

**PHILANTHROPY
AUSTRALIA**

Inspiring stories of giving

volume 2

Philanthropy for a generous
and inclusive Australia



Above
Maree Sidey, CEO
Philanthropy Australia

Welcome to *Inspiring stories of giving: volume 2*, the second in our series of publications about the positive impact of giving in Australia.

Stories inspire, explain, and connect us... they go to the heart of what it means to be human, and how we can work together to achieve positive change. Through telling stories of the important work of giving in this country, we change outdated perceptions of what it means to be philanthropic, and we bring more people into the work of more and better giving in Australia.

Volume 1 featured many stories about philanthropists and philanthropic organisations working with governments to achieve great outcomes. It also included many stories from Victoria and New South Wales.

Volume 2 zooms in on the impact that giving is having for communities around Australia, particularly regional and remote communities – from Western Australia and the Northern Territory through to South Australia, Queensland and the ACT.

We hope you enjoy this new collection and it sparks your giving inspiration!

Inside front and back cover

MusicNT is an innovative not-for-profit supported by the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation that is putting Northern Territory music on the map. It runs a diverse range of live events, including the National Indigenous Music Awards and Bush Bands Bash (pictured), in which 160 groups have performed. See story page 46. Photo by: Jeff Tan

Philanthropy Australia acknowledges and pays our respects to the past and present traditional Custodians and Elders of the country on which we work. We also accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Right
One of the participants in a pilot series of hip-hop production workshops held in NSW regional towns supported by the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation's Backing the Future initiative
See story page 50



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'It's such a beautiful story'



At the Skywalk Cafe overlooking the stunning Murchison Gorge in Western Australia, tourists now get a serve of local traditional knowledge with their coffee from its Nhanda proprietor, Tony Wilton. Tony was able to take on the business on the land of his ancestors with the support of Aboriginal Tourism Western Australia (ATWA), which is backed by philanthropic funders. Providing start-ups with infrastructure, training and other support is helping Indigenous businesses in far and remote areas of the state to thrive.

Above
The CEO of ATWA and WAITOC, Rob Taylor

Left and overleaf
The Kalbarri Skywalk tourist attraction – a 100m lookout over the Murchison Gorge in Kalbarri, Western Australia. Aboriginal Tourism Western Australia, backed by philanthropy, helped put the associated Skywalk Cafe back into the hands of Nhanda man Tony Wilton

Photos with thanks to Tourism Western Australia

Tony remembers being a kid in Kalbarri, WA, when his mob, the Nhanda people, still camped along the river, and lived on the lands of Murchison House Station. The station was then managed by the Blood family, who respected the depth of years that the local Indigenous population had lived on the coastal land. "My family, my great grandmother and my ancestors are buried on that station," Tony said. "That station is the traditional burial ground, and there's a cave that has been in our family for a millennia. It's our family cave."

This is why Tony and his wife, Ann, moved back from Broome, so that he could reconnect with his ancestral land. But even Tony hadn't been ready for the wave of emotion that rocked him when he visited the Skywalk tourist attraction north-east of the town – a 100-metre lookout over the Murchison Gorge. Tony was stunned to find the historical display included photos of his

mother and other family members. He also noticed that the adjacent cafe was closed up and empty. With his food truck business failing, he inquired, discovered a local business was on the brink of taking it over, spoke to them about his Nhanda roots, and they willingly stepped aside so he could take over the cafe.

This is when Tony met the crew from the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC), a not-for-profit organisation that helps Aboriginal tourism operators build their businesses and find success. WAITOC had recently established a Deductible Gift Recipient – registered subsidiary, ATWA, to attract philanthropic donations to offer business training, capital support – anything a start-up business like Tony's cafe might need.

Story continues →



The CEO of ATWA and WAITOC, Rob Taylor, is also a Nhandu man, so Tony's success is particularly close to his heart, he says:

“

It's such a beautiful story. The Skywalk Cafe coming back into Indigenous hands and actually being able to add that entire, deep cultural aspect to what's already a cool tourist property is fantastic. We supported them in getting infrastructure, as in, some of the things they needed to run the cafe that they wouldn't have been able to afford, as well as training and development, supporting the creation of their website and so on.”

WAITOC created ATWA to enable new lines of funding for such a purpose. For two decades, most of WAITOC's funding has been from government, which tends to be tied to election cycles and comes with parameters and restrictions.

Rob said the clear priority in WAITOC funding was to support Indigenous tourism ventures in the north of the state, mostly across the Kimberley. “The money we get is from royalties for regions, which means it can only be used in those regions,” he said. “So, we couldn't support the mid-west of WA and the great southern and southwest because we didn't have the money or the staff.”

Hence, the lateral solution to establish ATWA and build less restricted philanthropic funding. Asked if attracting donations for the new venture was a hard sell, Rob laughed. “It was like, ‘build it and they will come’, because I was in East Kimberley and I literally tripped over a lady. She was wandering around and saw me, in my uniform, and wanted to come to have a look at some of our products. She just followed us in her car while we were going around meeting some of our members.”

This mysterious woman, who still asks that her donations remain anonymous, not only pledged her support, but she introduced Rob to another philanthropist partner and Lotterywest, which provided a grant.

There are two streams to ATWA's work. A Business Support Hub, offering all the training and services they might need, and an Aboriginal Tourism Accelerator, offering mentoring for Indigenous business owners.

Aboriginal tourism adds \$63.8 million to Western Australia's income, as well as providing hundreds of jobs for Indigenous workers since WAITOC started, which Rob is hoping will double under ATWA's philanthropic support. However, it's about more than budget lines. “Governments want to see economic returns, but we look at the social return on investments,” he said. “We're about social impacts like strengthening our pride in our culture, keeping our culture and language alive.”

Rob points out that 99% of Indigenous tourism companies are small or micro businesses, and that the owners have no institutional wealth, handed down over generations of family, because First Nations people could not own a business before the referendum of 1967. This flows to failing applications for home loans, and other barriers to entry in the quest for financial security and business success. ATWA's philanthropists are making a tangible difference.

“I couldn't be more grateful,” Tony Wilton said. “I think out of all the organisations that I've had anything to do with, I would rate them (WAITOC/ATWA) up there as probably the best, and I'm not just blowing smoke rings.”

Tony now owns a house with a view. “I wake up in the morning on our property, it overlooks Kalbarri and it looks out over the hills of the ancestors, and I can get up and have a coffee, walk out on to our veranda and just be there and commune. I've never really gotten into contact with that part of myself before or been able to share it with Ann.

Right
Skywalk Cafe proprietors
Ann and Tony Wilton



Tony Wilton says:

“

At the cafe, people want to see and hear Aboriginal people speaking the truth about their experience, so when I'm serving coffees, I get the chance to talk to people and share my insight into the Nhandu culture and explain. I put things in context for them and help them to see through different eyes. They feel like they've had an experience, a proper experience.

WAITOC (through ATWA) helped make it happen. We all need a hand up, and it's sometimes hard to hold out a hand and ask for help. I really appreciate what they've done.”

Disaster-hit communities helped to get going again by RACQ workers turned volunteers



Above
Bridgette Muller, RACQ
Foundation Manager

The RACQ Foundation was established in the wake of the 2011 Brisbane floods and Tropical Cyclone Yasi. Since then, the Foundation has continued to support communities in Queensland from the outback to the coast, pledging more than 33,000 volunteering hours to deliver its Community Assistance Projects.

RACQ team members play a key role in the projects, getting to know communities while lending their skills to complete work from repairing generators and replanting vegetation to checking solar panel batteries and training locals in technology.

RACQ Foundation Manager Bridgette Muller said the projects provided practical on-the-ground support to Queenslanders impacted by natural disasters. Since the program began, 663 volunteers have supported 52 community groups and 160 family-owned farms or stations affected by severe weather across Queensland.

“The importance of the work we do in regional Queensland extends beyond the fences we build, the buildings we repair and farm equipment we fix,” Bridgette said. “It’s a core part of strengthening our connection to communities and making a difference.”

In October 2023, RACQ Foundation volunteers travelled to the South Burnett region in southern Queensland to assist with community work in the Aboriginal community of Cherbourg. Volunteers worked for two weeks on projects including helping the local Youth Advisory Group to restore the grounds of a lookout and assisting a rugby league club to repair their oval facilities after flooding events.

RACQ Foundation volunteers also travelled to Far North Queensland in October 2022 to repair and upgrade facilities in the Aboriginal community of Yarrabah. The 29 volunteers spent two weeks in the town helping with cleaning, gardening, and roofing, as well as carpentry, mechanical and maintenance work.

King of Yarrabah Vincent Jaabaan Schrieber is the fifth generation of his family to hold the traditional title and said the visit was of huge benefit.

Right
RACQ volunteer Albert, left,
with community leader the
King of Yarrabah, Vincent
Jaabaan Schrieber

“RACQ has been a blessing,” he said. “We’re so grateful there are organisations out there that want to come into our community and help us – giving and not wanting anything back – and that’s something we’ve never seen in my community.”

RACQ Managing Director and Group CEO David Carter said building strong and meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities across Queensland was at the heart of RACQ’s Reconciliation Action Plan.

“The projects are an incredible experience for our staff, having the opportunity to engage with the Traditional Custodians and learn more about their history, culture, and local arts,” Mr Carter said.

One of RACQ’s most dedicated volunteers, Albert Budworth, has volunteered at 20 community initiatives over the years. He began his RACQ career as a Patrol Officer in 1975 but continues to volunteer even after retirement.

David Carter says:

“**Volunteering is my way of giving back and making an impact. It’s a privilege to be able to use my time and mechanical skills to make a positive difference in the lives of others.**

The sense of community and camaraderie among volunteers is what I love. We can achieve so much more together than we could ever do alone.”



Operation Flinders: 'It's a bit of a headspin for the kids'



Above
David Wark, the CEO
of Operation Flinders

Right
Participant on the
Operation Flinders program

There's one on every trip, and maybe two. As disadvantaged youths from Adelaide are bussed 700km north of the city to the Flinders Ranges, made to hand over their phone and other electronic devices, and then start hiking into the wilderness, at least one of the youths will drop their backpack and run. Operation Flinders' team leaders just smile.

This is not their first rodeo. They know it will occur to the rebellious teen pretty quickly that it's an oppressively long way south to their usual haunts and they are surrounded by steep hills, so the path of least resistance to escape is to run along the river. By the time they work this out, they'll find one of the team leaders sitting peacefully by the water, waiting for them.

They'll be invited to talk about why they ran, or allowed to throw stones at trees, or scream obscenities, or just sit. Weirdly, from the youth's point of view, they won't get into trouble. They don't get punished. They just have it explained that if they want dinner, they need to walk to where the first night's camp is being set up. "It's a bit of a headspin for the kids, 'Going, oh, this is different, these people are different,'" said David Wark, the CEO of Operation Flinders.

The youths have found themselves on the bus after being recommended by their school or maybe their family. They're there because they've been struggling with peers or authority, broken homes and fraught family relationships. They may be drifting into brushes with the law. "They might have been exposed to some social environments that 'uncomfortable' would be the nicest way I could say it," David said.

