

Annual Review  
2023/24

# Resilience in Action



**FRRR**  
Foundation for Rural  
Regional Renewal



Acknowledgement of Country

FRRR (Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal) acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung clans as the Traditional Custodians of Jaara Country (Bendigo) where we are headquartered and extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations where we fund organisations and activities. We are grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside First Nations Peoples in this work and for the cultural knowledge they share so generously.

We pay our respect to Elders past and present and recognise the continuation of the custodial, cultural and educational practices of Australia’s First Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that despite our best efforts, this report may contain images or references to people who have passed away.

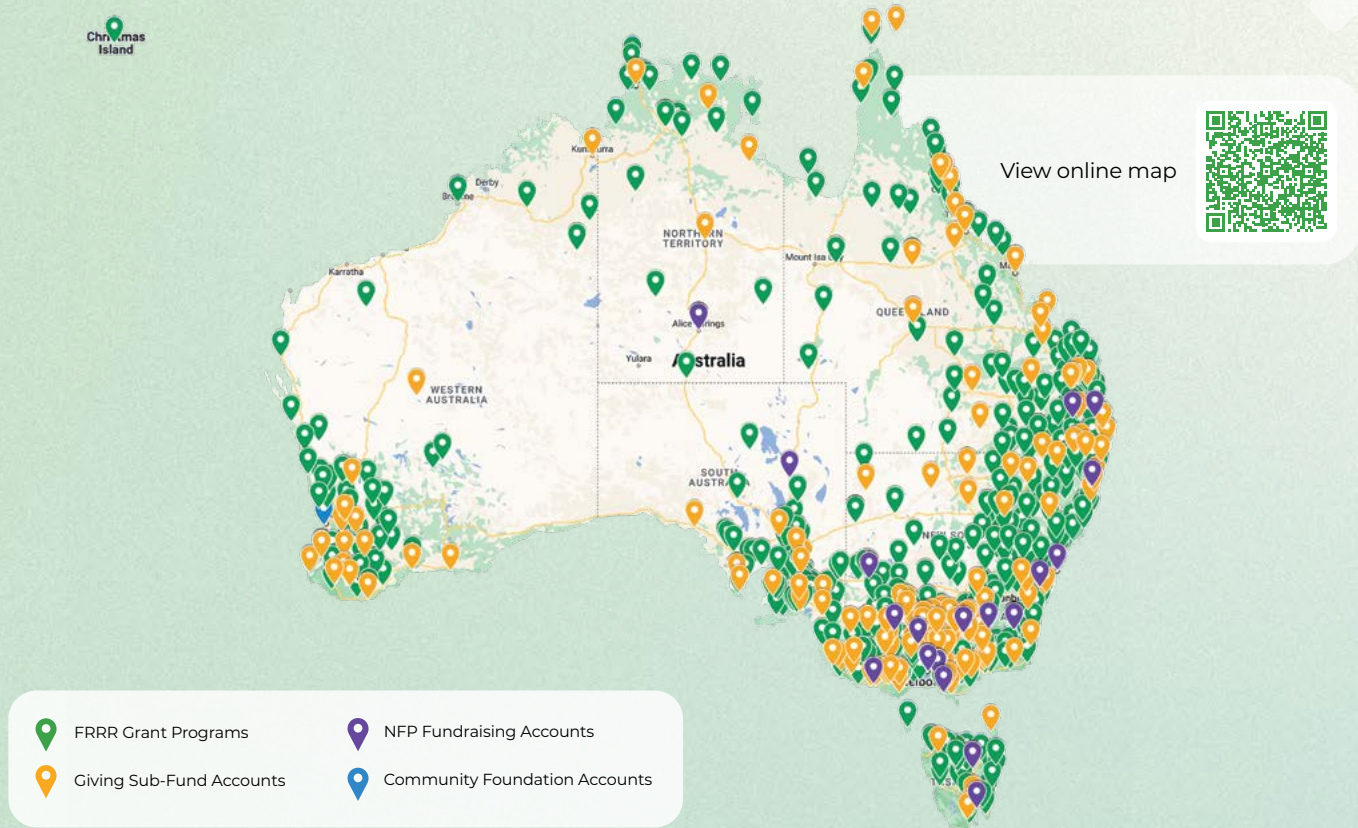
Resilience in Action

We are pleased to report on our progress over the past year toward our vision of more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered remote, rural and regional communities. The report looks back on what we achieved and shares our focus for FY25, which will be the final year of our current strategy. We have also shared our granting and capacity-building activities, as well as some examples of the impacts of the generous donations received in past years.

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FY24 Fast Facts







## Message from the CEO

In preparing this annual review, a story of optimism and grit, deep connection, learning and transformation emerged. As far as numbers go, this was a record year of granting and partnerships, with FRRR receiving \$39.4M in donations and awarding \$25.4M via 1,188 grants to 579 postcodes across the country. These funds have been put to work by incredible local people and not-for-profits (NFPs) who are driving solutions in meaningful, practical and impactful ways, in many cases for the benefit of future generations.

The funding reflects a wide array of small grants, which can be truly catalytic in building confidence, sowing the seeds of capacity building or simply getting important things done. Multi-year, place-based collaborations are also empowering communities in their drought and disaster resilience, and NFP effectiveness. Plus small grants support targeted resources for critical issues including mental health and reducing the digital divide in remote, rural and regional Australia.

Beyond money, we have distilled valuable and unique insights and shared them in policy submissions, contributions to research and through presentations to diverse stakeholders. It's pleasing to see our contributions influencing change such as national disaster funding arrangements and DGR reform for Community Foundations.

During the year, we completed a strategy review - reflecting, listening and stress-testing our focus areas and our role in responding to structural issues facing remote, rural and regional Australia. While we've made solid progress on most of our initial targets, the world is very different from when we set our strategy in 2020. As a result, we refined our priorities, with subtle yet clear shifts that sharpen our attention and resources on the following areas of change, disruption and cross-cutting themes:

- climate, economic, and land use transitions;
- generational transition in regional Australia;
- remote liveability;
- disaster resilience and recovery; and
- First Nations self-determination.

I am very grateful to all of FRRR's supporters and partners in philanthropy, business and government, as well as the countless individuals who put their trust in FRRR to get funding to where it will make a difference in grassroots communities.

None of what we do is possible without the dedication and commitment of our team and I thank each one of you for all that you do each day to support the communities we work with. I also thank the Board of FRRR, led by our Chair, Tim Fairfax AC and Deputy Chair, Anne Grindrod, as well as Chairs of the F&A Committee, Will Myer and Andrew McKenzie JP, who stepped down from the Board this year. You are all huge champions for the regions and a great support to our team and partners.

This report is a celebration of all of the community leaders who step up day after day to make inland Australia such a wonderful place to live, work, play and learn. I hope that the stories in this year's annual review inspire you and help to reinforce the power of investing in locally-led solutions in remote, rural, and regional communities.

**Natalie Egleton**  
CEO

*On Dja Dja Wurrung Country*



## A note from the Chairman

As a national foundation, FRRR is privileged to see the rich and diverse nature of remote, rural and regional Australia through the eyes of the not-for-profit and community organisations that it supports. In each of the 579 communities where grants were awarded this financial year, groups of dedicated volunteers brought projects to life that helped strengthen and sustain their communities. This is an enormous contribution to the vitality of Australia and I thank each and every one for their efforts.

This year saw FRRR achieve new granting records, distributing more than \$25.4M as far afield as Christmas Island to Mt Barker in southern WA, Masig Island in the far north of QLD and south to Southport in TAS - and hundreds of places in between. It was also a year of record donations - \$39.4M. I extend my appreciation to all FRRR's supporters for the trust they place in our Foundation to ensure those funds reach community groups that are well-placed to put the money to good use.

I was especially pleased to see more of FRRR's partners and supporters coming together to support cohorts, issues or regions important to them. My personal connection with FRRR began with contributing to education-focussed programs alongside the Myer and Calvert-Jones families. I know the impact that those collectively-funded programs had. I am buoyed by seeing more of these kinds of collaborations, in this

case around mental health and not-for-profit capacity building, as I know they too will have a lasting impact.

I thank the FRRR Board for their ongoing voluntary commitment to ensuring the Foundation's good governance. This year, we farewelled Andrew McKenzie JP, who very ably chaired the Finance and Audit Committee, and Bruce Scott, who brought so many different perspectives to the table from his far western QLD base. I am grateful to both men for their generous contributions over many years. We were delighted to welcome Donna Digby, who is from Alice Springs, to the Board. Her deep understanding of living and working in remote parts of the country will be invaluable. I also thank the volunteer committee members who give their time to ensure the grants we award are well-considered.

In closing, I thank our CEO Natalie for her ongoing leadership and stewardship of FRRR and acknowledge all of the dedicated FRRR staff for your efforts. They are greatly appreciated.

I invite you to read this year's annual review, which showcases the resilience of remote, rural and regional Australia and what can be achieved when we come together and empower local leaders to implement good ideas.

**Tim Fairfax AC**  
Chairman

*on Turrbal and Jagera Country*





# Responsible governance

FRRR is a company limited by guarantee, and accountable to our Members, the Australian Government and the Sidney Myer Fund. The organisation is specially listed in legislation as an Item 1 DGR entity. Our operations are overseen by an experienced Board of Directors, who have deep roots and a strong interest in remote, rural and regional Australia. They are responsible for ensuring appropriate policies are in place to guide management in operationalising the strategic plan.

The Foundation's governance framework also includes a Nominations and Appointments Committee; a WA Advisory Board; and the Finance and Audit Committee. Working closely with Koda Capital, our investment advisers, FRRR applies ethical exclusions and positive screens to where our funds are invested. We also have a preference for investments that benefit remote, rural and regional Australia, and align with FRRR's strategy.

The Board also has a number of Program Advisory Committees, which review and recommend most of the projects that receive funding. FRRR also entered a formal MOU with the Outback Alliance to transition to an Outback Advisory Board with FRRR. Work will commence in 2025 to strengthen and grow support for outback communities.

Our operations are audited annually to confirm compliance with statutory compliance requirements and, as a registered charity, FRRR reports annually to the ACNC.

We acknowledge the enormous contributions of our Board members and record our appreciation for the ongoing support of our Patrons.

