

aware of the photographs and expressed an interest in displaying them. A request was received from Kedron Park High School (where many of the young people attended school) for the photographs to be on permanent display in the school library. Several other requests for the photos to be displayed were also received from a range of venues including BCC libraries across Brisbane and cultural festivals. A decision was reached in consultation with the BCC Grants staff to produce additional sets of the photographs in two sizes to enable the photographs to go on tour across various locations.

Knowing Me Knowing You across Brisbane

- 10 June 2010 YPAA Changing Habitats National Symposium
- 17 July – 10 August – Knowing Me Knowing YOU Exhibition – Qld. Centre for Photography South Brisbane
- 10 Sept 2010 – Kedron Park State High School – permanent display
- 25 Sept 2010 – Cultural Connections – BCC Library (Zillmere)
- 1st Oct – 30th Oct 2010 – Garden City Library
- 1st Nov – 30th Nov 2010 – Corinda Library
- 18-21 Nov 2010 – Journey of Life – East Brisbane Community Centre
- 3rd Dec – 30th Dec 2010 – Annerley Library

3rd Jan – 31st Jan 2011 – West End Library

In addition the project attracted media attention (*Zooming in on their Past and Future* – Northwest News July 2010) and subsequently the group were approached to take part in the BCC *Moving Pictures Project* where Melly worked with the young girls from the Karen community on a series of “postcards of Brisbane” which featured the girls photography on the side of a BCC bus. To top off this amazing project one of the participants who has continued to undertake her photography work was announced the winner of the youth prize in the Qld Multicultural Photographic Awards for one the photographs she took during the project. The winning photograph is pictured below .



“Winning the award and the camera was a dream come true. Meeting Anastasia

(Minister for Multicultural Affairs) was great and she was really nice to me. I was so proud. It made me very, very happy” (Gray Gray Ket on winning her award)

Our only disappointment along the way was the sturdiness of our cameras. We were able to secure a good price for the cameras and they were quite adequate for our purposes, however as time went on it became apparent that they were not overly sturdy and some breakages occurred. For future projects we would allow for better quality cameras in our funding submission to try to address this issue as well as some small allowance for breakages/replacement.

Other feedback

“Thanks to ACRO and Melly and the other people that let us learn photography”

“Our photos have been in a few places now. I feel really famous.”

“Seeing our pictures on the bus was so good. It was amazing. Photography makes me very happy.”

“I feel really lucky cause there are lots of people who want to learn things and I’m lucky to have this opportunity.”



Knowing Me Knowing You

An Evaluation Outcomes Report

Background

ACRO is a social justice organisation that delivers services to individuals and families in crisis, support to older people and programs for young people. With ten years engagement with young people through recreation programs during school holidays, we have had the pleasure of working with a groups of younger Australians from different ethnic groups including young people from Sudan and the Karen community (who have come to Australia from Burma). ACRO was fortunate that one of our program facilitators (Melly Niotakis) was also a professional photographer who saw the potential for the young people involved in our school holiday programs to explore the art of photography. We subsequently applied for, and received, a Brisbane City Council *Creative Sparks Grant* to undertake a series of photography work-

shops to enable these young people to develop their photographic skills.

Knowing Me Knowing You – The Proposal

It was proposed that twelve (12) young people who had previously participated in the ACRO school holidays recreation program be approached to be involved in the photography workshops.

Two program facilitators were to be employed – Melly as the project coordinator and Ally Wakefield a psychologist who had worked with QPASTT and had extensive experience working with young people from refugee backgrounds. ACRO would provide the overall management infra structure for the project with Programs Manager Fiona Begg overseeing the project.



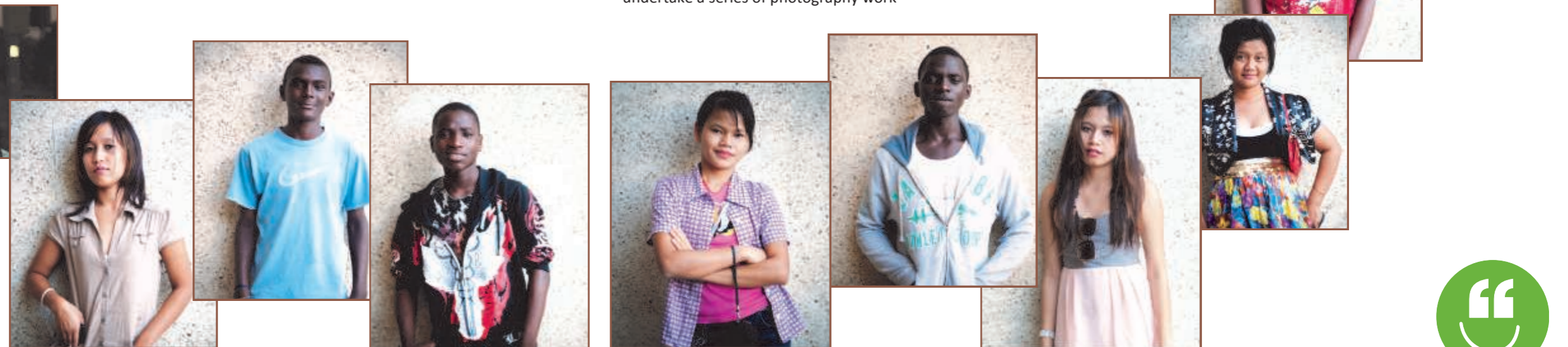
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The aims of the Project were:

To engage young people from refugee backgrounds in a safe and supportive environment to enable them to express their stories of arrival and settlement in their new country using the art of photography;

To build and enhance the access of the young people to a range of agencies and resources within the youth arts sector in Brisbane to support sustainable partnerships for their artistic futures;

To organise and hold an exhibition showcasing the young people's photography to the Brisbane community.