These are the youths who find their world altered by eight days hiking in the Flinders Ranges on Yankaninna Station. During their stay, they will walk through amazing country, share chores and spend time with team leaders who treat them with respect and trust, and genuinely listen to them, which can unlock these young people.

Having just clocked up the 10,000th attendee, it's a system that has been proven to work, driven by philanthropy, such as ongoing support from the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation since 2011. The support has included funds for capacity building and infrastructure, so other fundraising can go straight into the programs themselves.

The foundation's executive director, Kerry de Lorme, said: "One of the foundation's funding pillars is supporting young people, and I have visited Yankaninna Station a number of times and have seen the impact that Operation Flinders is making on these young and vulnerable people.

"We have invested a significant amount of money in infrastructure at the property, but there's nothing like being up there with the kids sitting around the campfire having conversations with them. We see their eyes light up when they have adults around them believing in them and encouraging them that they have the power to change their lives for the better and to improve their relationships, with both family and school."

Story continues →





Left and right
Participants on the
Operation Flinders program



Only eight days to potentially change a young person's life? David said that it was transformative for the attendees to spend time without the pressure of social media or the intrusion of mobile phones, and out of their everyday environment. Instead, they are embedded in a place of broad horizons, ever changing light and rugged beauty, sitting around campfires at night, which he described as "the elixir of truth" for the flames' ability to get young people to talk in ways they don't normally.

They also have the realisation that they've been given shoes that fit and are comfortable, or that they can sleep safely, without the danger of somebody doing anything inappropriate. "There are kids that are really upset when they have to leave because this is the first time that they've ever been able to talk to an adult and feel good about who they are. Plus, they're getting three meals a day and just some of that basic stuff," David said.

"We're hoping that the work that we do sees them rely on each other and work together. And that it has the attendees making decisions very quickly that are positive and may lead to much better outcomes – be that seeking employment, knuckling down at school, respecting their peers and respecting authority, or be that contributing to family life in a positive way," he said.

Operation Flinders runs a follow-up program, Next Step, for those who choose to participate, back in Adelaide, and David said the large numbers of participants shows how the young people don't want to let go of what they have gained from the Flinders experience.

Kerry spoke of one of those, Ellie Lawrence-Wood, who was one of the first attendees in 1993, when she was 13 and was already using and selling hard drugs among other disruptive behaviour. With Operation Flinders' support, Ellie enrolled in a TAFE course, continued on to university where she excelled in psychology, earning a PhD. She is now a psychologist specialising in post-traumatic stress disorder, and a board member of Operation Flinders. All from going for a walk.



Traditional knowledge and archaeology combine to help preserve First Nations heritage

The Everick Foundation uses archaeological services and scientific evidence, specifically the dating of culturally significant sites, combined with traditional knowledge systems to support First Nations communities to preserve their culture and heritage in place, on Country.

When it comes to documenting Indigenous heritage and understanding how First Nations people lived on the land for more than 65,000 years, Everick Benevolent Institution, trading as Everick Foundation, prioritises collaboration with Traditional Custodians who represent a strong line of cultural continuity between the past and present.

These communities face several challenges on their journey towards preserving their cultural heritage, which can include recording and dating their significant sites, and identifying and analysing culturally important artefacts and landscapes.

Across Australia, tensions are created between the cultural connections and obligations/responsibilities First Nations communities have with their Country and culture heritage and the competing prerogatives of various land users and stakeholders. The use of scientific evidence, specifically the dating of culturally significant sites, can support First Nations communities in their endeavours to preserve their heritage.

For more than two decades, Everick Heritage has been a leading cultural heritage consultancy, providing archaeological services for built heritage and First Nations heritage contexts for major infrastructure, mining, defence and residential projects. It was during this work that Managing Director Tim Robins observed the pressing need to facilitate capacity building opportunities for First Nations mobs so they were better equipped with the technical skills and disciplinary knowledge required to independently preserve their culture and heritage on Country.

Everick Foundation was subsequently founded, receiving Deductible Gift Recipient 1 status in 2022. The Foundation builds and nurtures authentic and meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities, assisting them to take important steps towards self-determination and ongoing economic success. Combining scientific, archaeological understandings with traditional cultural knowledge systems ensures holistic cultural and natural management of Country can take place.

“The goal is to give Indigenous communities the tools to manage and protect their heritage,” Tim said. “The history of Aboriginal occupation of this continent is incredibly complex. We’re talking 65,000+ years, and possibly much longer. Unfortunately, because we [non-Indigenous Australians] really haven’t learned how to properly tell the stories that are written in the land, we’re destroying them at a vast rate. Everick Foundation’s purpose is to empower communities to better tell that story so people can understand the values before impacting on those sites.

“There’s a great sense of frustration and disempowerment within Indigenous communities about the heritage management process. The Foundation was created to meet the need for communities to take control of and manage the data around their heritage. The Foundation team is able to leverage the technical skills of our commercial team, to deliver this important work,” he said.

At a practical level, the Everick Foundation provides Indigenous communities with cutting-edge technology and web-

Right
Everick Foundation
Director Tim Robins
Photo by: Attila Csaszar,
Everick Foundation



mapping tools. The team also provides culturally appropriate, on-Country training in archaeological excavation and dating. Other priority areas of the Foundation include Truth-telling and Cultural Mapping, with their in-house videographer working with communities to record their cultural knowledge for future generations. There is also geospatial technical support given to mobs to create digital databases for the recording of significant sites, artefacts and landscapes.

David Conlon, a Yuggera Ugarapul man, admits that when he first met Tim, they were on different sides of the negotiating table in relation to the management of his mob’s land, leading to a relationship he describes as “quite confrontational”.

However, the pair ultimately found common ground while discussing their shared passions for an Indigenous-led cultural heritage industry. Tim explained how the Everick Foundation is committed to assisting this aspiration to become a reality.

“As we got to know each other over time, I think we shared similar values and principles as to the way cultural heritage should be managed,” David said. “That really strengthened our relationship to a point where Tim was very supportive of advocating and assisting traditional owner groups like mine in being able to build our capability within our own tribe to step away from having third party independent advice on looking after Country from technical advisers that we were employing.”

Everick Foundation and the Yuggera Ugarapul People have delivered community-led projects including the Black Summer Bushfire grant and on-Country training programs. Working with Queensland Parks and Wildlife, the Yuggera Ugarapul People have developed a holistic, collaborative approach to future National Park fire risks and preserving cultural heritage, ensuring the resilience of the country against the worsening risks of climate change, while also providing training and jobs.

David is an instructive example of how self-determination can be achieved by Indigenous people, starting his own archaeology company, Cultural Heritage Wai, with mentorship support from Everick Foundation. “It was really an eye-opener that not many of our mob have had the opportunity to be out on Country and participate in cultural heritage assessment surveys or even archaeological excavation,” he said. “It was an aspiration of mine to take more initiative and more control on how we look after Country, and to have more of an involvement out in the field.”

David first sat down with his Elders to ensure he had their support. “I outlined what was wrong with having external and outside technical advisers, and it gave them peace of mind that we could sit here and complain and whinge about it, or we can take a step to demonstrate self-determination and to take control back definitely. I think that really resonated with our Elders. I was rather young, probably still am the youngest at that decision-making table, but knowing that what we’re doing is for our future generations, the Elders looked favourably upon me as a young person taking those steps in that direction.”

Right
Stone flakes excavated
during the Yuggera
Ugarapul Archaeology
Training on Country
program
Photo by: Attila Csaszar,
Everick Foundation



The 'growing, complex web of wellbeing challenges' facing school students

Schools Plus has developed a number of initiatives aimed at supporting young people's mental health in rural communities that is producing heartening outcomes.

Ask anybody in regional, rural and remote towns in Australia whether it's easy to find mental health support, and you'll hear the same bitter laugh. Winning an appointment with a specialist can take literally months, and often involves a debilitating level of travel.

The not-for-profit organisation, Schools Plus, has just released a report, Every Child, Every Opportunity, that quantifies what that service lag means for the struggling youth of remote towns, as well as First Nations communities and schools recovering from crises. Crises include floods, fires and the COVID pandemic that put such a hole in the social and educational development of many young people. Analysing six years of data from almost 2,000 schools across Australia, Schools Plus hasn't just articulated the scale of the issues these schools in disadvantaged areas are facing, it has come up with tangible solutions.

"Schools are telling us that there's this growing, very complex web of wellbeing challenges that they're facing among their students," Schools Plus CEO Sherrill Nixon said. "They're talking about rising anxiety, they're talking about increasing levels of trauma backgrounds. These kids are coming to school with low resilience, and that's playing out in the form of absenteeism, behavioural issues in the classroom, an inability to form relationships, and kids not having built their social-emotional skills sufficiently. Because well-being is so linked to learning, it means that academic results are also at risk as a result."

Schools Plus, which is entirely funded by philanthropy, has charted that the focus of many schools has shifted dramatically, putting the wellbeing of students even ahead of academic results, because of the interlinked nature of the two. "In 2018, only 31% of schools seeking our support identified wellbeing as the highest priority. In our most recent application round, it was 48%," Sherrill said.

The most exciting aspect of the Every Child, Every Opportunity report is when it talks about solutions, in three parts. The solutions were found through years of partnering with schools in some of the country's most vulnerable communities, trialling different and bespoke approaches to boost wellbeing and identifying what works.

"The first solution is the idea of having a wellbeing hub where schools are able to bring a GP, psychologist or allied health professionals, such as speech or occupational therapists, on to the school campus, so that kids are able to have quick and easy access to those health services," Sherrill said. "This has already been successful where we've implemented it. One of the starting points of this problem is that there's not easy access to care. Kids might be waiting 12 or 18 months to see a professional and then there's often the distance and hours needed to get to that appointment.

"Another issue is sometimes that there's a lack of trust in those sorts of professions, whereas schools are seen as being safe and trusted places, so if the schools are able to provide those services on site, then parents and students are much more likely to access them," she said.

Secondly, improved professional development of teachers to have better trauma-informed practices emerged as a key need, both among the teachers and in 71% of wellbeing-focused support applications. "All educators, including trainee teachers, should have access to timely, evidence-based professional development to help them create safe and supportive learning environments, identify student needs and implement strategies to support student engagement in learning," Schools Plus advocated.

The third suggested action was to create the new role of Wellbeing Navigators in disadvantaged schools, allowing trained professionals to coordinate effective identification, prevention and early intervention wellbeing and mental health strategies for kids showing signs of stress.

At Berri Regional Secondary College, Principal Clinton Ridgway is already working towards the Schools Plus dream. His school has established a wellbeing hub, including a Doctors on Campus initiative, where a psychologist travels from Adelaide once a week, among other inhouse professional help. Assistant Principal Donna Safralidis is the wellbeing leader, with the responsibility to lead student support across the school community.

"It was about shifting our mindset to wellbeing being just as important as teaching and learning, so instead of just focusing on academic excellence, we focused in on wellbeing engagement as well. We moved a lot of our internal improvement work with that as the focus and the vision moving forward," Clinton said.