## FRRR Board

- Tim Fairfax AC (Chairman)
- Anne Grindrod (Deputy Chair)
- Annabel White
- Bruce Scott OAM (to May 2024; pic. right)
- Andrew McKenzie JP (to Dec. 2023; pic. far right)
- Sue Middleton
- Hon John Sharp AM
- James Flintoft
- Georgie Somerset AM
- David Mackay



- William Myer
- David Hardie
- Donna Digby (from Jan. 2024)
- Alison Maclaren (Co. Secretary to Mar. 24)

## Patrons

- His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia (to 30 Jun 2024)
- Rt Hon Ian Sinclair AC
- Bill Kelty AC
- Hon John Anderson AO

## Thank you to our committee members and volunteers

FRRR appreciates the support and input of many individuals who serve voluntarily on our committees, alongside our Board members. Their knowledge and insights are invaluable to the effective operation of our Foundation.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Adam Levin, WA Advisory Board                           | Eliza Bale, Suncorp Group                                  | Lola Cowle, Community Representative                                   |
| Aiden Curyer, ANZ Volunteer                             | Emilee Tamison, Futures Isle                               | Loretta Willaton, Telstra Group Limited                                |
| Alicia Chau, ANZ Volunteer                              | Emma Funnell, ABC Heywire                                  | Lucy Markoff, Community Representative                                 |
| Allan Cameron, Gardiner Dairy Foundation                | Emma Mactaggart, David Mactaggart Foundation               | Madeleine Muirhead, Nutrien Ag Solutions                               |
| Amanda Schultz, ANZ Volunteer                           | Gabrielle Zurly, ABC Heywire Alumni                        | Mahsa Nabizda - Youth Chair, ABC Heywire Alumni                        |
| Andrea Gordon, Community Representative                 | Geraldine Roche, Sally Foundation                          | Marrisa Richardson, Suncorp Group                                      |
| Andrew Coghlan, Red Cross                               | Holly Roberts, Suncorp Group                               | Matt Linnegar, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation                  |
| Ankur Vaid, ANZ Volunteer                               | Ian Allen OAM, Community Representative                    | Melissa Brooke, Community Representative                               |
| Ann Kelly, Community Representative                     | Imogen Archer, ABC Heywire                                 | Michael Flagg, ANZ Volunteer   |
| Ashleigh Rosewarne, Gardiner Dairy Foundation           | Jack Lyon, ABC Heywire Alumni                              | Monique Hodgkinson, Suncorp Group                                      |
| Ashleigh Stennett, Suncorp Group                        | Jamie Henderson, WA Advisory Board                         | Natalie Sommerville, Industry Representative                           |
| Assoc Prof Ben Lyons, University of Southern Queensland | Jane Thomas, Sidney Myer Foundation                        | Nathan Janetzki, ANZ Volunteer   |
| Blake Lee, ABC Heywire Alumni                           | Jason Macfarlane, WA Advisory Board                        | Nicholas Costello, ANZ Volunteer                                       |
| Bronte Gorringer, ANZ Volunteer                         | Jenefer Stewart, ANZ                                       | Philippa Woodhill, ARLF  |
| Caroline Gorman, External Member                        | Jenny Gray, Telstra Group Limited                          | Prue Pateras, Donor Partner  |
| Caroline Robinson, WA Advisory Board                    | Jenny Pickering, Telstra Group Limited                     | Rachel Herberts, Suncorp Group   |
| Cissy Gore-Birch, WA Advisory Board                     | Jenny Wilson, Gardiner Dairy Foundation                    | Ralph Addis, WA Advisory Board   |
| Claire Hanratty, GoodWolf                               | Jeremy Yipp, CCI Giving                                    | Rebecca Chew, Boundless Earth  |
| Daisy Barham, AEGN                                      | Jessica Capps, Suncorp Group                               | Sam Lonard, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria      |
| Dan Simpson, ANZ Volunteer                              | Jonathon Atkins, ABC Heywire                               | Sara Parrott, Hand Heart Pocket - the Charity of Freemasons Queensland |
| Darren Sibson, ANZ                                      | Joshua Hawkey, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry | Sarah Falkiner, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry            |
| David Saunderson, Telstra Group Limited                 | Karen Akehurst, Community Representative                   | Shelley Nolan, Nutrien Ag Solutions                                    |
| Deborah Bowles, ANZ Volunteer                           | Kezia Jacobs, WA Advisory Board                            | Steph Pearson, Youth Community Representative                          |
| Debra Morgan, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust              | Kim Farrant, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry   | Talitha Devadass, Futures Isle   |
| Donna Bashforth, Telstra Group Limited                  | Kirrilee Warr, Community Representative                    | Tessa Deak, Trailblazer Alumni   |
| Donna Digby, Community Representative                   | Lea-Anne Bradley, John Villiers Trust                      | Tisha Tejaya, Trailblazer Alumni                                       |
| Dottie Wilson, ABC Heywire Alumni                       | Leah James, Suncorp Group                                  | Tracy Foglia, ANZ Volunteer  |
| Dr Alexandra Williamson, Community Representative       | Leisbeth Goedhart, WA Advisory Board                       | Will Sharples, Trailblazer Alumni                                      |
| Dr Dorin Gupta, University of Melbourne                 | Lily Harrison, ABC Heywire Alumni                          | William Denholme, ANZ Volunteer  |

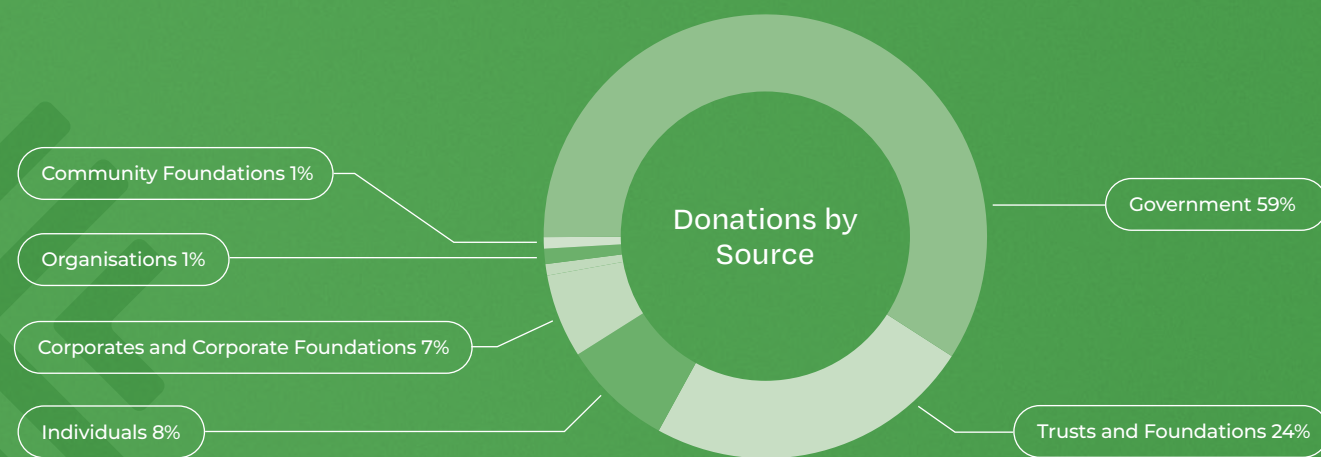


# Our performance

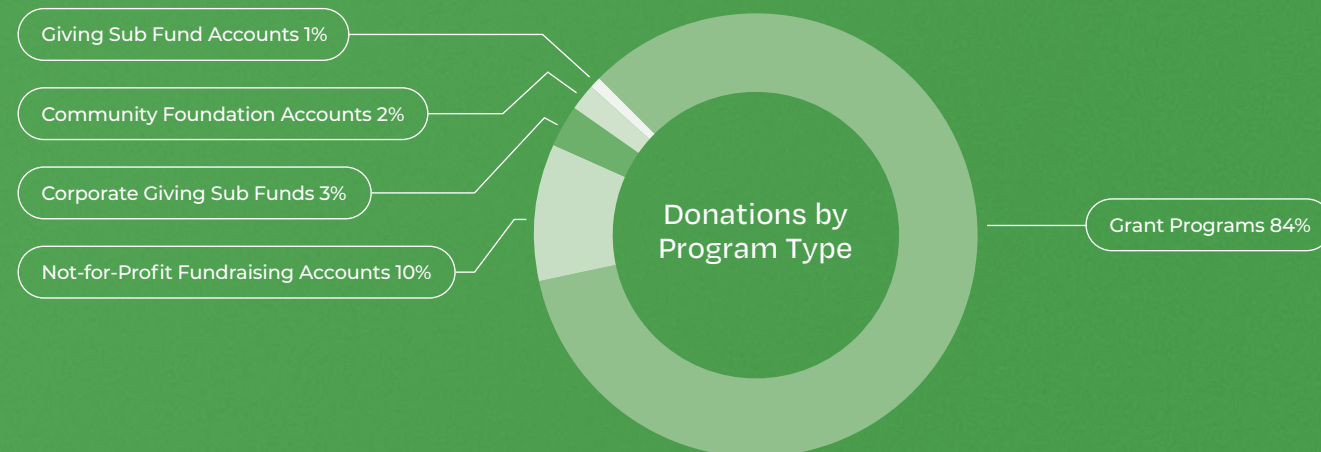
This financial year, FRRR received more than \$39.4 M via 1,452 donations (FY23: \$25.4M; 1,314), of which \$14.2M will be deferred to future year distributions. We are grateful to have new supporters partner with us, but also delighted to have so many repeat donors. Thank you.

## Source of funds

Donations came from a wide range of different types of organisations, as shown below. These donations also ranged widely in size, with all making a genuine difference. The largest donation was \$6.7M (FY23: \$7.9M) and smallest was one dollar. The real value however is in pooling these funds, as the collective giving enables us to support many more community groups.

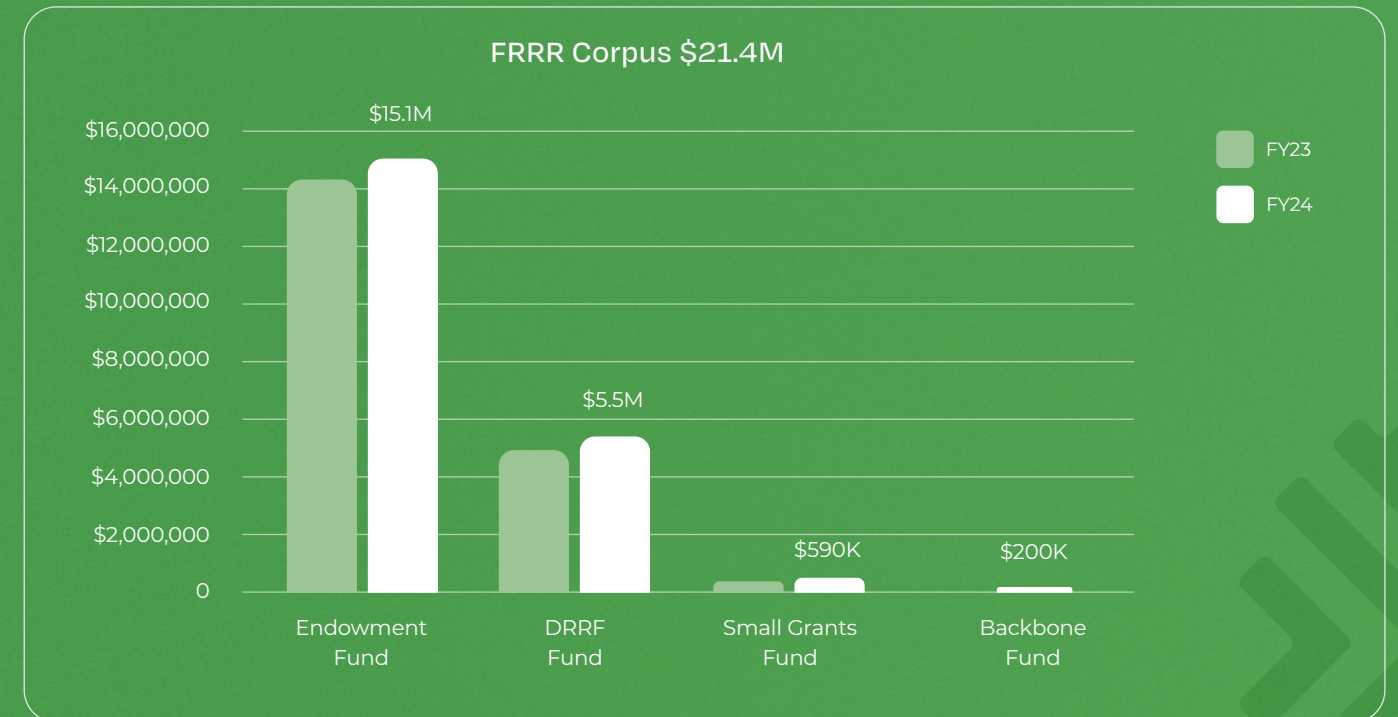


The largest number of donations went to support our core programs, including Strengthening Rural Communities (849 donations). Pleasingly, our community partners continued to leverage our special tax status to fundraise through the Community Foundation (\$744,001, FY23 \$805,536) and Not-for-Profit Fundraising Accounts (\$3,988,861, FY23 \$2,269,056).