Knowing Me Knowing You – In Action

In order to enable the young people to participate in the project it was necessary to gain informed consent from their families and also to ensure that the young photographers gained consent from their photography subjects where necessary. To assist in this process the services of an interpreter was enlisted to attend home interviews with the families. The interpreter also provided services later in the project at the exhibition to enable the families to be involved in the day in a meaningful way. Initial meetings with Brisbane City Council (BCC) grants personnel proved invaluable in ensuring the success of the project utilising their range of experience and contacts.



Twelve young people commenced the project. However one withdrew, after the initial meeting, indicating he could not commit to the regular attendance required for the project. Eight workshop sessions were planned with sessions organised across a week in the school holidays. Three follow up sessions followed on successive Saturdays. The Saturday sessions proved more problematic for attendance by some of the participants due to family, sporting and church commitments however the young people tried to accommodate these by attending for at least



a half a day when schedules clashed. The young women from the Karen community had 100% attendance.

The Photography

The young people showed considerable aptitude in grasping photographic language and concepts evidenced by their increasing skills with the camera throughout the time of the project. They listened and were able to apply knowledge about ways to improve their work. They were particularly adept at applying the technique of metaphor utilization in portraying their stories of arrival and settlement in Brisbane.

“During the course I learned that you have to choose a good place and think about how you want your picture to be “ ACRO Knowing Me Knowing You Participant.

Through computer use, It became apparent that participants had a significant interest in *Facebook*. Although initially the facilitators tried to balance this by provided free time for this activity, it became clear this was not working as a strategy. The facilitators instead decided to embrace *Facebook* as a tool and set up a dummy account to enable the participants to upload their best photo selections from the sessions and make comments on each others' pictures. Interfacing with the technology that the young people were already using proved to be a very productive strategy with the young people more engaged with each other's work than before.

The Workshop Sessions

One of the crucial ingredients to the success of the project was ensuring that the young people felt safe and comfortable in sharing their stories. Through psychologist Ally Wakefield's sessions the young people were able to build on the trust they had already established with Photographer/Camp Lead Facilitator Melly Niotakis, to express their stories in a group environment that was understanding and supportive. The use of a working agreement also worked well to help ensure that everyone was treated with respect.

“Working with Ally was

good. She kind and helpful” Knowing Me Knowing You Participant

By the end of the workshop sessions the young people had taken hundreds and hundreds of Photographs. These were carefully edited down to one or two which the young people thought best encapsulated their experiences of arrival and settlement in Brisbane. They then worked with facilitators to develop artist statements and a catalogue for the exhibition to help convey the complexities of their chosen photograph to the viewer. These statements accompanied the photography display throughout various venues across Brisbane.

Key Partnerships

As well as the incredible talent and commitment of the young people involved, the project success also rested with some key partnerships forged during the project which greatly supported its outcomes. The **BCC grants personnel** were able to facilitate a meeting with staff from **The Edge** and secure this amazing interactive media facility as the venue for our workshops. Having access to the cutting edge technology of this facility was invaluable to the project both in terms of the use of the resources and also in introducing the young people to a youth facility that they were unaware existed. The staff were very helpful. The young people now have their own access password and their newly acquired knowledge and familiarity with the facility enables them to access it by themselves. Anecdotal evidence indicates that several of the participants have returned to The Edge after the workshops to use the resources.

“I know where to go now to use computers and some other places to like the Art Gallery” Knowing Me Knowing You Participant.

The **Queensland Centre for Photography (QCP)** similarly was pivotal to the success of our project; in the first instance by providing the expertise of Maurice Ontango who conducted a session with the young people around the use of metaphor and also conducted a tour of the gallery speaking in context about this theme in relation to the exhibition of the day. Secondly QCP suggested we could hold our exhibition at their gallery and

assisting us by securing funding from **Griffith University** to assist with printing and exhibition expenses. The QCP also assisted us by providing an earlier opening time for the exhibit to better suit our project participants and their families. Being able to present the young peoples' work in a professional photographic gallery such as the QCP was a true highlight for the project. Our project was also fortunate to secure the services of Meagan Williams curator of the **QUT Art Museum** who conducted a tour of the National Portrait Prize being held at the Museum. Meagan structured the presentation to suit our needs and gave us a very informative session on portraits, self portraits and representation.

The Exhibition

The preparation required to hold a photography exhibition for a group of first time photographers from refugee backgrounds was quite considerable and Melly Niotakis pulled out all stops to make it a success. This entailed the organization of transport for all the young people and their families, interpreters so that they could all participate fully, through to organising a surprise presentation on the day for each young person of their favourite photo from the workshops. **Councillor Helen Abrahams** officially launched the exhibition and with approximately 200 people in attendance the day was a fitting tribute to the hard work that had gone before. A number of representatives from key agencies and groups attended including the Chairperson of ACRO Mr Ian Stewart, the Karen Youth Leader, the Brisbane Ethiopian Secretary, teachers from the young peoples' schools, Brisbane City Council staff, YPAA, Contact Inc, QPASTT, Griffith University, Youth Arts QLD and Speak OUT.

“I've never had an exhibition before. It feels amazing you can prove to people you can do something and how important you can be” Knowing Me Knowing YOU Participant

A record of the day was captured and appears as a link on the ACRO website www.acro.com.au/index-younger_main.html

Project Outcomes

As the project progressed it came to take on a life of its own as more people became