Berri Regional students were so stressed by all the usual anxieties of today's student life, such as social media, online gaming, family tensions and a troubled world, plus flood impacts across the Riverland region and the pandemic that their engagement in school and learning was affecting their attendance. Establishing the wellbeing hub, with a team of youth

workers and other professionals dedicated to their mental care, was a way to nurse them back into social habits and education.

"There's a lot of careful strategy around it," Clinton said. "It is not intended as a drop-in centre. It's students going there seeking support or making appointments to get support. It can be as much as seeking a doctor or a psychologist, to having case management with the youth worker, to getting support for the fact they don't have lunch or a uniform for the day."

"We're seeing the benefits, three years in," he said. "For us, it was more about not just having wellbeing as an add-on program. This is more of a holistic overview, taking every individual on their merits and seeing what was wrong, what's happening in their lives and how do we support them.

"Of our 700 students, 400 in the last year accessed our wellbeing hub in some capacity, including some of those high academic students you wouldn't immediately think are suffering from poor mental health," he said.

Schools Plus, which was founded following a recommendation in the first Gonski Review into education, hopes more support from government and the philanthropic community will enable many more schools to follow Berri's lead in the wake of their report's release.

Right
Clinton Ridgway,
Berri Regional Secondary
College Principal





How a philanthropic consortium is helping young people out of homelessness

Left
Foyer Central Manager,
Aimee Cavallaro
and a resident, Alex

A Foyer Foundation initiative with Hand Heart Pocket and others resulted in the Queensland government committing to eight new foyers that provide youth homelessness accommodation and support services. We look at how the collaboration between a consortium of philanthropists, impact investors and service providers worked and explore the broader impact of the foundation's model around Australia.

In French, 'foyer' is the term for hearth, and that special sense of home and belonging. And in Australia, Youth Foyers are precisely that for many vulnerable young people: a safe space they can call their own, where they have housing and support for education, employment, and life skills under one roof.

Youth Foyers originated in France more than 30 years ago and spread to the UK and the US before emerging in Australia in the early 2000s. Today, Youth Foyers – self-contained units with communal living spaces – are in most states and territories and provide a home for up to two years for people aged 16 to 24 experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

The Foyer Foundation is a national organisation that works with community housing providers, education and employment services, philanthropists and impact investors. Together, the partners are achieving extraordinary things, including funding commitments from state and federal governments, with Queensland in particular moving rapidly thanks to the creative input of Hand Heart Pocket, an independent charity and philanthropic foundation.

The foundation has established FoyerInvest, a consortium of not-for-profits, investors and philanthropists working toward the goal of 50 Accredited Youth Foyers in Australia by 2030. FoyerInvest's Queensland Working Group is a unique advocacy collaboration initiated by

Hand Heart Pocket that brought together the six youth services and community housing providers there that were expert in delivering Foyers with the consortium and young Foyer tenants to jointly advocate on building more.

This initiative has resulted in \$320 million worth of commitment from the Queensland state government that was announced earlier in 2024.

Hand Heart Pocket CEO and Co-Chair of the Queensland FoyerInvest Working Group, Sara Parrott, says the Queensland Government's decision to fund eight new foyers was an enormous win that highlighted the importance of collaboration in achieving system change.

Sara became aware of Youth Foyers in 2022 when she was looking for opportunities for Hand Heart Pocket to invest in activities that would have positive outcomes for young people in Queensland.

"We went to a Foyer conference on the Gold Coast and met different organisations wanting to set up Foyers – but we knew we couldn't have separate organisations going to the government to ask for funding," Sara said. "We invited everybody to discuss how we could talk to the Queensland Department and Treasury's social impact investing teams about building more Foyers."

Story continues →

Sara Parrott says

“

It was perfect timing because Foyer Foundation was about to publish a study that showed what the payback was to governments for investing in a foyer. We dubbed ourselves the Queensland FoyerInvest Working Group.”

Along with Hand Heart Pocket and Foyer Foundation, the working group also includes Mission Australia, Wesley Mission Queensland, Gold Coast Youth Service, The Y (YMCA Queensland), Brisbane Youth Service, Q-Shelter and IFYS.

Hand Heart Pocket then invested \$250,000 in Foyer Foundation's capacity to run state and federal government relations and supported the working group in preparing a combined pitch to the Queensland Government.

“We spent 2023 as a working group talking to the Department of Housing and then the stars aligned when a new Minister and Director-General came on board, met with the young people who live in Foyers and were convinced by the social return and said, yes, this will work,” Sara says.

“The advocacy culminated in an announcement in February 2024 within the new Queensland housing plan of not six but eight foyers. Our \$250,000 grant turned into about \$320 million worth of commitment by the Queensland government for social housing for young people in Queensland.”

The Foyer Foundation continues to build awareness of the model, using its research that shows 80% of people exit from Youth Foyers into safe and stable housing and 65% gain decent work, and most progress their education.

Liz Cameron-Smith has seen significant growth in the Foyer model across Australia since she joined as the CEO of The Foyer Foundation in mid-2022. She explains that the Australian beginnings in 2008 came after a group led by Narelle Clay, CEO of Southern Youth and Family Services, travelled to the UK to learn about the model. They brought the best parts of the approach to Australia.

Youth Foyers are much more than supported accommodation or a welfare program. They use an ‘Advantaged Thinking’ approach, meaning Foyers tap into the ambitions of young people and nurture their talents while building life skills.

The voices of empowered young people are an important part of FoyerInvest's advocacy work. “These young people have travelled to Canberra with us, met with the Offices of the PM, the Treasurer, the Housing Minister, MPs and advisors, and engaged with state and territory governments,” Liz says. “They shared deeply personal stories about their lives and the way Youth Foyers offered them a launchpad for the future.

“Governments have also realised Youth Foyers will save them money by increasing employment and taxpaying citizens, decreasing dependence on welfare, housing and justice services, and breaking cycles of intergenerational disadvantage.”

There has been a dramatic increase in demand for Youth Foyers across Australia in recent years. Currently, there are more than 630 units across 16 Accredited Youth Foyers, with 11 more under construction or accreditation. A further 33 communities are seeking investment for new Youth Foyers.

“On average, 44,000 young people asked for support from homelessness services every year for the last decade,” Liz says. “As a nation, we are not doing enough to break intergenerational cycles of homelessness and provide young people with the pathways they need. The model is based on the proposition that the most constructive thing we can do for young people is to ensure they become educated, employable and empowered.”

A partnership with the Paul Ramsay Foundation commencing in 2021 provided the Foyer Foundation with essential seed funding to accelerate the growth and impact of Foyers in Australia.

Right
Foyer Central residents in the common area

Below
Shepparton Education First Youth Foyer Team Leader Matt Jobling and current student, Ange



“The seed funding meant we could mature and evolve as an independent entity that connects the Australian Youth Foyer network, provides quality assurance, knowledge sharing and capability building, and the first national outcomes framework for Youth Foyers,” Liz says.

The funding for Foyers in Cairns, Hervey Bay, and the Moreton Bay region (with more locations to be confirmed) means people such as Caitlyn, who lives in Wesley Mission Queensland's Logan Youth Foyer, can continue to look forward to positive futures.

“Foyer has given me stability, opportunity and a safe place to express myself and become a better version of myself,” Caitlyn said.

“I've been able to gain employment and a vehicle, and I have participated in volunteering opportunities. I've also learnt how important it is to use my own voice to advocate for other young people experiencing homelessness, and I've realised that I would love to pursue a career in community services.



Caitlyn says:

“**It feels good to have an impact on the future of youth homelessness and be a voice for other young people — I'm proud that I can use my story to influence change and impact my community.”**

Hopes for a breakthrough in childhood diseases underpinned by 10-year funding relationship



Above
Professor Enzo Porrello, Theme Director of Stem Cell Biology at Murdoch Children's Research Institute

An enduring relationship that has formed between the Stafford Fox Medical Research Foundation (SFMRF) and Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) over a decade has been attributed to enabling the latter to develop world-first research into stem cell medicine that could result in treatments for rare or currently incurable and devastating childhood diseases, including heart disease and brain cancer.

The milestone was hit earlier this year when SFMRF delivered further funding that has so far amounted to more than \$12 million in the period for ongoing projects and infrastructure, including the development of the Stem Cell Based Drug Discovery Facility.

The SFMRF funding has supported the Inaugural Stafford Fox Fellow, held by Professor Enzo Porrello, and the acquisition of cutting-edge technology to study potential new treatments for diseases from medulloblastoma (Australia's most common childhood brain cancer) to muscular dystrophy. These combined advancements have enabled MCRI to join two other world-leading institutions in Denmark and the Netherlands to form the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Stem Cell Medicine, known as reNEW.

Enzo says: "Our researchers are world leaders in reprogramming stem cells, that can be taken from any individual, into a range of different human cells relevant to all the medical conditions and diseases on which we are working. The Drug Discovery Facility supports this research towards translation."

The Facility employs a custom-built robotic system alongside advanced stem cell production capabilities. This innovative approach enables MCRI to screen hundreds of compounds a day, a process that would

otherwise require significant manual effort, meaning faster answers for patients and potentially better treatments for childhood conditions, from autism and genetic heart and kidney disease, to type 1 diabetes.

"We've developed models of heart, brain and kidney cells and they provide us with a really powerful window into human biology and disease processes that we can use as a platform for treatments. The facility is the only one of its kind in Australia, which is what has really put us on the map internationally and enabled the reNEW collaboration in Europe."

reNEW is funded by the Novo Nordisk Foundation, one of the largest philanthropic organisations in the world, with a net worth in 2022 of around A\$170 billion. Enzo says that MCRI would not be in this position without the support of Stafford Fox and the ongoing investments, which "really provided the foundations to help us build our research program and its tremendous growth".

The Stem Cell Medicine department, which includes the Drug Discovery Facility, has grown from four researchers just over a decade ago to more than 250 researchers and students today. This growth has been built with those targeted investments from Stafford Fox.

"They have been there from the beginning," adds Enzo.

Many stem cell experts utilise the Melbourne facility, and bring with them funding from a range of other sources, including the National Health and Medical Research Council, Medical Research Future Fund and other charities and foundations.

"This is just the beginning," says Enzo. "Those platforms are what's allowing us now to move that research closer to clinical application. Our hope is that this will allow us to drive drug and therapeutic treatments in the next 10 years."

Medical and treatment breakthroughs from this research would affect many lives. The facility is working on a number of projects, including one with the MCRI Heart Disease Lab to screen for drug compounds that may stop damage to the heart that occurs when children (and adults) go through chemotherapy. It has also optimised protocols that can be used to study blood cancers, including leukemia, and developed a stem-cell derived "heart patch" tissue that is being tested pre-clinically to treat congenital heart disease.

The granting and review process between Stafford Fox and MCRI is a combination of traditional and trust-based reporting, but the focus is on nurturing the relationship and involving the trustees as milestones are achieved.