## Corpus growth

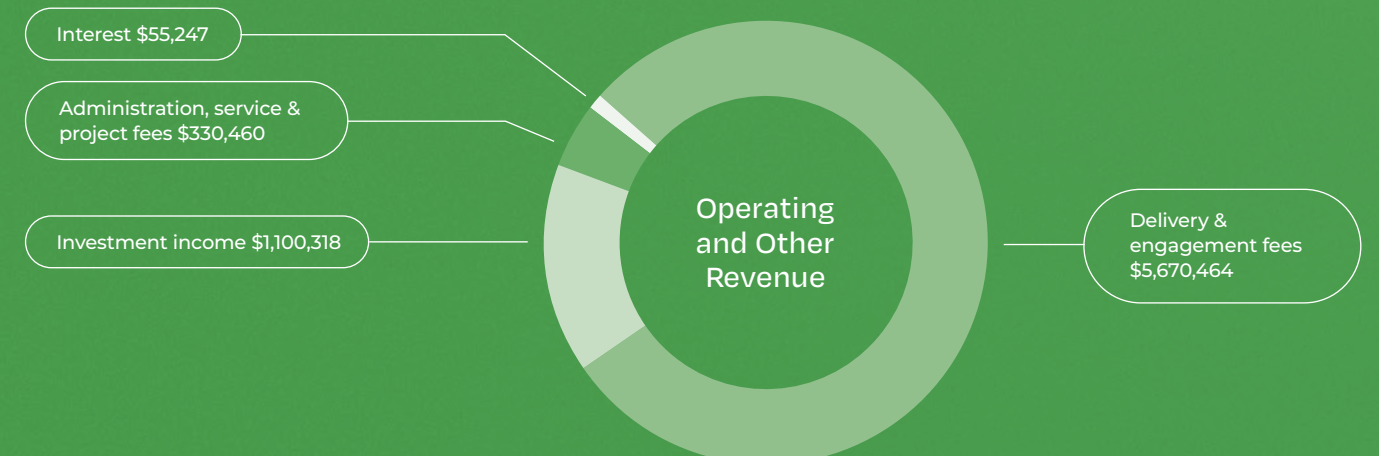
We saw our corpus grow through a combination of donations and returns on investments. The Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund was up \$436,358, while our Small Grants Fund grew by \$66,716. These funds are invested in perpetuity, with annual distributions used to boost funds for granting. This year, we launched a Backbone Fund, designed to support our ongoing operations, which stands at \$200,000. At year end, the combined value of these funds was \$21.4M, including the Endowment Fund which is valued at \$15.1M (FY23 \$14.3M).



## Operating and other revenue

To reach grassroots community groups and to award well-informed grants takes significant effort and considerable due diligence. We fund this activity through a portion of each donation, project fees, investment income and interest. We had operating revenue of \$7.1M, and our operational costs were just over \$7M, with the bulk being employment costs (\$3.6M) and evaluation and consultancy fees linked to specific programs (\$1.4M).

Like all organisations, we have experienced increasing costs and so in the coming year, we will review our delivery and engagement fees to more accurately reflect what it takes to grant well. At the same time, we will seek to drive efficiencies through a review of our technology roadmap and explore ways to maintain our high standards while still remaining agile and getting funds into the hands of community groups as quickly as possible.





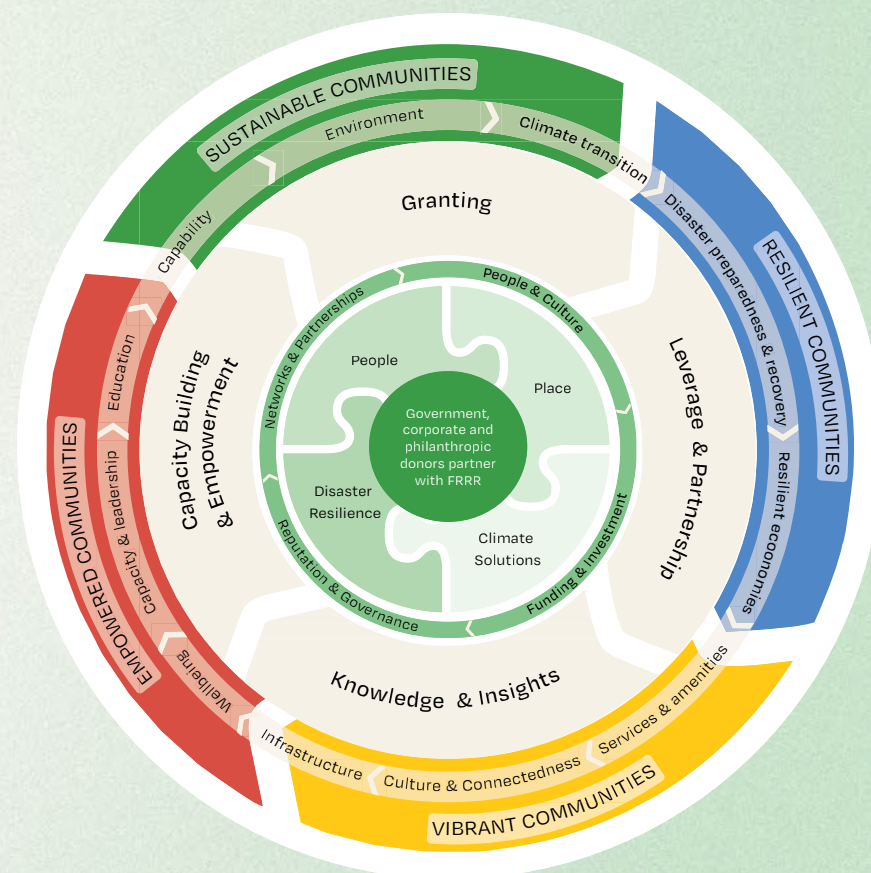
# Our vision and strategy

Our vision is for more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered places across inland Australia. After 24 years, we have the know and the how to connect the good will of philanthropy, government business and individuals with the passion and good purposes of local community leaders.

We believe that where you live shouldn't limit your opportunities. Our ambition is to support the capacity and capability of remote, rural and regional communities so they can be on the front foot of disruption, navigate transition and seek sustainable futures for themselves and the nation is increasing, and growing in relevance and importance.

This manifests in applying a community-led, place-based philosophy, with a preference for supporting smaller, more remote and less resourced communities most vulnerable to the effects of market failures. We also prioritise communities impacted by and vulnerable to disasters.

We're committed to strengthening resilience and sustainability in the intersecting areas of People, Place, Disaster Resilience & Climate Solutions.



## Our strategic priorities

We recognise that FRRR cannot do everything and needs to reduce the risk of spreading our resources too thinly. In 2024, we refreshed our strategic focus areas to sharpen our focus and target resources.

- Helping communities respond to climate, generational, population, industry and energy transitions;
- Growing and investing in the next generation;
- Closing the gap and supporting First Nations self-determination;
- Building disaster resilience; and
- Enhancing the liveability of remote areas.

Some of our early actions against the new focus areas include:

- **Helping communities respond to transitions.**
  - Established a Climate Solutions portfolio, led by Sarah Matthee, and launched the Community Led Climate Solutions grant program. We also joined The Next Economy, Re-Alliance and JSA Projects on the Striking a New Deal project, a place-based initiative seeking to drive better outcomes for regional communities from renewable energy projects.
  - Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) expanded to work with eight NSW communities and supported significant positive impacts in the capacity of not-for-profit organisations across strategy, systems, people, and efficiencies. We also launched a new funder collaboration with The Ross Trust, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust, William Buckland Foundation and The Jack Brockhoff Foundation to partner with three Victorian communities, over the next five years through the IRCF program.
- **Growing and investing in the next generation.**
  - Increased our investment in youth-focussed programs, such as Takeover, and applying a youth lens to all our granting.
- **Enhancing remote liveability.**
  - Responding to market failures in more remote locations by supporting those communities to advocate for, lead and sustain local solutions. In 2025, we will launch an Outback Advisory Board to continue and reignite the work of the [Outback Alliance](#). We are also reviewing the scale of our grants to ensure they reflect costs of delivery in remote and very remote Australia.
- **Disaster resilience and recovery.**
  - There was significant traction this year on the DR:FR program in the Burnett Inland, as well as progress on strengthening drought resilience across the country through the Community Impact Program and Small Network Grants, funded by the Australian Government;
  - Closing the gap and **supporting First Nations self-determination.**
    - We have strengthened our commitment to supporting First Nations communities, including a priority on increasing funding to First Nations led and governed organisations and growing our internal learning and cultural awareness.

There are many more examples later in this review of the work we did and the impacts we made by working with so many partners.





# Strategy in action



## People

The goal of the People portfolio is to strengthen local not-for-profits (NFPs), community groups and volunteers by providing opportunities for skills, network and leadership development. This reporting year saw the continuation of the Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program, which focusses on building the capacity of local NFPs in eight communities across NSW. This involves training and skill building activities in areas identified through the community roadmapping process, alongside grants directly to NFPs to improve their systems, drive efficiencies, support their people or refine strategy. The significant impacts prompted four funders to come together and partner with us to expand this program in Victoria in FY25.

We continued our 10 year collaboration with the ABC for the Heywire program and expanded our partnership through the youth led, place-based Takeover program. This initiative involves working with students in a rural community – this year, Lismore – to identify issues that matter to them. The young people are directly involved in bringing the projects to life working with local NFPs, using grants from FRRR.

### Exploring ongoing collaboration in Nambucca Valley

Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

\$75,653

Sixteen community groups across the Nambucca Valley have participated in the IRCF program over the last five years. Several NFPs want to continue to collaborate on fundraising and financial sustainability through the Nambucca Valley Collective NFP Sustainability Initiative.

Under the auspices of Bowraville Innovative Social Enterprises Precinct Incorporated (BISEP), an IRCF grant allowed the group to engage a consultant to facilitate a series of workshops with representatives of the potential collaborators. The goal was to establish a shared vision, strategy, proposed operating model and generally explore how the group could continue to come together to fundraise collectively and share resources.

