

Understanding the “partner”  
in partnerships: A case study  
of an effective university-  
community research  
partnering



St Vincent de Paul Society  
*good works*



Lord Somers Camp  
and Power House



# The power of university– community research partnerships

- University–community research partnerships have the potential to:
  - respond to society’s most pressing needs through engaged scholarship
  - respond to emerging practice as well as help define it
- BUT they must be founded upon mutual respect to avoid misunderstandings that may arise when people from different sectors come together
- We will explore our learnings from our university–community research partnership, established by the Stakeholder Engaged Scholarship Unit (SESU) at ACU

# Our partnership: Exploring the impact of COVID- 19 on the organisations' clients (and potential clients)

- Collaboration between ACU researchers and three diverse community organisations:
  - St Vincent De Paul Society NSW
  - Jesuit Refugee Service (NSW)
  - Lord Somers Camp and Power House (Victoria)
- Established following a call for EOIs from the SESU at ACU
- SESU projects like this one aim to establish **mutually beneficial partnerships**:
- **For the organisations:**
  - ✓ Enables participation in larger-scale research to support service delivery without having to invest time to recruit researchers
  - ✓ Being part of a cross-sector, university-led collaboration helps us build legitimacy around research findings for a broader audience
- **For the researchers:**
  - ✓ Provides an opportunity to engage directly with community organisations
  - ✓ We can apply our skills and knowledge to address urgent and real-world challenges.

# Key values that guide university– community research partnerships

- Support to connect
- Relationships ground in collaboration
- Shared goals



# Support to connect

Match-making process based on shared interest

Project inception meetings that are exploratory and don't require commitment

Investment in understanding different contexts

Time spent sharing expertise and experiences

Co-creation of the research project

# Relationships ground in collaboration

Respect for  
different types of  
knowledge and  
experience

Neutral 'broker'  
facilitated the  
partnership  
process

An evolving and  
flexible process

Open and  
reciprocal  
communication

# Shared goals

Clarity about  
motivations

Desire for real-  
world impact and  
relevance

Regular  
opportunities to  
take stock and re-  
assess

Questions?