"We frequently invite the trustees on site to tour facilities and meet the people they've funded to really deepen those relationships. It's important that we're on the journey together and it's equally rewarding for foundation trustees to see how the facilities have grown," says Enzo. Members of the Stafford Fox team, which is based in Victoria, visited the institute in March. "Trust has certainly been one of the key factors that has sustained the relationship between MCRI and Stafford Fox."

Intrinsic to the longevity of the relationship is the understanding that science takes time. Bringing developments such as these to fruition is a long-term investment. Enzo says that Stafford Fox's support has also been "a massive opportunity" to leverage other philanthropic investments and inputs, particularly competitive grants.

The Drug Discovery Facility is embedded in The Royal Children's Hospital, which provides a crucial insight into patient experience and perspectives. MCRI researchers are in regular contact with children affected by the illnesses they are researching through hospital advocacy groups, working closely with the patients, their clinicians and families. "It certainly hammers home the reality of the conditions we're working on for the children and their families involved, and makes us acutely aware of the potential impact of our research," says Enzo.

"To think of how we could dramatically change the outcomes for some children's lives one day with treatments derived from our research is incredibly motivating."

Right
Stafford Fox Trustees visiting the Murdoch Children's Research Institute.
Left-right: Dr Alejandro Hidalgo-Gonzalez, Anne Marie Gasbarro (Stafford Fox), Ken Wallace (Stafford Fox), Dr Sean Humphrey, Dr Timothy Johanssen and Dr Henry Beetham





'No red tape, no walls, just the best outcomes' for First Nations enterprises

Left
From left, Cormach Evans, founder and CEO of both Strong Brother, Strong Sister and Ngarrimili, with Jye Cardona, founder and CEO of Brother to Another and Darren Damaso, Youth and Family Lead at Brother to Another

Anybody who has ever set up a business can tell you how hard it is, let alone the ongoing running and growth of a company. The paperwork, accounting, legal, staff management, tax management and other demands are remorseless. Now add to that the experiences faced by First Nations people, from the harm and hurt of colonisation and impact of the Stolen Generation, ongoing racism and discrimination.

This is why Cormach Evans and his partner, Coco, established a national not-for-profit organisation, Ngarrimili, to assist aspiring First Nations executives as they establish companies and negotiate the wider commercial world.

Since 2017, Ngarrimili has been helping Indigenous businesses become a reality, from start-up to building success, including attracting finance, export expertise and anything else required.

Cormach, a Yorta Yorta man, and Coco previously started a profit-for-purpose business, Strong Brother Strong Sister, in Geelong, Victoria, which today is a Deductible Gift Recipient 1 status charity. Establishing SBSS saw the pair experience some of the hurdles they would then go on to tackle with Ngarrimili. "That journey really saw a lot of barriers that apply for First Nations businesses – even just getting an ABN, but also the racism, discrimination from a lot of external parties or government services and everything else," Cormach said.

"I was really lucky to have incredible people around me that could help me get that foundation set up and running and the mechanics of it all, so I wanted to be able to provide something like that to our community. Now, we're working with thousands of different businesses across Australia, which is amazing to be a part of and a great privilege for us. For me, it was shameful to still see today the low expectations white Australia has of First Nations people, communities and business," he said.

Ngarrimili's vow is to remove red tape and hurdles and assist with whatever individuals need. "Whether it's one bit of support or

ongoing support, we might help with website design or setting up accounting, getting tax returns done, to legal advice to auspicing and a range of other things," he said. "We've set up Ngarrimili to be that one-stop shop, but the most important thing is to have no barriers in place. You can access Ngarrimili at any time for immediate support. Everything's personally tailored to the individual's needs, their circumstances and what they're looking to do.

"First Nations people are leaders in every space, but it's about respect from non-First Nations people," Cormach said. "We've been able to be sustainable for 80,000 years. We've cared for Country, we've been able to harvest, we've had farmers, first inventors and many other things. So, it's in our blood, it's natural and there's obviously just been a lot of barriers in place. A lot of things have been stolen from First Nations people, whether it's family, country or language and culture.

"The exciting time now is that we are taking it all back to where it belongs: us. Ngarrimili is fast-tracking those opportunities for First Nations businesses and what comes of economic prosperity is massive. That's where real change can happen. We're actually making a change in control and there's power in it."

Ngarrimili doesn't ask for any return for the support. "We're privileged to be a part of the journey," Cormach said. "No red tape, no walls, just the best outcomes."

Ngarrimili also contracts Indigenous companies for required services, as another layer of economic benefit. The ripples expand and, as Cormach said, the benefits flow to not just the company owner, but also their family and wider community.

Story continues →

The success of Ngarrimili's work is everywhere. When Cormach travels, he said he sees people wearing House of Darwin and other First Nations brands everywhere, across Australia and even overseas. House of Darwin is a label established by Shaun Edwards with support from Ngarrimili. Not only is the brand now exporting internationally and providing the Northern Territory with local surf wear, but Shaun has created his own foundation to refurbish basketball courts in remote areas, as a hub for Indigenous youth and communities.

In fact, Ngarrimili is part of a zeitgeist where Cormach and Coco, Shaun, and others of a similar age, energy and drive across Australia are working together to bring meaningful change to Indigenous lives, embracing different visions but a shared dream of First Nations economic success and independence. "It's quite beautiful to have strong Aboriginal men working collaboratively and when one of us is down, we all get around each other. I think there's real beauty in it, and we're sort of showcasing that to the younger ones as well." Cormach said.

Jye Cardona (Kungarakan, Bardi, Bunarugumm) and Darren Damaso (Larrakia, Malak Malak, Yanyuwa) are part of this movement, driving another NFP, Brother to Another, which has been supported by Ngarrimili, originally through auspicing the Bright Moon Trust funding while they were waiting for charity status. Brother To Another is achieving positive outcomes for young Indigenous men, especially ones caught in the life-threatening confines of the youth justice system.

Jye founded the organisation after volunteering within the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre's difficult B-Block, where First Nations inmates told him they lacked Indigenous mentors, case workers or safe spaces where they could feel welcome. It was those inmates who came up with the foundation's name, Brother to Another.

Darren said Brother To Another, lacking any real support from the NT's Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, is now supported by several major trusts and foundations, including Bright Moon, the Paul Ramsay Foundation and the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF). It has gained momentum inside and outside the walls of Don Dale, supporting young men and their families to interact with community safely, on land and sea in the NT.

Neal Harvey TFFF's CEO, said:

“**Jye is a visionary with lived experience of the issues that need addressing. He is a remarkable young man and has set out to do something very difficult, in challenging circumstances. He is certainly deserving of our support.**

Jye is trying to turn the lives of young, Indigenous incarcerated boys around so they feel loved and valued, and see a place for themselves in society. That's an intergenerational goal but Indigenous youths are over-represented in our detention facilities and that simply has to change.”

Brother To Another is connecting young Indigenous men with their culture, language and purpose, while also providing a rented but important community space in the Darwin suburb of Winnellie. It was where three generations of some families turned up to reflect and support each other in the challenging wake of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum. The future aim is for Brother To Another to own some land and infrastructure and to create self-determination and a lasting impact for the community.

“We work from a cultural determinants of health framework that connects young people and families to Country, family, kinship, ancestors, spirituality, and physical and mental wellbeing,” said Darren. “Working off that, we're able to attack the problem from a strength-based perspective.

“Historically for a long time now, it's always been, 'What's the problem with Aboriginal people?' We're the sickest, we're the hardest done by, we're the most incarcerated. So, just flipping that and making it a strength-based approach has been really, really good.”

Top and bottom right
Participants in Brother To Another programs, connecting with Country and (below) their cultural heritage painting the Aboriginal flag.



'You know what you're doing': Cultural knowledge was key to Kimberley cyclone recovery grant



Above
Perth Indigenous leader Kim Collard

In early 2023, Western Australia's Kimberley region was battered by ex-tropical Cyclone Ellie, with damage to property and infrastructure isolating already vulnerable communities. Here, we learn how the Fremantle Foundation and The Bibbulmun Fund worked with local community leaders to ensure support made it to the right people and places.

Perth Indigenous leader Kim Collard had worked on plenty of projects in his time in philanthropy, but even he was shocked by the impact of the cyclone and flooding.

The Fitzroy River had reached its highest levels on record, peaking at 14.23 metres at Fitzroy Crossing on 4 January 2023, isolating the town and nearby communities. More than 200 people were evacuated from areas throughout the Fitzroy Valley. The Great Northern Highway Bridge at Fitzroy Crossing was damaged beyond repair and road transport had to be rerouted, while a barge and low-level floodway solutions were implemented.

"The Fitzroy River was so flooded that the volume of water in the region was 10 times that of Sydney harbour – that gives an indication of how significant it was," Kim said.

Kim, a Ballardong-Wilman man, established The Bibbulmun Fund in 2013. The fund is the not-for-profit arm of his businesses Kulbaradi Pty Ltd and Kooya, which are both designed to give back to the Aboriginal community across Australia. The fund is held in trust by the Fremantle Foundation.

Stu MacLeod is the CEO of the Fremantle Foundation, which was formed in 2010. The Foundation manages \$6.2 million in donated funds, and represents donors and projects throughout Western Australia. The foundation launched the WA Relief and Recovery Fund in 2020 with an initial focus on pandemic support.

Sue Stepatschuk, then with the Fremantle Foundation, identified the need in the flood-affected communities. Using funds provided by a philanthropic organisation, Sue reached out to Kim as a partner to channel the funds and help identify the best granting opportunities.

Sue and Kim travelled the 2,370km from Perth to the Kimberley region in May to visit the flood-affected communities. They also met local leaders to identify projects and understand where money was needed.

"Kim's connections meant we were able to set up phone calls to be invited on to Country and to know who to meet," Stu said. "They spent three days understanding the lay of the land and what the community wanted."

"The projects were community led and the consultation was done in person, with respect, and with the understanding the community would be leading decisions. It was interesting that the majority of projects we ended up supporting had not been on our radar from our research in Perth – the understanding on the ground is so different to what you find online."

Kim said it was heartening that a philanthropic organisation recognised the value of The Bibbulmun Fund's cultural connections and grassroots approach.

Kim Collard says:

"The philanthropic foundation said, 'You know what you're doing, let's not reinvent the wheel'. We visited three communities, spoke with key leaders and the heads of organisations. They said they needed trailers, mini excavators and bobcats. The money for that side of things was in their hands within days."

Right
The Bibbulmun Fund played a key role in supporting locals to obtain work on the construction of the new Fitzroy River Bridge, which opened to traffic in October 2023, ahead of schedule

Below
Kim Collard and Stu MacLeod, from the Fremantle Foundation, accepting the First Nations Philanthropy Award 2024



Now, in the time since the cyclone, The Bibbulmun Fund is continuing to work with the communities on recovery and resilience-building. Some funds are still to be distributed, while other projects have included:

- \$90,000 for the Foundation for indigenous Sustainable Health to buy an all-terrain caravan for staff quarters and mobile office
- \$65,000 to the jobs and training organisation Yanunijarra Aboriginal Corporation for new and replacement equipment
- \$90,000 to the Central Kimberley Football League to reactivate the popular competition
- \$90,000 to Gurama Yani U to support pathways to sustainable employment and capability building.