"The most significant change for our organisation is stronger partnerships with other NFPs involved and the ability for us to work from a place where we are all on the same page."

Trudi Hayes, Secretary, BISEP

After several discussions, there is a commitment to continue to work on this concept.

As a result of the project, BISEP is well positioned as the go-to organisation for supporting NFP capacity building and fostering partnerships across the Nambucca Valley, creating a connected community. In particular, BISEP strengthened its connection with Lifetime Connect and they are now sharing resources and partnering on projects.



## Place

Our Place portfolio focusses on strengthening the sense of identity, celebrating vibrant cultures, encouraging self-generation and improving access to sustainable social and physical infrastructure. Strengthening Rural Communities (SRC) is our flagship program in this regard and this year, like most others, it was the most popular, attracting well over half of all grant applications (1,654; FY23: 1,307). Issues such as the housing shortage, rising costs of living, food insecurity and increasing economic pressures are placing more demand on local NFPs, driving up funding requests. We could fund around only 37% of requests and continue to actively seek new partners.

There are a number of other programs that also focus on enhancing the liveability of rural communities, including the Gardiner Dairy Foundation's Community Grants, Telstra's Connected Communities grants, Nutrien Ag Solutions Community grants and the In a Good Place program. We are grateful to our partners for their recognition of the role of small grants in creating thriving communities.

The process we embarked on last year to transform our grant assessment processes and embed continuous improvement is paying off, resulting in significant reductions in the time for us to respond to applications. This has created additional capacity in the team to undertake more community engagement, as showcased on pages 22 / 23.

### Festival supports Culture and the economy

Tim Fairfax Family Foundation

\$25,000

The Numburindi Festival in Numbulwar, NT, is crucial to four clan groups. Designed to preserve and share the cultural heritage, local community members and their invited visitors share stories and knowledge freely.

The community-driven approach ensures the event reflects the vision of Elders, fosters respect for land, language and culture, and supports younger generations to learn and celebrate traditions in old and new ways. The three-day festival on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria includes traditional dances, songs, ochre-painting ceremonies, performances by local musicians and bands and youth dance competitions.



The 2023 festival, the first in two years due to COVID, was crucial for the region's economic and cultural revival. A grant to Artback NT Inc. helped cover performer fees, crew and local staff wages, as well as services within the Numbulwar / Roper Gulf community. The festival provided paid work for around 100 people, delivering much-needed short-term income, while also boosting skills and confidence.

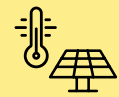
Despite the challenges posed by its remote location, the festival continues to grow in significance and impact. It drew over 2,300 people, and the festival committee engaged the entire Numbulwar community - clans, community and services - in a celebration of culture and pride.

"It's important to have this festival to help teach our kids dancing and culture – and for the old people to remember."

Russell Numamurdi







## Climate Solutions

This year, FRRR created Climate Solutions as a distinct portfolio of work across remote, rural and regional Australia. This was in recognition of the need for concerted effort to support communities now and through the climate transitions ahead.

In shaping our response, we drew heavily on the AEGN network. With the support of philanthropic partners, we activated a Community Led Climate Solutions grant program, distributing 16 grants totalling \$278,693 in its first round, and have grown available funding through further corporate and philanthropic multi-year support across 2024.

Alongside this, we have listened and learned from a wide range of networks, events, forums and peers to consider how FRRR can best support rural communities navigating the challenges and opportunities ahead of us. We have also begun sharing the learnings, co-hosting an event with AEGN after the first round was awarded.

### Reframing CQ's future

Hand Heart Pocket - The Charity  
of Freemasons Queensland

\$3,905

Central Queensland is an area of high climate change risk and extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and bushfires. Local grassroots organisation Environmental Advocacy in Central Queensland Inc. (EnvA) perceived a need to increase awareness and understanding of climate change and promote a shift towards renewable energy.

EnvA used a Community Led Climate Solutions grant to support a screening of the film *Climate Changers* in Yeppoon followed by a panel discussion including scientists, farmers and conservationists.

The event attracted a diverse audience of 70 people, with some travelling up to three hours to participate. The panel provided insight into local climate solutions and the opportunities presented by transitioning to renewable energy. The discussion fostered engagement and conversation about climate action, with the goal of empowering community members to explore their role in creating a more sustainable future.

Organisers say that it has helped move toward a more climate-conscious perspective, emphasising that everyone has a role to play in building a resilient community that can seize opportunities brought about by transition.



"Without financial support from organisations like FRRR, EnvA, which is only a small, young organisation, wouldn't be in the position we are today engaging our community in climate action."

Coral Rowston, Secretary, EnvA



## Disaster Resilience & Recovery

The Disaster Resilience & Recovery portfolio focusses on supporting communities before, during and after a natural disaster or drought. With 71 events triggering Government disaster recovery funding arrangements<sup>1</sup>, FY24 was another year of complex and overlaid climate related events. FRRR continues to support grassroots organisations, which are often first to respond and the last one standing, long after other supports have left town. Programs like the Prepare and Recover Stream of the Strengthening Rural Communities program, as well as the likes of our partnership with Suncorp on the Rebuilding Futures program help sustain these organisations. We also continued to support ongoing recovery from the Black Summer Bushfires.

Alongside more frequent disaster events, the re-emergence of drought, especially in SA and parts of VIC, and even summer flooding on the Nullarbor Plain, we saw increased focus on being better prepared. A major focus this year was the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative, with more than \$6.7M awarded for projects across the country.

### Iluka takes control

Lachlan and Sarah  
Murdoch Foundation

\$22,342

The Yulgilbar  
Foundation

\$17,548

After consecutive floods in 2022, the small north-coast NSW community of Iluka was isolated with no phones, internet or power for nearly two weeks. The Iluka Rural Fire Service (RFS) knew the community had to be better prepared and more self-sufficient in future. After consulting Clarence Valley Council, Iluka Community Organisation Planning for Emergencies (ICOPE) was formed to establish an evacuation centre at the Iluka Community Hall. A grant to the Iluka RFS from the Emergency Services Fund helped equip the hall with essential supplies, including mattresses, radios, lighting, first aid kits, portable power packs and a generator.

The reinvigorated Hall has become a vibrant hub for social interaction and collaboration. ICOPE continued to engage the broader community in disaster preparedness, as well as enhance community connectedness and resilience, thanks to another grant through The Yulgilbar Foundation Fund Grant program. A series of events at the hall, called "Field of Friends", featured live music, BBQs and games, alongside disaster preparedness information stalls from the SES, RFS, Ambulance, Red Cross and Marine Rescue.

Residents have come together in ways not seen for years, strengthening bonds and creating new connections that will help them face future challenges as a united community.

"We thank FRRR and our generous donors for the grants that Iluka RFS received to furnish an evacuation centre in Iluka. It was the catalyst in creating ICOPE and we have since also received further grants to enhance and strengthen Iluka in times of emergencies."

Cheryl Dimmock, President, ICOPE



[Click to watch video](#)



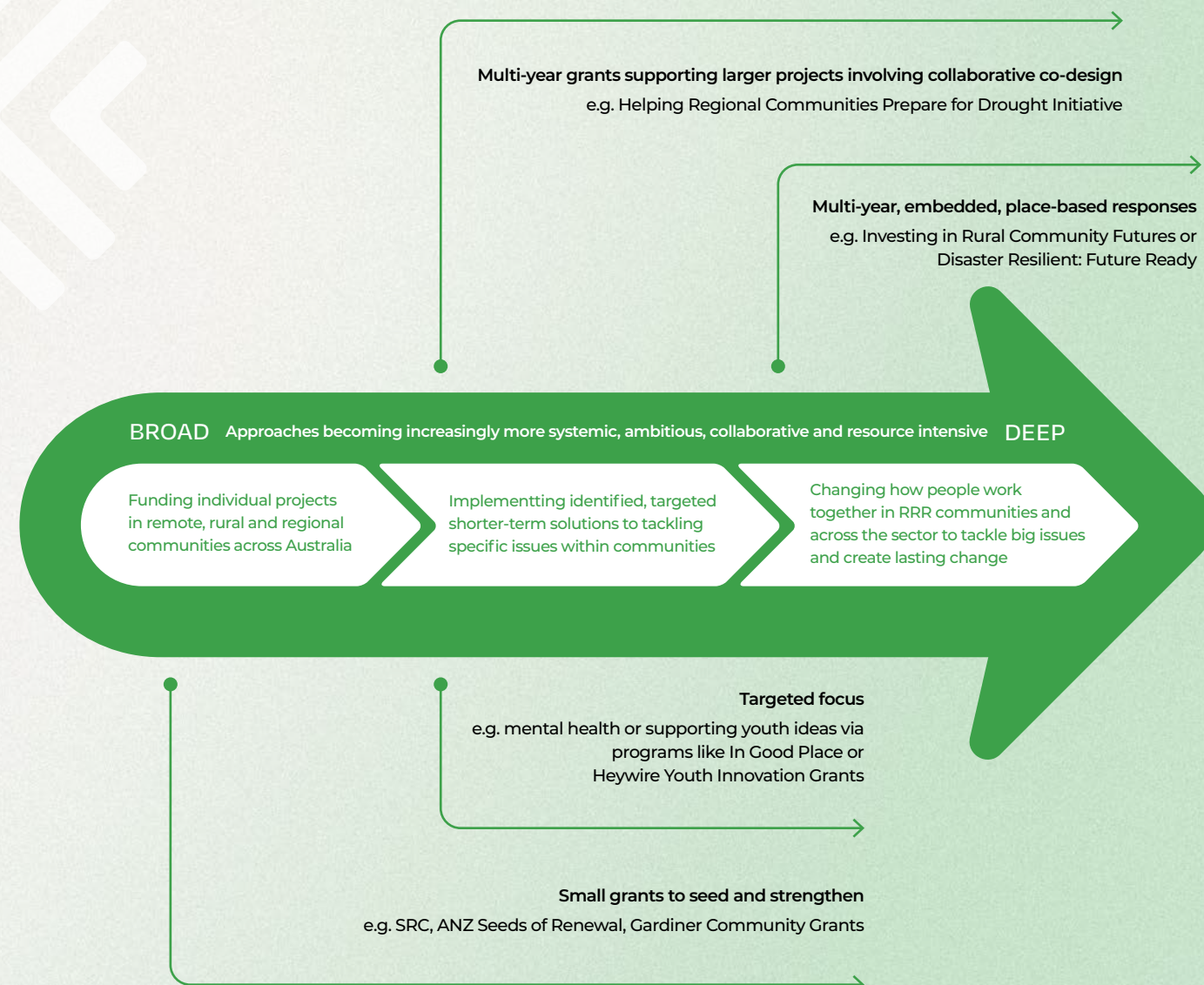
# Broad and deep funding options

FRRR's granting programs range from broad-based and able to respond to the many challenges and opportunities facing remote, rural and regional communities, to being highly focussed - on either a particular issue or working deeply in a particular community - tackling the intersecting issues and becoming more systemic, ambitious, collaborative and resource intensive.

At their broadest, they are usually awarded as one-off, small grants that address local gaps, strengthen liveability, wellbeing and vitality of remote and rural towns, and build readiness and capacity for change, disruption and new opportunities. This 'right-sized' funding is an important lever, especially for small places and comes through programs like Strengthening Rural Communities. In addition to providing funding to communities, this program provides insights for FRRR into emerging trends and areas that may need deeper programs or advocacy.

Programs such as In a Good Place, which targets mental health, and our corporate and philanthropic donor informed programs, have a more targeted focus, such as digital inclusion. This means they can help test new ideas that build confidence and drive long-term momentum in remote, rural and regional communities.

Moving along the spectrum, we provide support for place based capacity building, through programs like Investing in Rural Community Futures and Disaster Resilient: Future Ready.



## IRCF delivers and expands

The Investing in Rural Community Futures program was established in 2019 in three NSW communities, with the support of the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. The focus was to build the capacity of the local NFPs that play a fundamental role in building and sustaining the social and economic fabric of their communities. Designed around bringing community leaders together to map where investment was needed in light of their local context, the program has led to impressive outcomes for many of the groups that have been involved.

With the support of Snow Foundation, the program expanded to the NSW South Coast and then, following the Black Summer bushfires, into some communities in the Shoalhaven and into the Bega Valley with funds from the Australian Government and Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation. This reporting year, off the back of the impacts and outcomes from the program, four donors in Victoria have come together to support its expansion into Victoria.

Read more about the program in this [Learnings and Insights Report](#) from October 2023.

### Paid staff supports NFPs

Snow Foundation

\$30,000

Safe Waters Community Care Inc (SWCC) assists vulnerable people in the Ulladulla area. A Safe Shelter was opened in 2020, in response to a lack of supported crisis accommodation for people experiencing difficulties such as homelessness, fleeing domestic violence, or struggling with substance misuse.

Initially, the shelter was operated solely by volunteers and was only open at night. As demand expanded, additional funding and staff were desperately needed.

Through IRCF, SWCC was able to employ a Manager, which allowed recruitment, training and management of volunteers to be streamlined and for management systems to be implemented. Additional positions then helped with the establishment of policies and procedures, and supported coordination of volunteers and supporting guests in the shelter.

The organisation was able to increase the provision of homelessness services to vulnerable people in the Ulladulla area. The IRCF grant enabled paid staff to build positive relationships with the existing volunteers and, crucially, to source further funding and improve the sustainability of the organisation.

The improvement in operations meant SWCC was better able to demonstrate the need for their service and secure another grant to cover the complete wages for Shelter Coordinators and an Executive Director.

"The primary outcome was the enhancement of community identity, wellbeing, and sense of place."

Sarah Date





## Recovery in Kalbarri

Disaster Resilience &  
Recovery Fund

\$22,500

Kalbarri in WA was severely impacted by Cyclone Seroja in April 2021, including losing the Kalbarri Community Centre, an important gathering place, especially for young people. With locals still focussed on their recovery, there had not been the opportunity – nor the funds - to rebuild it. Without a venue, the town also hadn't come together to celebrate the efforts of those who had been working hard to support the community's recovery.

The Association decided to rectify that and also start fundraising to rebuild their meeting place by hosting a 'classy, fun' inaugural annual Community Gala. Using funds from DRRF, Kalbarri Development Association Inc. secured a marquee, erected and cleaned it with the help of many volunteers and staged a sold-out event. The Gala strengthened connections, thanked volunteers who helped rebuild and celebrated the community's resilience. They also raised more than \$20,000 to go toward a new community meeting place.

In this context, community events following the Cyclone in Kalbarri go well beyond a simple social occasion. Instead they help to build vibrant and healthy community life through times of adversity, which pays dividends in deepened social connection and inclusion, both before and long after the event occurs.

## Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund

Launched in September 2019, DRRF pools and invests donations, with the returns used to fund grants for grassroots recovery and preparedness initiatives.

To date, \$420,000 has been allocated to various disasters.

**Closing value: \$5,512,147**

**FY24 distribution: \$187,882**

*"Our inaugural Community Gala was the talk of the town. Not just for the weeks after, but also in anticipation of it. Planning what to wear, makeup, hair dos and the like, created a sense of joy and anticipation. Businesses benefitted with the sale of clothes and accessories, hair dressing and make up appointments. ... people who went said 'this is just what we all needed!'"*

Lauren Sweetman



## Back to School concludes

This year saw the closure of our long-running Back to School program. A review found other organisations were now providing similar support and FRRR could support educational outcomes through other programs. The final round saw the distribution of 18,540 vouchers valued at \$1,139,200 via 48 local groups. This brought the total distributed since 2005 to nearly \$12.9M through 253,747 vouchers.

Established to support disadvantaged students, FRRR provided vouchers redeemable at Target, Kmart or selected specialist local retailers to support children

and families to purchase the basics needed to start the school year ready to learn. FRRR worked in partnership with Community Foundations and other trusted local groups, who ensured vouchers reached those most in need.

Pleasingly, a number of Community Foundations will continue to run local Back to School programs, ensuring support continues. FRRR is extremely grateful to the many organisations that funded this program since 2005, particularly the Sidney Myer Fund who were the program's instigators.

## Vouchers support Bass Coast students

Helen and David Hains Foundation,  
Bertalli Family Foundation, Be BlueRock  
Foundation, Origin Energy Foundation  
and a private donor

\$52,200

In 2024, Bass Coast Community Foundation received 933 vouchers through FRRR's Back to School program. The vouchers were distributed through local schools in the Bass Coast area, helping vulnerable students and their families with essential school items such as uniforms, books and shoes. The program has a lasting impact, with school principals also reporting reduced stress and strengthened relationships with families they support.

*"We learned firsthand that the recipients of the vouchers gain in confidence and self-esteem and they feel empowered, as they are given the resources and freedom to purchase school items that were needed but their families are unable to provide."*





# Reach and impact

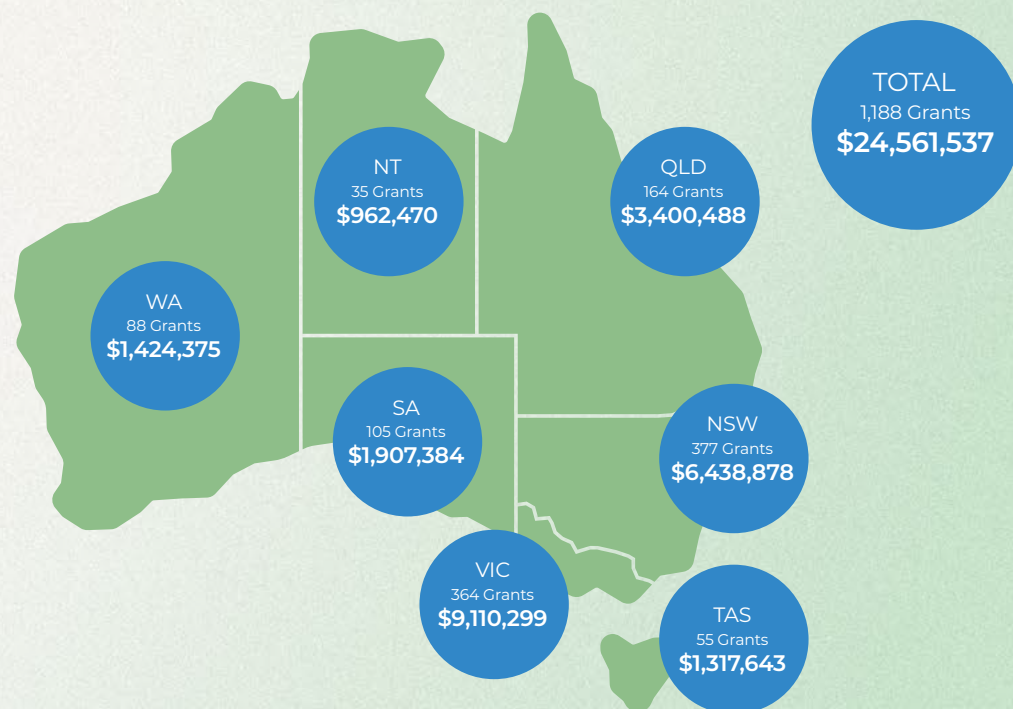
In FY24, FRRR received 2,909 applications (up 10% on FY23), the most in our 24 year history. Applicants requested \$54M, an 18% decrease on last year. Ninety percent of applications were eligible and FRRR was able to support 45% of the requests. In total, \$24.5M was approved for 1,188 grants, toward project valued at \$45.2M (FY23: \$22.5M; 1,158; \$62.1M).

Over the last five years, we have seen the leverage of the grant funds we've awarded decline significantly. We define leverage as the extra funding community groups secure – in cash or in kind - for every dollar we grant. The decline reflects cost of living pressures, economic constraints and the general lack of discretionary funds from business or individuals. In addition, it reflects increasing volunteer fatigue, which has seen FRRR's grants support more paid positions and resources to increase knowledge, skills, capacity and awareness.

## Our reach

Funding was again spread far and wide, with grants awarded in 56% of all LGAs (FY23: 53%) and into 579 postcodes (FY23: 552). The LGA to receive most grants was East Gippsland (27), which also received the most funds (\$630K).

In line with our refreshed strategy, we continued to place emphasis on supporting communities in outer regional, remote or very remote areas, awarding \$11M via 584 grants (FY23: \$11.6M; 559 grants). Similarly, our focus continued on the most disadvantaged communities, with 549 grants valued at \$10.6M (FY23: 611; \$11.9M) going to communities with a SEIFA rating of less than 40.



Since the Voice referendum, FRRR has doubled down on our support and partnerships with First Nations communities, seeking to more actively support self-determination and back Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governed organisations. We are still refining our tracking of this investment but we know that at least 78 projects were awarded to First Nations led organisations or to projects that benefited First Nations people, valued at \$1.5M. This reporting year, we also saw more regional communities seek to lean in in different ways to build understanding and connections – sometimes through things as simple as a reconciliation picnic in the park. Some communities are further down the track, looking at creating employment and enterprises, leveraging their knowledge and connections. We will seek to do more in this space in coming years.