Funds also went towards one of the most significant healing events, the 2023 Yajilarra Festival, which prioritised reconnection with kin and rebuilding. The festival was held over two days in July 2023 in sports grounds in Fitzroy Crossing, as the floods had washed away the sand banks at Danggu (Geikie Gorge) National Park that staged the inaugural event in 2021.

An evaluation report written by Dr Kathryn Thorburn included quotes from some of the performers, including the Bunuba Wiyi Choir, which comprises mainly descendants of Stolen Generation Bunuba people.

"After we sang last night, we were all on high, none of us could sleep, we all sat up and looked at the stars, thanking our ancestors, grateful for everything that has happened," one choir member said.



Kim's enduring commitment to Aboriginal communities has been recognised with a number of significant awards this year. In April, the Bibbulmun Fund and WA Relief and Recovery Fund/Fremantle Foundation received the First Nations Philanthropy Award at the 2024 Australian Philanthropy Awards and in June, Kim was named West Australian of the Year 2024 – Aboriginal Award. He was recently named as 2024's National Elder of the Year at the NAIDOC Awards.

He said he is grateful for the awards and hope they shine a light on the fact that only 0.5% of charitable funding goes into Aboriginal projects in Australia.

"I want to spend the rest of my life increasing that bucket of money," Kim said. "And ultimately, I want The Bibbulmun Fund to be managed, funded and distributed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people."

Project Independence

How home ownership for people with a disability unlocks freedom



Above
Glenn, Ehren and Amelda Keys at Ehren's home in Project Independence Phillip, Canberra

Photo by:
Sithixay Ditthavong,
Canberra Times

Innovation is so often driven by the insights and passion that come from personal experience and this is the case for Glenn Keys AO and the not-for-profit social enterprise Project Independence. The affordable housing provider was established with philanthropic support and is dedicated to helping people with intellectual disabilities achieve the goal that every individual deserves – the pride and security of home ownership and independent living. The impacts extend beyond bricks and mortar, and Project Independence is an inspiring example of what can be achieved when we reimagine what's possible.

Glenn is the Founder and Executive Chairman of Canberra-based Aspen Medical, one of the world's leading providers of outsourced healthcare solutions. So, what would drive Glenn to spend up to 30% of his week volunteering with Project Independence, an innovative social housing provider?

Glenn and his wife Amelda (Mel) have three children including Ehren, 30, who has Down Syndrome. About 15 years ago, when Glenn and Mel were thinking about future housing options for Ehren, they learnt that a good quality disability housing project in Canberra had a waiting list of 280 for just six rooms. Glenn decided to embark on a social housing project himself, thinking that they would build to rent out.

Then came a conversation with Ehren during the knock-down rebuild of the family home.

"I asked Ehren: 'Why are you so busy you can't unpack a box?' And he said, 'I'm designing the house I want to buy when I leave home,'

"That was a bit of a slap in the face," said Glenn.

"I had assumed Ehren's older sister and younger brother would buy homes, but I had never considered that an option for Ehren.

"He was a victim of my unconscious bias."

Inspired by Ehren's view of the need for a housing model which incorporated the potential of home ownership, Glenn had the idea of Project Independence.

"We had already formed a committee and I said to them: 'Let's assume ownership is possible,'" said Glenn.

Fast-forward 12 years and Project Independence is now the only home ownership model in Australia for people with an intellectual disability.

Project Independence now has 20 homes in the north of Canberra and 10 on the south side. A project is underway in Melbourne to redevelop a site to create 10 new homes, and a development of 10 homes has just been approved in Sydney.

Right, top to bottom
Residents of Project Independence, Sophie, Campbell and Aimee

So how does it work?

The Project Independence model supports people with an intellectual disability to become more independent. The approach enables people to buy their own home, which is designed in a community environment that empowers them to step into an independent life, utilising Supported Decision Making to help them grow their capability to truly live independently.

"Residents can stay for as short or long a period as they like and can sell with their equity returned," said Glenn.

"One of the most joyful parts of Project Independence is that residents decorate their homes as they choose – it's such a natural expression of self.

"I was showing around a prospective resident – Lee – who said: 'Now I get to pick my curtains. I just want some really nice curtains.' Lee had lived in a group home for 38 years prior to moving into Project Independence."

Glenn explained that they have also seen excellent employment outcomes for the majority of the residents.

"When we first opened in the north of Canberra, four out of 20 residents had a job. Now 18 of 20 have a job, with the vast majority on award wages."

So, what's next for Project Independence?

"We want to expand the model to include housing solutions for other disadvantaged groups such as older women without super or savings, women and families escaping family violence, and homeless veterans," said Glenn. "All these groups are disproportionately over-represented in homelessness."

"The Project Independence model is unique, proven, scalable and shovel ready, and a testament to the philanthropic support of individuals, community, business and government."



The gift of equity in education— a Fogarty EDvance case study

Right
Megan Enders,
CEO of the Fogarty
Foundation and Founding
Director of EDvance

Overleaf
A demonstration class
during the EDvance
Teaching Intensives.

The Fogarty Foundation is committed to improving access to high-quality education to all young people in its geographic scope. The broader aim is to create prosperous societies. The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has provided case study insights here from its Advancing Education funder resource, which looks at the long-term impact for students from improving school leadership capability through quality training.

In 2012, the Fogarty Foundation founded EDvance to support schools across Western Australia with students who were struggling with their learning or at-risk of missing out on educational attainment. They looked at some of the challenges that make it difficult for students to achieve learning outcomes, including factors such as parent or guardian educational achievements or experiences, household income and community wealth, as well as historic and cultural factors that impact First Nations students or students from a cultural or linguistically diverse background.

The Fogarty Foundation considered if the corporate sector technique of improving leadership quality to lift business outcomes could be effective to bring about change in schools. The Foundation created a program to build leadership capability in schools over three years, drawing on knowledge, resources and tools from education, business, philanthropy and community groups. The program delivery was designed to be distinct over each of the years.

Year 1 focuses on developing school leaders' knowledge of tools for leading change, including their understanding of the education evidence base; deciding a strategic direction based upon evidence of existing outcomes and school culture; creating a school improvement plan and starting to trial changes. Year 2 continues implementation of the school improvement plan, connects leaders with other schools for peer-learning and support, and evaluates and adapts the plan based on areas showing promise. Year 3 sees whole schools embed and scale effective practice, set a future direction and determine ways to sustain improvement beyond the program.

Megan Enders, CEO of the Fogarty Foundation (and Founding Director of EDvance), said: "While the impact of teachers on children in classes can be significant, schools' leaders set the strategy, tone and direction of their school and have a huge influence on its culture. We did a lot of research on best practice around the world to determine the best lever to help schools improve outcomes. The conclusion was very much that the leader is pivotal in socialising innovation across the whole school community and in creating the right environment for quality teaching to occur."

Story continues →





Right and below
School leaders participating in the Fogarty EDvance School Improvement Program workshops



“The design of our program is very much about on-the-job learning, so that the lessons school leadership teams take away can be immediately applied into practice at their school. This makes the learning deeper and more impactful,” she said.

“The school leaders develop their own solutions as a collective process that is scaffolded with the guidance of an experienced mentor who is assigned to the school for the whole three years. They get constant feedback and coaching as they implement the change plan.”

Since its inception, 11 cohorts have participated in the program. This has amounted to more than 500 school leaders supporting 68,000+ students at 148 schools across WA. Fogarty EDvance now works with Knowledge Society to deliver the program. While cohort and participant numbers increase year on year, the program is able to be iterated and finessed to allow for continued use of proven methods, while addressing different schools’ individual priorities.

The impact of the program has been significant. All schools have recorded improvements, including across important learning enablers, such as student attendance and behaviour.

In Cohort 6, for example, all schools saw improvements, with approximately 50% making a significant improvement to student academic outcomes. In relation to the seventh cohort, NAPLAN areas at or above expected performance increased from 48% to 65% between 2019 to 2021. Further impact data can be found on Fogarty EDvance’s website.

The program has shown that, at times, seeking proven ideas for lifting quality from areas outside of the system you want to change can be a useful way to identify elements of promise, to then transfer and trial in new settings.

Megan Enders says

“

While it’s been focused in WA on schools in communities with social and economic challenges, it’s a transferrable program that’s been designed to be used by any school. We think it has a lot of merit more generally as a quality approach to leading a school.”

“We’ve been delighted with the outcomes,” said Megan. “They’ve really proven themselves over time. The results speak to the considered design of the program in that it’s highly structured, standardised and based on best practice, but also able to be tailored to individual context and place,” said Megan.

She said that the sector faces a real challenge in the increased transience in school leaders since COVID and that the Fogarty Foundation has lobbied the state Department of Education to review its promotion and remuneration processes to encourage continuity of leadership at schools, given the time it takes to achieve – and sustain – improvements in student outcomes. The program has tried to mitigate this by engaging whole leadership teams and making it a requirement to create a second 3-year strategy at the end of the program so any incoming school leaders have a roadmap. An alumni program also allows a new leaders to a participant school to complete the program and staff to attend refresher programs.

Megan said that anecdotally EDvance schools are known within the state education department as those that perform well in their regular reviews. “We’ve almost become a sub-system within the system. The department has been a funding partner throughout and continues to support what we’re doing. It sees that we’re fulfilling a valuable area of professional development for the system. A school that’s completed the EDvance program is generally regarded as one that’s running a tight ship and focused on the right things.

Collaborative conservation: The story of Ned's Forest



Above
Keen nature photographer Ned McNaughton, the teenager who was instrumental in helping preserve an environmentally significant parcel of land near Meringo in NSW

Left
A barking owl, one of the threatened species whose habitat was preserved

Photo thanks to Ned McNaughton

This is a story of a teenager's crucial role in saving a precious parcel of remnant coastal bushland, the power of collaboration and the different skills and experience that helped it happen.

In 2022, then 15-year-old Ned McNaughton, a keen nature photographer, took his camera to the border of a 69-acre large parcel of land in Meringo on the NSW south coast, a few kilometres from his home. "I go out into the bush and look for animals to photograph," he said. "I love it. I'd heard from a man who lived in the area that there were powerful owls there, so I went looking and found them."

Two weeks after this sighting, Ned had another sighting, this one less positive. One evening he noticed a clearing being prepared for sub-division with tags marking trees to be saved from the chainsaw.

Ned mentioned his concern to his mother, Fleur, who in turn told a family friend at Local Land Services. Word spread among the community, which is where his neighbours Julie and Mark Mills enter the picture. Julie and Mark, passionate about maintaining biodiversity, had become increasingly concerned that urban sprawl was destroying the environment in the region.

Mark, Julie, Ned and Professor David Lindenmayer, a world-leading expert from the Australian National University in forest ecology and biodiversity conservation, visited the property.

They found patches of old-growth habitat including 200-year-old hollow-bearing trees supporting populations of threatened and critically endangered species, including southern greater gliders, powerful owls, yellow-bellied gliders, glossy black cockatoos and brush-tailed phascogales. The Black Summer fires of 2020 had destroyed vast tracts of old-growth bushland in the area.