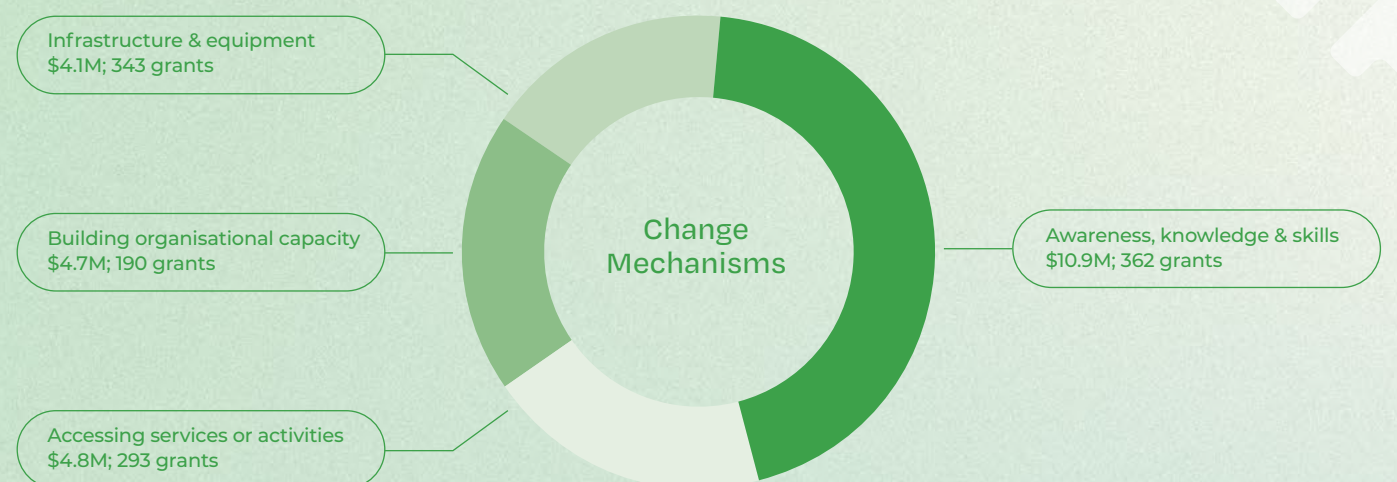
## Impact

For every grant, we track the impact the group we fund expects from their project. In recent years, most funds have gone toward building community resilience; developing organisational resilience and capacity or promoting individual and community health and social wellbeing. This trend continued with \$15.2M awarded to 793 projects in those three outcome areas – close to two-thirds of total funding and grants.

Grants by Impact Area	# Grants	Funding
Building Community Resilience	263	\$5,734,025
Developing Organisational Resilience & Capacity	268	\$5,335,875
Promoting individual & community health & social wellbeing	262	\$4,244,161
Acting on environmental challenges / opportunities	77	\$4,138,040
Supporting lifelong learning, education and / or training	158	\$2,753,947
Contributing to a culturally vibrant community	124	\$1,540,746
Building economic strength & sustainability	36	\$814,743
Total	1,188	\$24,561,537

## Change mechanisms

The most common use for the funds this year was for awareness, knowledge or skill-building activities, which accounted for \$10.9M via 362 grants (FY23: Services & activities; \$6.4M; 330 grants), more than double the next most common lever. In past years, most funding has gone toward infrastructure and equipment. We attribute this change to much of the funding awarded in this financial year being for training programs, awareness building around topics such as drought or disaster preparedness and investing in leadership development. This is a reflection of the momentum toward communities preparing for and responding to disruptions by upskilling and mobilising their social capital.



## Disaster preparedness funding increasing

Nearly 30% of all grant applications this year (850, seeking \$23.2M; FY23: 692; \$33M) were to support disaster preparedness or recovery. We awarded 461 grants, valued at \$11.7M (FY23: 409, \$10.8M), with most being for preparedness (269, \$8.6M), which made up nearly 35% of all funding awarded this year. This reflects a combination of there being less funding left to distribute for bushfire recovery and a sustained focus on drought preparedness projects (150 grants) this financial year.





## More than money

While a big focus of our day to day work is granting, our team also spends considerable time listening, learning and connecting with communities through phone support, webinars, community visits and workshops.

This year, the team answered 3,055 calls (FY23: 3,535) and spent more than 15,420 minutes on the phone (FY23: 21,840). In addition, we hosted 36 online webinars, including 19 grantseeker workshops, reaching at least 1,125 people. We were particularly pleased with the participation in the seven Tasmanian workshops we ran in November in conjunction with Tasmanian Community Fund, which attracted 144 people.

This reach was further extended by people watching recordings of the webinars via our YouTube channel, accumulating another 27 hours of watch time via 1,208 views. In total, grantseekers spent nearly 800 hours watching the 200 videos that are on our YouTube channel.

FRRR's website was also a source of information about granting programs, attracting more than 518,474 visits (FY23: 481,233).



This map shows just some of the places the FRRR team travelled to in FY24.





# Insights and learning

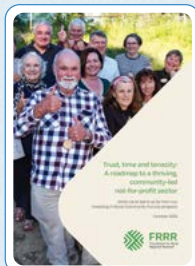
FRRR has a unique role in the national philanthropic, policy and regional development landscape, to share what is happening in remote, rural and regional communities. We do that in a variety of ways, including regular newsletters, roundtables, speaking at conferences, publishing articles online or on our social channels, hosting webinars and making submissions to relevant inquiries and policy reviews.

This year, FRRR made the following submissions:

- Developing a National NFP blueprint
- Future Drought Fund Productivity Commission Inquiry
- Future Drought Fund: Response to the Investment Strategy and Drought Resilience Funding Plans for 2024-2028
- Independent Review of Commonwealth Funding Arrangements
- National Drought Agreement Review
- Pre-budget submission to the Australian Government
- Productivity Commission Inquiry into Philanthropy
- Response to the Interim Report from the Productivity Commission's Future Drought Fund Inquiry.
- Senate Economics Reference Committee Inquiry into the indicators and impact of regional inequality in Australia

## Reports and evaluations

To track our impact, FRRR regularly reviews the outcomes from the programs that we deliver. We aim to consolidate learnings, so we can scale our work with integrity, impact and cost-effectiveness. This year, we refined our measurement and impact framework and work is underway on its implementation into our systems and processes. Meanwhile, we published two program evaluations, as noted below. At year end, work was also underway on evaluations of the Tackling Tough Times Together program; the Investing in Rural Community Futures pilot with VFFF; and the interim evaluation of the Future Drought Fund's Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative, with future reports to include a review DR:FR Victoria; IRCF South Coast and the Black Saturday bushfire programs.



### Trust, time and tenacity

A roadmap to a thriving community led NFP sector. Learnings to date from the IRCF program.



### Evaluation of the COVID Regional Community Support Program

Delivered by FRRR on behalf of NSW Government.

## Partnerships and Forums

FRRR also shares insights with groups where we have a common interest, enabling the voices of regional communities to be at the forefront of policy making, philanthropic practice and granting. In the reporting year, FRRR staff were involved in the following groups:

- Our Town Allies and Advocates Group
- Striking a New Deal
- Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone Community Reference Group
- Community Connector 4 Resilience
- NEMA Charities Roundtable
- Community Resilience Alliance



# Leverage and broker

At the core of FRRR's model is connecting donors with grassroots community organisations who know what is needed to strengthen and sustain their communities. Our Partnerships and Services team facilitates this support in a number of ways, including helping donors contribute to our collectively-funded programs; setting up donor-advised programs aligned to specific issues or regions; or contributing to our invested funds, to ensure grants can be made well into the future.

A significant focus for the team in this reporting year was growing contributions to FRRR's Strengthening Rural Communities program, our most flexible and most in-demand. These grants are catalytic, especially when it comes to helping communities seed and strengthen, adapt and evolve, innovate and renew. We continue to seek contributions to the Small Grants Fund, so we can meet more of the demand into the future.

The value of collaborative giving was evident elsewhere too, with some notable new partnerships emerging, included four Victorian funders collaborating to roll out the IRCF program in Victoria, committing \$5M over the next five years. The In a Good Place program also more than doubled its funding base, thanks to a new funder collaborative contributing \$350,000 per year toward mental health initiatives to support farmers and farming communities.

In addition, the team also supports a number of community-based organisations to leverage FRRR's special tax listing to fundraise for specific initiatives that the FRRR board has approved. We refer to these as Fundraising Accounts. In this reporting year, FRRR hosted 52 such accounts, ending the year with 45 accounts open. In total, community foundations and not-for-profit organisations raised \$4.7M through these accounts (FY23: \$3.1M). Of these, the highest number of donations went to the Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens (90 donations | \$65,480). Most funds were raised by The Diggers Foundation, who secured \$2.6M into their account.

"FRRR is really embedded in rural communities, they understand their communities and are well-trusted. That's one of the big learnings I've got from dealing with FRRR – their understanding of and their emphasis on getting into communities with a sort of a bottom-up type approach, rather than a top down."

John Hetherington, Ian Rollo Currie Estate Fdn.

### Farina Restoration Group

Since 2009, the Farina Restoration Group has worked tirelessly to stabilise and restore aspects of the historic abandoned township of Farina, around 650 km north of Adelaide. Each year, volunteers head to the site for around two months. They maintain these historically significant buildings and have developed walking trails and added storyboards explaining the history and function of the sites to the tourists who visit.

FRRR has hosted a Not-for-Profit Fundraising Account, since 2011, through which the group has raised \$88,000. The account closed recently following the group's most successful season ever, with an estimated 45,000 visitors and revenues to support ongoing work in excess of \$300,000.

"Thank you to FRRR for your support in the past, the funding received certainly helped to 'put us on the map.'"

John Tuckwell, Treasurer

### Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation

Community-driven solutions are essential in any community, but particularly in remote settings. When the local newspaper closed during COVID, Mparntwe Alice Springs lost one of the vital threads connecting the town's disparate communities. Crucial local stories were suddenly left untold, leaving 'Alice' without a unified voice or a platform for civic conversation.

The Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation (MASCF) came into being largely in response to this issue. After establishing their Board and a Community Foundation Account with FRRR, MASCF held its first successful fundraiser. Nine weeks later the Centralian Today was launched. The local community now has a regular, trusted platform to harness and connect its resources, to identify its priorities and take action toward a brighter future.

"It is early days for the Foundation, and there's much to do to realise its potential to encourage and support positive change in Alice Springs."

John Huigen, Executive Director MASCF





# Thank you to our supporters

FRRR was designed to bring together funding and support from business, government, philanthropy and individuals to benefit people living in remote, rural and regional Australia. As in past years, we have seen the impact of what is possible when people who care about these communities come together and empower them to achieve their visions.

Thank you to the 1,452 donors who partnered with FRRR to make this possible this year. In total, \$39.4M was donated (FY23: \$25.4M), with a median donation of \$30.

We greatly appreciate your support. Thank you.



"One of the great things about FRRR is that there's people on the ground in rural and regional communities – not just around Victoria but around Australia, and we really see the benefit of that. We feel we can get scale across Victoria through partners like FRRR because of the really deep work that's happening on the ground. I think that's one of the rich and wonderful things about FRRR."