When Professor Lindenmayer confirmed to Julie and Mark that there was "an extraordinary range of species there", they decided to provide the funds to purchase the property.

At around this time, Julie was talking with passionate environmentalist Jim Phillipson at an event. She said that the coast of Australia was being cut up into decreasingly small parcels and there was no philanthropic model for communities to come together to purchase land that was significant in its biodiversity.

"Jim said, 'Actually I'm developing one of those'. And it led from there," said Julie.

Biodiversity Legacy, a not-for-profit (NFP) launched by Jim, was engaged for support with due diligence on purchasing the property and protecting it in perpetuity. Once the property's title was transferred into a safe ownership structure, the land was saved from development.

Julie and Mark named it Ned's Forest.

It was due recognition for the teenager who had started a series of actions involving a coalition of individuals and organisations, all of a like mind to protect the biodiversity of the area. "I'm super proud to have my name associated with something so good," Ned said of the forest's name.

"Habitat fragmentation has become such an issue in this area and conserving small parcels of land is so doable when there are funds to do it. This is what people should be investing their money into." Ned said the contribution by Julie and Mark was "so generous of them".

Story continues →

Ned's actions – which became the subject of a story in the local paper and the ABC – underline the importance of raising awareness and the effectiveness of doing this strategically. "Talking about it, starting conversations is the biggest thing, because otherwise nothing happens," Ned said.

Jim and his wife, Heather, are Gippsland locals, who have been deeply involved in environmental protection for many years. In 2017, they set up the Rendere Trust and associated entities, such as Biodiversity Legacy, which provides funding and strategic advice to eco start-ups and environmental organisations.

Through these entities, funds have been directed into peak environmental bodies and local NFPs to support a range of biodiversity programs in Gippsland. The role of the Rendere Trust, Jim said, is to provide core funding for NFPs to do "the heavy lifting" by empowering them to operate sustainably and flexibly. This ensures they can achieve long-term conservation goals and respond effectively to emerging challenges.

It's work that is crucial. "We've seen the destruction and loss of the environment and that's moved us from being takers – if you can use that word – to givers," Jim said. "We realised that unless we start to give back to the environment, then our kids and their kids and their kids will have far less environment. And that's the case all over the world."

Rendere's model is entirely collaborative, aligning the power of fundraising with the knowledge and energy of organisations on the ground working. Rendere is also the visionary behind several parallel initiatives, including Nature Impact Collective (NIC), a group of philanthropists seeking to collaborate on biodiversity projects. In 2024 NIC dispensed \$1.35 million to five NFPs across Australia and in 2025 anticipates doubling that figure.

Manager of Networks and Relationship at Biodiversity Legacy, Loulou Gebbie said:

“What we're doing is transferring land into what we loosely say is 'common land'. It's a transfer of land that is not an investment or a way to accumulate wealth, but something for everyone.”

It's an innovative model that is gaining support at local government level. In 2018 the Bass Coast Shire in Victoria, having worked with Biodiversity Legacy, launched the Bass Coast Biodiversity Biolinks Plan to connect remnant patches of indigenous vegetation using biolinks or wildlife corridors.

It showed that the model could be replicated and adopted by governments.

Loulou said Ned's role underscored that everyone can contribute to conservation in different ways. "Ned is such a great example of a passionate young person who has a voice and is able to enact change without necessarily having the financial resources to do so, but instead by speaking up, connecting and acting in partnership with generations to raise awareness and draw on collective skills and resources."

Biodiversity Legacy prioritises transparency with First Nations groups BDL land transfer projects. "BDL wants to support and empower First Nations voices and organisations and we think the best way we can do this is to share as much as possible from what we have learned by developing pathways for perpetual land protection. Of course, for any land returning to First Nations groups, this needs to be 100% First Nations-led."

Two years on, that conversation between Ned and his mother has now been heard around the country.



Right
Loulou Gebbie,
Network and Relationships,
Biodiversity Legacy

Right
Conservationist Jim
Phillipson, Rendere Trust
Founder and Strategic
Director, who launched
Biodiversity Legacy

Below
Endangered greater gliders
shelter in the ancient trees
of Ned's Forest, a symbol of
its rich biodiversity

Photo thanks to
Ned McNaughton



Road to success: Innovative MusicNT puts Territory musicians on the map



Above, top
Mark Smith, Executive Director of MusicNT and (below) Catherine Satour, founding member of Desert Divas and now also Vice Chair of MusicNT.

Far right
Pelé Savage performing at the Saltwater Divas event. Photo by Shauna Upton

If you're driving the 1,500km from Alice Springs to Darwin, you'll want lots of music to keep you company and you'll need to stop for food and fuel. Cue the supremely innovative idea to scan QR codes at roadhouses en route connecting you to digital playlists of contemporary and predominantly Indigenous recording artists from each region you're travelling through.

Your Soundtrack to the Outback is just one of the exciting programs produced by the not-for-profit and peak body MusicNT, whose mission is to grow the Territory's industry – and share the powerhouse creativity of its artists across Australia.

"The goal was to encourage people to invest in the local communities with those businesses and to create a personal connection to the music and experience of being in the Territory," said Mark Smith, who has been Executive Director of MusicNT for nearly two decades.

"Music from the Territory is taking over stages across the world. Reflecting thousands of years of history, as well as the melting pot of cultures that is the Top End, NT music is the heartbeat of the nation. The country is just catching up to how great the songs and musicians of the NT are!" he said.

MusicNT supports 3,500 members with programs, events, workshops, mentoring, recording opportunities and industry contacts. The organisation has received a three-year operational grant from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF), which Mark said is a gamechanger. "I wish more funders would do it. It's the missing link," he said. "It's given us validation as an organisation, protection from the perils of the live event industry and increasingly fraught government funding model and freedom to grow," he said.

"It still feels as if there are new ideas, opportunities and fresh audiences out there to discover NT music. I'm passionate about making a difference in whichever way we can."

The relationship with the TFFF has developed over years. Foundation Trustees Tim Fairfax AC and Gina Fairfax AC recognised MusicNT's

leadership over ten years ago, and supported the early growth of its Sista Sounds program. Then there was a one-off capacity building grant co-funded with the Sidney Myer Fund, which is when Mark first met TFFF's now CEO, Neal Harvey. A good while later, Mark was put in contact with TFFF Program Manager, Hannah Barr, and they kept in touch with "regular conversations but they weren't transactional".

"They were about where the organisation was, what we were up to, what the plans were for the future. Those conversations slowly coalesced into a more formal discussion around this funding opportunity," he said. "MusicNT had developed over that time too, and suddenly it was the 'right time, right place', even though that had taken years to evolve," said Mark.

"It's a critical time to receive operational funding because we're in the middle of doubling our staff. It also means you can achieve something over the long term. It's a really important opportunity," said Mark.

MusicNT runs live events, including the Bush Bands Bash, in which 160 bands have performed, and the National Indigenous Music Awards, which celebrates its 20th year in 2024. And 150 women have benefitted from the women's programs, Sister Sounds and Desert Divas. "The beauty of Desert Divas is that a number of the women who went through it are now employed to deliver the program," said Mark.

"MusicNT's overarching ethos is equity of access, so I hope this funding will help us continue to be relevant for musicians regardless of whether they're in a remote community or in Darwin," said Mark.

Story continues →



Right
The Bush Bands Bash
Photo by Oliver Eclipse

Below
The Bush Bands
Bash Papunya
Photo by Renae Saxby



Through the TFFF, Tim and Gina Fairfax have assisted Queensland and Northern Territory communities with more than \$70 million since 2008. Like MusicNT, the Foundation's mission is to ensure people living in rural, regional, and remote geographies have the same opportunities as those in urban areas. The TFFF funds organisations and endeavours which strengthen connection, resilience, and leadership, and it favours multi-year, operating support in recognition that this is the greatest need for many for-purpose organisations. "That means," said Neal, "finding good people doing good work, and resourcing them to get on with it."

"Mark is absolutely one of those people. It's been incredible to watch that organisation's growth in his time. Mark is incredibly well-connected across northern Australia, understands community needs and is trusted by the communities, which make MusicNT an ideal partner for TFFF," he said.

"There's strong evidence that arts and culture are key drivers of social cohesion and wellbeing. But touring and freight is expensive, insurances are needed – all these challenges make it difficult for metro arts organisations to get out to the regions. Tim and Gina are interested in supporting those organisations in the regions already doing the great work," said Neal.

"If Australia is to become the cultural powerhouse we want to be, we want our art and our artists, particularly First Nations artists, to be celebrated and loved. That's going to require funding and support."

"It's very difficult for future generations to become what they can't see. MusicNT provides mission-critical leadership and opportunity for Territory communities," said Neal. Building the capacity of regional organisations is on the agenda and the first Regional & Remote Music Summit is being held in Darwin in 2024.

Mark Smith said

“

The Territory has a vision of dramatically increasing its population and re-establishing itself in the post-COVID era. Our argument is that our significant point of difference is the creative and cultural element – and our artists. Tourism and the government have an opportunity to really invest locally and say, 'This is our story and this is the reason people will travel to the Territory'."

Catherine Satour, a singer-songwriter from Alice Springs, who is Arrernte, Pertame and Mirning, grew up watching her father Bunna Lawrie and his legendary band Coloured Stone. She was a founding member of Desert Divas and is now also Vice Chair of MusicNT. She said the local music industry was very male-dominated when she was an emerging artist with little opportunities for women, but she has helped change that. "MusicNT provided me with my first professionally produced track when I was starting out, which was amazing and helped open doors. I had the most incredible support, and they've been along for the whole journey," she said.

They released the first-ever indigenous women compilation album, Desert Divas Vol 1, featuring 10 artists from multiple language groups. Now, she said, she loves working with up-and-coming artists who have big ambitions and working towards developing opportunities to showcase. "It's all about supporting the development of the industry and introducing to wider audiences the rich diversity of musicians in the Territory," she said.

She said the impact is broader than just the music. "I'm like the 'Mum Diva' now. There are sometimes complex issues in relation to community and culture, outside of the 'program'. It's all about providing holistic support, because when you see those women doing well and getting gigs being up on stage and getting paid for their music works and phenomenal songs are being made, it's all so worthwhile," she said. "We've got to keep providing that space."

Mark has more innovative programs up his sleeves. He's working on a loyalty program for live events to help rebuild the audience base severely dented by COVID. And the next stage of Your Soundtrack to the Outback will incorporate 'drive yourself' music trails offering a variety of curated musical experiences, such as concerts or workshops.

Youth voices add 'true authenticity' to foundation's grantmaking



Above
Jenny Wheatley,
Vincent Fairfax Family
Foundation CEO

The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) is a multi-generational family foundation focused on its strategy of Backing Young People. Here, we explore the foundation's establishment of an advisory group to assess if grant applications pass the 'youth pub test'. The initiative puts participatory grantmaking into lively practice in a bid to deliver better outcomes by incorporating community voices into the funding process.