Debra Morgan,  
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

FRRR thanks all those who partner with us to help create more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered remote, rural and regional communities. Below we acknowledge those who contributed more than \$10,000 in this reporting year.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ANZ</li> <li>➤ Australian Government</li> <li>➤ Bertalli Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ Brian and Margaret Baker Foundation (APS)</li> <li>➤ Brian M Davis Charitable Foundation #</li> <li>➤ Bunnings Group</li> <li>➤ CCI Giving</li> <li>➤ Center for Disaster Philanthropy</li> <li>➤ Charter Hall</li> <li>➤ Collier Charitable Fund</li> <li>➤ Community Enterprise Foundation</li> <li>➤ David Mactaggart Foundation</li> <li>➤ Department of Health &amp; Human Services</li> <li>➤ Doc Ross Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ Dr George Jacobs</li> <li>➤ Dusseldorp Forum</li> <li>➤ Estate Late Harold Gordon Jones</li> <li>➤ Findex Community Fund</li> <li>➤ Gardiner Dairy Foundation</li> <li>➤ Geelong Community Foundation</li> <li>➤ GlobalGiving</li> <li>➤ Hand Heart Pocket - the Charity of Freemasons QLD</li> <li>➤ Helen and David Hains Foundation</li> <li>➤ Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation</li> <li>➤ Jack Brockhoff Foundation #</li> <li>➤ Kellogg Australia Charitable Foundation</li> <li>➤ Kenyon Foundation</li> <li>➤ Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation</li> <li>➤ Macdoch Foundation</li> <li>➤ Macquarie Group Limited</li> <li>➤ Minderoo Foundation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Mitchell Community Resources and Advocacy Group Community Foundation</li> <li>➤ Morris Family Foundation #</li> <li>➤ Tim Fairfax AC and Gina Fairfax AC</li> <li>➤ National Emergency Management Agency</li> <li>➤ Norman Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ NSW Government</li> <li>➤ Nuseed</li> <li>➤ Nutrien Ag Solutions</li> <li>➤ Origin Energy Foundation</li> <li>➤ Paul Ramsay Foundation</li> <li>➤ Perpetual Foundation - Julian Flett Endowment</li> <li>➤ Private Donors #</li> <li>➤ Sally White OAM</li> <li>➤ Seaton Foundation</li> <li>➤ Shine On Foundation</li> <li>➤ Sidney Myer Fund</li> <li>➤ Snow Foundation</li> <li>➤ Suncorp Group</li> <li>➤ Telstra Group Limited</li> <li>➤ The Bryan Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Calvert-Jones Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Clem Jones Group</li> <li>➤ The Ian Potter Foundation #</li> <li>➤ The John Villiers Trust</li> <li>➤ The Maple-Brown Family Foundation #</li> <li>➤ The Myer Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Next Economy</li> <li>➤ The Sally Foundation #</li> <li>➤ The Sid and Fiona Myer Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ The William Buckland Foundation +</li> <li>➤ The Yulgilbar Foundation #</li> <li>➤ Tim Fairfax Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation</li> </ul> | <p><b>Donors to Fundraising Accounts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ACME Foundation</li> <li>➤ AJ (Tony) Emmett</li> <li>➤ Andrews Foundation</li> <li>➤ Christopher Blaxland</li> <li>➤ Community Impact Foundation</li> <li>➤ Dawn Wade Foundation</li> <li>➤ Ereshkigal Foundation</li> <li>➤ Fay Fuller Foundation</li> <li>➤ Fkg Group</li> <li>➤ George Lewin Foundation</li> <li>➤ Gidleigh Foundation</li> <li>➤ Handbury Foundation</li> <li>➤ Heenan Investment Group</li> <li>➤ Highgate Foundation (ACF)</li> <li>➤ James Frizelle Charitable Foundation</li> <li>➤ Kassa-Miller Giving</li> <li>➤ Marrich Equity Pty Ltd</li> <li>➤ Mount Pelion Foundation</li> <li>➤ Outback Parks &amp; Lodges</li> <li>➤ Quercus Fund (ACF)</li> <li>➤ Scott Williams Foundation</li> <li>➤ Siddle Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ Sue Petruszka Giving (Community Impact Foundation)</li> <li>➤ The Anthony Costa Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Isobel &amp; David Jones Family Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Rekindle Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Thyne Reid Foundation</li> <li>➤ The Vedmore Foundation C/o Trustee</li> <li>➤ Vasudhara Foundation</li> </ul> |
|---|--|--|

# Also donated to Fundraising Accounts

+ Managed by Equity Trustees





# A talented, committed team

FRRR's team is passionate about making life better for those who live, work, learn and play in remote, rural and regional communities. Most staff grew up, or currently live, in rural communities, which gives them a genuine understanding of the challenges and opportunities of living outside a major urban centre.

As at the end of June, there were 39 people either employed or contracted (32.1 FTE) across VIC, NSW, QLD and WA. As we have done since COVID, those who are close to Bendigo spend some time in the office and the rest working from home (17.3), with the balance of the team working completely from home (14.8).



That made bringing the team together in Bendigo for a "Staff Muster" in February 2024 very special, as for many, it was the first time they had met in person. Alongside the usual strategic and operational planning, it was a wonderful opportunity to build connections. We also spent time visiting projects FRRR had funded or volunteering with local organisations.

We acknowledge our talented team for all they do in the delivery of our programs and thank them sincerely for their efforts, which we know are also appreciated by so many community groups.

"FRRR staff have always been very willing to help whenever I have contacted them. They have been understanding of the problems faced by volunteer organisations and offered helpful advice to help sort out problems we faced. Even when I have contacted FRRR about the most trivial concern, the staff have always been pleasant and more than willing to help."

Kinglake Historical Society, VIC

"Thank you to the team for their assistance in finding the right grant stream and being great to deal with on the phone."

Camp Coocinda Inc, VIC

# Community feedback



"The FRRR portal and application process was easy to navigate and we look forward to [applying] for additional rounds in the future."

Outback Gondwana Foundation Ltd, QLD



"FRRR is fantastic. The help small organisations and community groups receive is vital in our communities."

Community Care and Transport Inc, SA

"FRRR has been astonishingly accommodating and understanding as this project was beleaguered with COVID impacts. The original project model was not achievable during COVID. FRRR was wonderful about allowing a revision to a more suitable program that still met the core needs of social connection and skill building for older people. While I am sure we are all pleased that this grant is finally complete, it has been a joy to work with FRRR and the funders."

West Wimmera Health Services, VIC



"Thank you for investing in this event. You cannot underestimate how important it is to this community and how it helped people recover and heal following the pandemic. FRRR's support was essential, and we are extremely grateful."

Boolarra Folk Festival Committee, VIC

"I have found the support and guidelines throughout extremely supportive. Many grants take hours and hours to complete relevant and irrelevant information. Throughout the whole experience I have felt valued and supported. I have spread the word and will continue to do so. Our community is disadvantaged in many ways so you will possibly find applications from other groups. I cannot thank you enough. As a new group your grant has brought us to the fore. Exciting times ahead!"

Newlands Arm Landcare Coastcare Group, VIC



# Grants in action

## Victoria

364 Grants

\$9,110,299

Victoria received the most funding this year (37%), with \$9.1M shared across 364 grants via 19 programs. This 67% increase on last year is skewed by a \$2.28M distribution from The Diggers Foundation Not-for-Profit Fundraising Account. Twenty-two per cent of grants were awarded through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative (33 | \$2M), while 20% of Strengthening Rural Communities funding (169) also went to VIC. The balance of funds was distributed via Community Foundation Fundraising Accounts, support for communities affected by 2022 floods through the Rebuilding Futures program (funded by Suncorp and AAMI) and the Gardiner Foundation Community Grants program.

The East Gippsland and Wangaratta LGAs had most grants requested and awarded, with a total of \$1.2M distributed via 42 grants. Across the state, 59% of funding supported activities to develop awareness, knowledge and skills via 107 grants. Twenty per cent of funding (\$1.7M) supported 101 projects aimed at providing access to services and activities, while the balance was split between investing in infrastructure and equipment (12% | 112 grants) and building organisational capacity (9% | 44 grants).

Grants were awarded to 141 (39% of all grants | 43% of funds) disaster resilience and recovery activities. Of these, 67 projects totalling nearly \$1.3M focussed on longer term post-emergency / disaster recovery.

## Connecting across generations

Australian Government

\$10,000

Conceived by Wodonga City Council as a way to combat social isolation post COVID and address the stigma of ageing, the Centenarian Portrait Project by Teenagers was a unique, intergenerational art initiative that brought two distinct cohorts together to create portraits, sparking a memorable exchange of perspectives.

The project, supported by a Rebuilding Regional Communities Strengthening Rural Communities grant, paired eight teenage artists with eight centenarians. Meeting regularly, the youth heard living historical Australian stories, while the centenarians saw their experiences brought to life through the eyes of a new generation. Additional workshops helped teenagers to develop communication and empathy skills, build rapport and transfer ideas into images.

In a milestone moment for the young artists, the final portraits were exhibited at Hyphen's Community Gallery, attracting 60,000 visitors, and were later gifted to the centenarians and their families.



*"My interaction with Lois has been a profound journey, teaching me valuable communication skills with older generations and unveiling the richness of varied life experiences."*

Polly Davis

## Rural health hub strives for more

Beyond Medical

\$33,589

The Harrow Bush Nursing Centre set out to enhance patient care in their remote community, which no longer has a visiting GP service. An Enhancing Country Health Outcomes grant enabled the Centre to upgrade its vehicle, ensuring safe transport of emergency equipment, faster response times and ensuring good clearance on farm roads. Additionally, nursing staff completed further training in emergency care, maternity, wound closure, mental health and more, improving patient care across Harrow and several outlying communities in the West Wimmera Shire. Although COVID disrupted plans for more advanced qualifications, the Centre continues to provide essential health services, significantly reducing the need for community members to travel long distances for medical attention.



## Remote pARTicipation in Orbost

Gardiner Dairy Foundation

\$5,000

Post-pandemic, demand for online access to meetings and events has skyrocketed, including in Orbost. The Orbost Exhibition Centre in the East Gippsland dairy region used a Gardiner Dairy Foundation Community grant to improve digital access for the rural community. They purchased a portable video conferencing system, so they can deliver arts programs and offer access to training, development and information sessions to people who cannot travel due to health or distance. The new technology enhances delivery of events and exhibitions for artists and community groups too.



## Coordination creates strength in Korumburra

Various Donors

\$30,200

Since 2021, FRRR has supported Korumburra Staying Strong (KSS) to enhance local capabilities through the Disaster Resilient: Future Ready (DR:FR) Victoria program. The first stage saw Milpara Community House Inc partner with KSS to engage a coordinator to develop, manage and promote the **Helping Hub**. This accessible, multi-media platform connects individuals to volunteering opportunities and has strengthened community connections. It also proved its value as a reliable source of information and resources during storms and power outages in February 2024. This reinforced the importance of clear, localised information and of understanding roles and responsibilities during a disaster.

KSS is now leading community planning processes, with input from South Gippsland Shire Council and guided by the [Critical Dimensions for Community-led Resilience Building](#) (developed by FRRR and University of Sydney). This will clarify the role of community organisations alongside local government, as well as prioritise 80 community resilience-building ideas and ensure resources are allocated efficiently and projects planned in a timely, sustainable manner.

Both initiatives are part of a sustainable model for community resilience building that leverages the critical dimensions referenced above to position Korumburra to respond to future disruptions in an informed, connected and effective way.





## New South Wales

377 Grants  
\$6,438,878

New South Wales received just over a quarter of all funding awarded (26%) via 16 grant programs. Investing in Rural Community Futures, Takeover Lismore, The Yulgilbar Foundation Fund and place-based Fundraising Accounts accounted for a quarter of all funds awarded (\$1.6M).

The most funding went to the Ballina (14 grants, \$437,537 awarded) and Wingecarribee Shires (5 grants, \$400,800 awarded). In both cases, distributions from Fundraising Accounts accounted for most of the funding. The Bega Valley and Shoalhaven LGAs had the most requests and grants awarded (55 requests each | 23 and 26 grants awarded respectively).

Projects primarily focussed on building community resilience or developing organisational resilience and capacity (59% funds | 208 grants, \$3.8M). A total of 45% of grants awarded in NSW related to disaster resilience and recovery activities, with just over half of all funding supporting these projects.