Harrison Garlick didn't know much about philanthropy a few years ago. A high school student in country Victoria, he was passionate about the environment, surfing and hiking, and looking forward to university.

Fast forward to 2024, and Harrison is in his second year of studies and as a Youth Advisory Group member at the Foundation, has added philanthropy to his list of passions, and is even thinking about starting his own not-for-profit one day.

VFFF's Backing the Future initiative began in 2022. The program supports individual changemakers to pilot, test and accelerate early-stage initiatives focused on rural and regional young people in New South Wales and Queensland.

"Our focus on young people aligns with the history and values of the Foundation," VFFF CEO Jenny Wheatley said. "When we launched the Backing Young People strategy, we committed to finding ways to actively listen and respond to the voices of young people."

The foundation established the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to incorporate young people into the decision-making process for Backing the Future. When setting up the group, the foundation established three key principles:

- YAG members would be paid for their time and insights
- VFFF would provide professional development to build members' capacity as advisers
- the YAG should have a clear role and set responsibilities that genuinely influence the foundation's work.

The first YAG, made up of seven young people, was selected through an open call-out for candidates aged 18 to 30 living in or connected to regional Australia. The foundation is now in its second YAG iteration.

The key role of the YAG is to shortlist Backing the Future applications, drawing on their experiences as young people from the bush. The group's shortlist and comments are passed on to the VFFF Grants Committee, which decides on the final grant recipients. Across their two-year term, YAG members also help to design, monitor and improve the foundation's approach to Backing Young People.

Story continues →

Right
The VFFF inaugural Youth Advisory Group (l-r) Charlotte Watson, Florance McGufficke, Elise Lane, Harrison Garlick, Steph Pearson, James Atkinson and Andrew Taukolo

Below and overleaf
Participants in a series of hip-hop production workshops called Hometown in regional NSW centres run by music producer Bevis Masson-Leach, aka Papertoy, with Sadini Handunnetti. They were funded by VFFF's Backing the Future initiative.





Right and below
Participants in Hometown.
‘Having young people
involved in assessing
the grants gives it true
authenticity,’ said Bevis
Masson-Leach

Overleaf
Bevis Masson-Leach,
aka Papertoy, running the
hip-hop workshops with
young participants



“The committee takes the YAG’s comments seriously,” said Program Manager Natalie Buckett. “In a way, the YAG provides a ‘youth pub test’ for applications, considering whether projects genuinely resonate with young people.”

Harrison grew up in South Gippsland in Victoria on the doorstep of the stunning Wilsons Promontory National Park.

As a child and teenager, he developed a connection to and an appreciation for rural Australia – and saw the disadvantages and opportunities for youth in the regions compared to those who live in the cities.

Harrison, who is now studying a Bachelor of Natural Environment and Wilderness at the University of Tasmania, first learnt about the YAG as a high school student and decided to put up his hand.

“It has shown me a different way to look at things,” Harrison said. “All the YAG members have different experiences, so we consider grant applications from a range of perspectives. We know that VFFF values the group and respects our perspectives.”

“It has made me think about how cool it would be to start a small not-for-profit one day, something that benefits youth.”

NSW music producer Bevis Masson-Leach, also known as Papertoy, was one of VFFF’s Cohort One Backing the Future grant recipients. He received grant funding for he and Sadini Handunnetti’s project, called Hometown, which was a pilot series of hip-hop writing and production workshops held in four regional towns.

Natalie Buckett said

“
One great insight was from a group member who said that being in the YAG helped him realise that change-making could be about supporting others as well as running an organisation himself.

He had learned about the different levers of change in the nonprofit world – and that was really lovely to hear.”

“Having young people involved in assessing the grants gives it true authenticity,” Papertoy said. “They could see that the workshops were something young people could really benefit from, both from a creative perspective or just to have some fun and meet like-minded people.”

The first workshops, which featured homegrown artists, were so successful that Papertoy has now received NSW Government funding for a second series.

“The workshops let participants express themselves in inspiring creative sessions, and sometimes that has almost been therapy for them, especially for young people who have come from difficult situations,” Papertoy said.

Natalie said that VFFF had recently held a YAG reflection meeting as some members were nearing the end of their term. “We asked them to look back on their journey so we could gather their feedback and make our next group even stronger,” she said. “Members reflected on how the experience has shaped their ongoing interest in the community and philanthropic sectors.”



'We're developing future champions of theatre'



Above
Criena Gehrke,
Executive Director,
Queensland Theatre

A unique Queensland Theatre Company program for young people is sparking young people's interest in careers in the arts and also building the audiences and champions of the future, thanks to generous philanthropic support.

The Scene Project started in 2013, with professional artists running programs at eight schools in Brisbane. Eleven years on, students at more than 120 schools, with 60% throughout regional Queensland, are reaping the benefits of the program.

Queensland Theatre Executive Director Criena Gehrke said Scene, the company's largest educational offering, encourages drama students to take part in the creative process from planning and writing to rehearsal and presentation.

"Each year more than 6,000 young people engage in drama programs and activities with Queensland Theatre," Criena said. "The Scene Project is at the heart of our education offerings for young people, designed to build connection, critical and creative thinking, wellbeing and interpersonal skills using the medium of participation in theatre."

"The project, which started as a small metropolitan initiative to engage schools and communities regardless of location, is leading the way nationally," Criena said.

Since 2013, Queensland Theatre has commissioned a playwright to pen a new work each year. Participating students are then asked to create their own 15-minute performance piece based on the script, in a way that resonates with them and their community. During the creation phase, Queensland Theatre artists visit schools to run workshops supporting students and their educators in crafting their performance.

Clusters of several schools then come together in their local performing arts centre to perform alongside their peers in events called Outcome Days. Students perform and then watch each other's work before a company of professional artists from Queensland Theatre perform the whole piece, followed by a celebration and forum with all participants.

Criena said generous grants are enabling the initiative to evolve and grow.

"The costs sit outside traditional education and touring funding mechanisms, so philanthropic partnership is critical for regional access and growth," she said. "While all ways of engaging with the arts are positive, the great thing about The Scene Project is that it is not a competitive environment – instead, it brings young people together for the unique experience and to find their 'tribe'."

"Peer learning, skill sharing, and community connection is a critical benefit to the participants, particularly those who find like-minded people in an often isolated community. It also builds the connection to their local performing arts centre, removing any perceived barriers."

The Tim Fairfax Family Foundation (TFFF) initially provided \$1.2 million over five years to prioritise growth and capacity-building in regional areas. Rekindle Foundation has now committed \$500,000 over five years.

Story continues →

The 2023 Scene Project included:

- 116 participating schools
- 1,616 participating students
- 251 teachers had professional development
- 68 artists had multiple engagements
- 6,326 education resources distributed

Right
Students from the
Rockhampton region
Scene Project



Right
Director and actor
James Cook, one of
the directors of
Rekindle Foundation

Criena said the support was incredible.

"We believe that much of the success comes from a shared set of values and a true belief in the importance of theatre and storytelling, especially to young people," she said.

"Without their generous support we couldn't have expanded the way that we have – it enables us to keep the program affordable for schools and to take it all over our state. I'm proud to say that Queensland – and Queensland Theatre – is leading in our engagement with communities and schools."

While the program can be a stepping stone into a career in the arts for some participants, Criena believes it is also creating the next generation of audiences.

"We're developing future champions of theatre and showing them that everybody deserves to have access to amazing theatre, not just those in the cities," she said.

Director and actor James Cook is one of the directors of Rekindle Foundation, which is based in NSW. Rekindle has three key focuses: the environment, affordable community housing and the arts.

"When we launched into philanthropy, we sat down as a family and discussed our values," he said. "I've been involved in the arts since I was a teenager and it was important to me to find something in that space, especially in supporting youth and education in the arts."

James is keen to develop strong relationships and follow The Scene Project's progress.

Director and actor James Cook said:

“
We're interested in the discipline but also in how young people can develop skills in connecting, collaborating, teamwork, expressing themselves, and building empathy and resilience, especially the youth from regional areas.”

"Too often theatre and the arts can be inaccessible to people outside metropolitan areas. It can sometimes seem inaccessible to people in metropolitan areas, so anything we can do to help fling open the doors to the arts is really important."

James said that philanthropy was more important to the arts than it had ever been, given that the area is often being pulled from the education system.

"I feel people realised the importance of live performance during the pandemic – people really wanted it back when it was taken away," he said.

Felicity Campbell, 16, from Rockhampton, is an aspiring writer and director. The Year 11 student, who loves everything to do with the arts, was thrilled to have the chance to take part in The Scene Project in 2023. "We were given a script, and our job was to rework then piece it all together again and we had Queensland Theatre performers talk to us about the project and work through one of the scenes," she said.

"It opened a whole new world, and it was great to meet students from other parts of Queensland. I really want to do something in the arts when I leave school."

Felicity's mother Tess said the program had boosted Felicity's confidence, and in more than just performing.

"It was incredible to see how they all worked together, listened to each other, and had a real camaraderie."



Gender-diverse healthcare program gets 'phenomenal response'



Above
Children by Choice
CEO Jill McKay

Inclusion is about being seen and acknowledged. When striking posters for a project that aimed to improve the accessibility of quality reproductive health resources for non-binary and transgender audiences were placed in Queensland clinics by not-for-profit Children by Choice, that phrase took on a joyful meaning.

"We loved the posters you left us and a client to the clinic saw them and was so excited because they had been involved in the photo shoot!" reported a healthcare worker in a Cairns Sexual and Reproductive Health Service. "It was a beautiful moment of recognition and belonging for both the client and our staff. There were tears. The posters are all very proudly displayed in our clinic rooms now."

This is just one of many stories about the project that Children by Choice CEO Jill McKay said has elicited a "phenomenal response".

In 2023, The John Christopher Pascoe Memorial Charitable Trust, a charitable trust of which Perpetual is Trustee, provided a grant of \$83,000 to Children by Choice, which is located in Queensland and provides free, unbiased sexual and reproductive health information to the community.

The funding went towards supporting a project that sought to educate and inform health professionals and gender diverse people about their pregnancy options and reproductive rights by co-designing a suite of resources.

It was launched at a critical time. Pervasive cis-heteronormative ideologies – the assumption that heterosexuality and being cisgender (a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth) are the norm – have resulted in transgender and gender-diverse people being alienated and disregarded from accessing Australia's healthcare. Many have become reluctant to consult healthcare professionals on their sexual and reproductive needs.

Children by Choice's vision is that people can freely and safely make their own, informed reproductive and sexual health choices without barriers.

This project, said Jill, aimed to "transform the way people see themselves as having a right to access pregnancy, reproductive and sexual health services".

The community for which the service is designed is one that sees a disproportionately high prevalence of adverse mental health and health outcomes, much of which is related directly to the stigma, prejudice, discrimination and abuse that many LGBTQ+ people experience. Through the project, Children by Choice has had resources to address some of the challenges of building trust within the LGBTQ+ community that stem from a history of discrimination.

There is need for change. "Research has shown there are pervasive binary gender norms inherent in the Australian healthcare system and that there is a perpetuating myth and a fear that gender-affirming medical care induces infertility and makes it more difficult for trans people to access contraception, pregnancy and abortion information and care," said Jill.

Seeking a range of perspectives from those with lived experience, the project has engaged stakeholders including Diverse Voices, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health, Open Doors, Headspace, WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention Association, QLD Health and True Relationships and Reproductive Health.

Jill said the project aimed to improve understanding of healthcare needs in the LGBTQ+ community. She said to date there has been a "very strict cis-gender healthcare approach". "For anyone who is queer or someone who doesn't identify as a male or female, getting access to reproductive and sexual health can be really challenging."

The project also sought to ensure that the information around pregnancy, sexual health, abortion and options available to trans and gender diverse individuals is non-stigmatising.

"In Australia and around the world, accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare has been stigmatised and unnecessarily so, particularly for the LGBTQ+ community," said Jill. "The stigma means people resist or don't get access to choice because they

are concerned and that has mental health effects. Stigma often connects to shame, fear, embarrassment, humiliation and perhaps a sense of judgementalism."

The project team researched trans and gender-diverse experiences to create accurate educational resources for LGBTQ+ communities and health professionals.

Jill said that a lack of education among healthcare providers can also lead to incorrect information being dispensed. "A trans person goes into a health care setting and the healthcare professional doesn't even want to have a conversation about their gender to explore what healthcare needs are for the person," she said.

"So, they are not getting access to the treatment they need or the health professional isn't offering or considering all options about reproductive health."

Healthcare professionals need to see "the whole person", she said. "The project is about, 'You can't be what you can't see'. We're raising that profile, so the community can see themselves and are validated, see that they are worthy and should expect quality healthcare."

She said the area has been underfunded by philanthropy because communities didn't always understand or acknowledge that the changing landscape meant that this community's needs were changing too. "This is an example of responding to a need in the community and being part of improving our healthcare for everyone," she says.

Jane Magor, National Manager, Philanthropy and Non-Profit Services at Perpetual, said Perpetual recognises that LGBTQ+ individuals

and communities have been underserved and supported by the philanthropy sector. "We recognise that when communities are under-invested in, they tend to become over-represented in poorer health and life outcomes," she said.

Organisations such as Children by Choice and its services were "a great way to address these inequalities facing LGBTQ+ communities and facilitate social change. Their expertise, and commitment to centring lived experience, provides significant insight into how investment from philanthropy can have a meaningful impact," she said.

The John Christopher Pascoe Memorial Charitable Trust was established by the will of the late John Christopher Pascoe, and its purpose is to support organisations in Queensland. The distributions from the Trust are determined as part of Perpetual's IMPACT Philanthropy Application Program.

Since 2013, the Trust has distributed almost \$1 million across various charitable organisations, sectors and towards prominent causes encompassing medical research, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, healthcare, social welfare, refugee and migrants, education and mental health.

A key aim of this project was to improve understanding. Jill McKay said: "When we expand that exposure and clarity around the diversity of all people, it invites more people into the conversation, and it tells people of all ages to expect quality healthcare.

"It promotes inclusion across our society. We want to move towards a society that is fair, accessible and equal for everyone."

Right
Resources to support an education campaign for health professionals around reproductive rights for gender diverse people



Taking impact to the next level



Above
Kathryn House AM,
Chair of the
management committee
of Impact100 SA

For Kathryn House AM, her dedication to giving started early in life.

“I grew up in the country where, if something needs doing, the community get together and do it – such as helping a farming family with a harvest. Plus, I had great role models in my family. To this day my uncle, who’s nearly 90, still mows lawns for the local town.”

“I was raised to be generous and contribute to the community. At school, I organised the World Vision 40-hour famine. I always say to people: I can’t remember how much we raised as a school, but I remember the incredible feeling I had gathering the group of people and doing something that was bigger than yourself.”

This feeling translated to Kathryn House leading many fundraisers for a variety of causes and her more than 20 years’ involvement with Catherine House, including time as chair of their Trust and now as Community Ambassador. Catherine House provides crisis, longer term accommodation and support services to women experiencing homelessness in South Australia. It is South Australia’s only homelessness and recovery service for women. (Sharing a sound-alike name with the for-purpose organisation caused some confusion when Kathryn House phoned Catherine House to make her first donation.)

When Kathryn first learnt about the Impact100 SA giving circle she knew she wanted to be involved. Today, Kathryn is Chair of the management committee of Impact100 SA.

When it started 10 years ago, Impact100 SA aimed to bring together at least 100 members who would each donate \$1,000. Last year it had 301 people participating and the group is on target to have even more in 2024. The contributions are pooled to make high impact grants to South Australian-based charities or organisations, based on the members voting on shortlisted pitches.

There are Impact100 groups across Australia, the first being set up in Western Australia after James Boyd learnt about the collective giving model during a research sabbatical to the US.

“We have a different theme each year, with members voting to select the theme – this year’s theme is ‘tackling inequality’. We then invite matching organisations to write an expression of interest. In the second stage we ask selected applicants to do a full application,” Kathryn said.

“The final voting happens on our awards night where we chose the organisations to receive our \$100,000 high impact grants following a seven-minute pitch. In 2023, two organisations received \$100,000 each and two other organisations got \$50,500 each.”

Sometimes it’s not simply a grant that the organisation receives.

Right
When it started 10 years ago, Impact100 SA aimed to bring together 100 members who would each donate \$1,000 for good causes – last year it had 301 people participating

Below
The Young Impact100 SA giving circle

Kathryn House says:

“In our early years we had a pitch from Kickstart for Kids and they wanted to buy a refrigerated food storage unit with their \$100,000 to transform the model of their breakfast program. But then, someone at the awards night said: ‘I’ve got these units in my warehouse – you can have them’. And someone else said: ‘I’m a refrigeration electrician, I’ll donate my time’. And someone else helped them with their governance. Plus, people volunteered with the organisation to drive the truck to the breakfast program and others volunteered serving breakfast.

That’s the power of telling your story.”



Philanthropy gets behind bid to revitalise regional journalism



Above
Nick Richardson,
Melbourne Press
Club CEO

Since leaving Philanthropy Australia as our former storyteller, Nick Richardson has made an interesting transition – not just to the role of Melbourne Press Club CEO, but to getting to grips with the grants system. The experience has led him to develop an innovative philanthropic partnership to support cadetships for school leavers from diverse regional communities to embark on journalism careers.

Nick frequently wrote stories in his time at Philanthropy Australia about the experience of philanthropists and not-for-profits (NFPs). After a working life spent largely in journalism, Nick said he found the terms of the grantmaking process uncomfortable. “I was wary of the binary notion of either seeking support or dispensing it. And then, when I changed jobs, I realised that I probably had to become a grantseeker and I wasn’t at all sure how to go about it,” he said.

As CEO of the Melbourne Press Club, a small NFP, Nick leads a member-based organisation that celebrates, advocates and supports journalists across Victoria. He was aware that philanthropy and journalism had a long association in the US, but less so in Australia.

“At a time when the old commercial model for journalism is broken, there is a desperate need to find more ways to sustain journalism’s essential role in a functioning democracy,” he said.

“This funding blind spot isn’t philanthropy’s fault. Journalists have this age-old cultural suspicion of money. In most instances, it’s a practised scepticism, based on the legitimate desire to separate the commercial from the editorial arms of their business. Once you accept that advertisements and editorial are fire and water, it’s no large jump to see philanthropic support for journalism as potentially compromising. But it’s not and should never be seen to be,” he said.

Nick had a conversation with resident Philanthropy Australia legend Pat Burke OAM about the issue and was introduced to the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation. Nick

had been aware of the Foundation, but as a grantseeker, he looked at it differently. The Foundation’s mission is to support lasting transformational change for disadvantaged children and young people. One of its funding priorities is to empower children and young people through quality education and pathways to employment, which prompted Nick to come up with a proposal.

Research from the Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) showed just how pervasive the closure of news publications has been in the past decade. PIJI’s surveys of the nation’s news deserts reveal dozens of communities losing their local news providers because of the difficulties of sustaining a print revenue stream in the digital age.

“And the problem was compelling in rural and regional areas, where many established titles had closed and those that remained were running much smaller newsrooms,” said Nick.

“This is, of course, a global problem that has yet to find a global solution. But what about a local plan, something that might help on the ground? What if we tried to support regional journalism by finding a way to help a local publisher employ more journalists? And what if we were able to give kids battling tough circumstances an opportunity at a job and a career?”

This was the point that Nick started to have constructive and insightful conversations with the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation. Nick had previously travelled to Shepparton and spoken to a range of people for one of Philanthropy Australia’s podcasts, including Amanda McCulloch, who later became the

Right
Kayla Jones, a Year 12 graduate from Greater Shepparton Secondary College, was the first recipient of the Melbourne Press Club’s Regional Journalism Fellowship program, funded by the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation



Far right
Anita Hopkins, CEO of the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation.



Executive Officer of the Greater Shepparton Foundation. He also knew of the McPherson Media Group based in the town, a family business that was stalwart of the Goulburn Valley through its range of publications, including The Shepparton News.

The Melbourne Press Club has Deductible Gift Recipient 1 status but isn’t a charity, which meant that it had to partner with a charity to apply for most grants. A collaborative philanthropic approach brought together the Melbourne Press Club, the Greater Shepparton Foundation and the Brian M Davis Foundation to create a unique opportunity that resulted in a successful grant.

Consequently, in early in 2024, the Greater Shepparton Foundation and the McPherson Media Group announced that Kayla Jones, a Year 12 graduate from Greater Shepparton Secondary College, was the first recipient of the Melbourne Press Club’s Regional Journalism Fellowship program, funded by the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation. She took up her post at The Shepparton News in March.

Anita Hopkins, CEO of the Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation, said: “The Regional Journalism Fellowship program fits our mission focus in two ways. One is employment pathways for marginalised young people in regional areas, but it also encourages and amplifies diverse youth voices to be heard in the media and that was really important to us.

“It’s a relatively small seed grant to test the model. If it works, then our hope is that it can be rolled out to other regional areas.

“We recognise the high levels of disadvantage that can develop in regional areas. Our current focus is Victoria and we knew we already had a strong and innovative partner in the area we could trust in the Greater Shepparton Community Foundation.

“Regional journalism is fundamental to democracy. If you get a concentration of media in regional areas, then the media loses the local flavour and the opportunity for local people to have their voice heard,” Anita said.

“And if young people don’t have a voice, then they can’t talk about how they can create change in their communities.”

The foundation distributed \$9.5 million in the last financial year. “We hope to be involved in more great collaborations like this one in the future,” said Anita.

“We hope that Kayla and any future fellowship recipients see journalism as their future, or if not, perhaps in writing and having confidence in raising their voice. We hope that it will open doors to opportunities for them.”

While the fellowship is a small step, Nick said the initiative has made him determined to do more. “In a way that I’d never expected, the possibilities of this grant filled me with a rare kind of hope: that perhaps with more opportunities like this, by partnering with engaged funders, local publishers and a community foundation, we have a new model for supporting rural and regional journalism.”

Thank you

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