## Community connection post-COVID

Australian Government

\$49,700

Queer Family Inc creates a sense of family and belonging for the LGBTIA+ community in the Northern Rivers, NSW, through community events, peer support and increased visibility. Just six months after their inception, COVID hit and severely impacted their service delivery. Using a \$49,700 Rebuilding Regional Communities Strengthening Rural Communities grant, they were able to hire a Recovery Officer for 12 months.

With the extra support, the organisation flourished and had a profoundly positive impact on the Northern Rivers region. They significantly expanded programming and events, engaging more than 2,000 people in 2022 alone. The response from the community was so positive and consistent, and the service need so great, that Queer Family secured funding to rent their own operational space, The Farmhouse.

*"It's thrilling and we would not be here without FRRR's funding and support."*



## Mental health support for flood-impacted youth

Suncorp Group

\$19,920

Human Nature Adventure Therapy Ltd provided mental health support to disadvantaged, flood-impacted youth in the Far North Coast of NSW. With their Suncorp Rebuilding Futures grant, they delivered Thrive Outside, a program focussing on wellbeing, adventure and skill-development. The therapeutic outdoor activities included a Young Women's Day, Horse Riding and two Retreats focussed on art therapy and connection.

The grant covered transportation and engagement costs, ensuring money and distance were no barrier to participation. The program reduced isolation, deepened local connections and improved wellbeing in a way that was community-centred, responsive and flexible. This aligns with the National Principles of Disaster Recovery, which advocates engaging and supporting the community to actively participate in their own recovery, at their own pace.



## Grant leveraged to enable recovery

Fire Fight Australia

\$25,000

Following the Black Summer bushfires, the Narooma district suffered significant trauma and economic loss. Narooma Mountain Bike Club Inc used a Strengthening Rural Communities grant to engage a specialist contractor to develop key documentation that ultimately enabled them to secure more than \$4M to develop the Narooma Mountain Bike Trails. This project built on the natural assets of the region to increase tourism, boost the local economy and provide the community a space to exercise and connect with nature.

[WATCH video to see the impact](#)



## Building resilience in Lake Cargelligo

CCI Giving

\$9,062

Lake Cargelligo has seen some tough times over the generations. St Francis Xavier Primary School used an In a Good Place grant to engage in the Resilience Project School Partnerships Program. This upskilled teachers to make the topic of good mental health more accessible to children and equipped students with lifelong tools that empower them to recognise the signs and take proactive steps to improve wellbeing for themselves and their families, ultimately benefitting the wider community.

## High Schoolers Haven

Seaton Foundation

\$6,000

Young people attending the Lismore Takeover event felt that anti-social behaviour might cease if there were alternative activities.

Lismore City Council used a Takeover grant to launch High Schoolers Haven, a youth-led pop-up space. The monthly event is designed by and for young people, with activities fostering social connections, support and skills development. Starting with 30 people, by August 60 people were going along. Council is now working with community to ensure the sustainability of the event.





## Queensland

164 Grants  
\$3.4M

Queensland received nearly 14% of all funding (164 grants | \$3.4M), a 2% decrease on FY23. Two thirds went to projects developing organisational resilience and capacity and promoting individual and community health and social wellbeing. One third of the funding was awarded via NFP Fundraising Accounts for The Child Writes Fund and The Next Economy. A further 32% of QLD's funding was through our flagship Strengthening Rural Communities program (95 grants | \$1.1M).

The remaining funds awarded were distributed via 10 programs, including 16 grants (\$682K | 20% funding) through the Future Drought Fund's Community Impact Program and Small Network Grants, both of which are part of the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative. Just less than one third of all projects focussed on disaster resilience and recovery activities, with 32% of funding awarded going towards emergency or disaster preparedness projects across the state.

### NFP report cards enhance drought resilience

Australian Government –  
Future Drought Fund

\$50,000

Not For Profit HQ Ltd received a \$50,000 grant through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative - Community Impact Program to strengthen the capacity of community organisations in the Fitzroy Capricornia region. In collaboration with the Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association, the project conducted health checks for local NFPs, delivering each organisation a tailored report with recommendations to increase their capacity and reach.

Next steps include leadership training, improved operational plans and skill development to enhance the resilience of NFPs in drought-affected areas such as Clarks Creek, Banana Shire and Central Highlands. Building capability, strengthening relationships with local governments and connecting like-minded organisations improves the operational health of local NFPs, their staff and local networks, enabling them to play an active role in supporting their communities during future droughts and other climate impacts.



### Healthy meals, healthy mob

Australian Government

\$9,592

The Cape York Institute received a \$9,592 grant through the Rebuilding Regional Communities stream of our Strengthening Rural Communities program to support the Mayi Market COVID Resilience Project. This initiative provided 11 chest freezers to remote Cape York communities, so families could stockpile essential food, reducing reliance on overpriced, poor-quality goods from local stores. The project improved food storage and availability, stabilised prices during isolation periods and promoted healthier food choices for Cape York's vulnerable First Nations communities.

"This project has achieved excellent outcomes for our First Nations people of Cape York. The application and acquittal processes were basic and achievable in the timeframes. The portal is easy to navigate and use. Mel from FRRR was excellent in providing support and information when required and is an asset to your organisation for her professional, friendly, helpful attitude. Thanks FRRR, this project has truly made a big difference!"



### Gordonvale garden restores and reconnects

FRRR

\$10,000

Mulgrave Landcare and Catchment Group Inc. received a grant through the Small and Vital stream of the Strengthening Rural Communities program to establish a native plant nursery in Gordonvale. The project reconnected the community, providing a welcoming space for volunteers to learn about native plants, participate in environmental restoration projects and engage in weekly activities. The nursery grew more than 10,000 native seedlings and created opportunities for employment and mentorship, benefiting both the local environment and community.



### Technology engages visitors

Telstra

\$10,000

Cherbourg, in the South Burnett, has a deep sense of pride in the many Nations, groups and people that now call the community home. The Cherbourg museum is designed to remember, heal and share the story of Cherbourg with the wider population. The Cherbourg Historical Cultural Community Precinct used funds from Telstra's Connected Communities program to implement digital technologies to improve access to the Museum's resources. The result has been more visitors engaging and interacting with the exhibits, building understanding of the important role Cherbourg played in our post-colonial history.





## South Australia

105 Grants

\$1.9M

In total, \$1.2M was awarded via 69 grants. Sixty-nine percent of these grants and 76% of funding was distributed via three programs – Strengthening Rural Communities; Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative (HRCPI); and Aboriginal Health in Aboriginal Hands. Not surprisingly, nearly two thirds of projects were in outer regional, remote or very remote communities.

In addition to the projects funded this year, there were 14 HRCPI projects still underway from the previous year including multi-year grants. Recovery work continues on Kangaroo Island too, following Black Summer. Increasing investment in SA remains a strategic priority for FRRR and there has been significant outreach and engagement to grow networks and raise FRRR's profile with partners and communities alike.

## Talking about (dis)ability

Friends of FRRR

\$10,000

Auspiced by Stand Like Stone Foundation and run by a group of six young people, the Let's talk about (dis) ability project was designed to change mindsets around disability by empowering youth. With an FRRR Heywire Youth Innovation grant, a team of young individuals with a disability on the Limestone Coast created and delivered a series of interactive double lessons to increase knowledge and understanding of disability, accessibility and inclusion.

While they faced delays due to COVID, they persevered and the students showed interest, asked genuine questions and wanted to know more. In addition to participating students confirming that their understanding of disability had improved, the young people who facilitated the program also benefitted. Two of the small team leveraged the skills, lessons, experience and expertise they developed to gain employment.

"We have become much stronger, and confident advocates in the region and are being recognised as such, getting approached by local media and having more opportunities open that support our continuing journey."



## Shed boosts economy, wins awards

Australian Government

\$150,000

In 2019, FRRR awarded a Tackling Tough Times Together grant to the volunteer-led Jamestown Show Committee to build a new shearing shed and wool pavilion. It now also serves as a key Shearing and Wool Industry Training Centre. The committee is proud to have the capacity to help give locals skills in an industry that has a worker shortage and believe it's made a long term impact on the local economy – in more ways than one. In October 2023, the venue hosted the Australian National Speed Shearing and Wool Handling Championships, attracting competitors from across Australia and New Zealand. In February 2024, the Championships was named SA's Community Event of the Year, highlighting that investment in community infrastructure yields both short term social outcomes, as well as longer term economic gains that benefits the wider community.



## Lessons learnt from caring for wildlife after the fires

Paul Ramsay Foundation

\$16,075

Kangaroo Island Wildlife Network Inc used a Strengthening Rural Communities Prepare and Recover grant to run a one-day event for the NGOs and volunteers who undertook wildlife recovery after the Black Summer bushfires. Featuring a range of presentations followed by group discussion, the goal was to learn, reflect and recognise volunteers for their efforts. For those who couldn't attend, the materials were shared online and in publications. The outcomes go far beyond knowledge-sharing, to restoring social fabric, building capacity, improving wildlife management, habitat protection and enhancing animal welfare. It also adds to the limited emergency response capability in this remote location.



## Big Swamp refuge prepared for future

Center for Disaster Philanthropy

\$21,025

Big Swamp Community Centre was the local refuge during the Black Summer bushfires, despite not having a functioning kitchen. A Strengthening Rural Communities Prepare and Recover grant from FRRR allowed the committee to buy the materials to construct a new kitchen. The construction, valued at around \$70,000, was completed almost entirely by volunteers. The new space has created opportunities for fundraising, as well as given the community a gathering place in times of good, as well as times of crisis.





## Western Australia

88 Grants

\$1.4M

While funds awarded in WA decreased this year, it was pleasing to see a 21% increase in the number of applications received, and a corresponding 11% increase in the number of grants awarded – a testimony to our continued focus on building support for WA communities.

Most grants were awarded through the Strengthening Rural Communities program (40 | \$407K), while 55% of the funding was awarded to just 20 grants via the Future Drought Fund's Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative (HRCPI) – on top of the \$1M through this program last year.

These HRCPI grants are reflected in the 59% of funding that was directed to projects focussed on disaster resilience and recovery activities.

One quarter of all projects in WA promoted individual and community health and social wellbeing (22 grants | \$450K), with projects to build community resilience next with 17 grants (19%) totalling \$391K, and projects acting on environmental challenges / opportunities accounting for 14% of grants awarded (12 grants | \$191K).

## Performance builds resilience

Private Donor

\$9,961

A Strengthening Rural Communities Small & Vital grant to Denmark Community Resource Centre and Annette Carmichael Projects enabled locals in Porongurup and surrounds to increase their resilience by co-creating and performing a dance. Distributed 15 - The Stars Descend was a multi-site trail of dance performances to inspire climate action and hope.

Sixty-five people participated in the 20 dance workshops, held either in Porongurup Hall or on the Twin Creeks Conservation Reserve. The process, which also included consultation with local Elders, culminated in a performance to a packed audience from surrounding communities. The project empowered participants to contribute and collaborate, creating and strengthening relationships across age, culture, gender and life experiences and increase their sense of belonging.

**"This project gave me so much connection with people, place and myself. The joy that I felt contributing to the greater good was food for my soul... We moved on the land, for the land."**

Participant

WATCH the video here



## Strengthening the Wheatbelt

Australian Government

\$96,000

Wheatbelt & Beyond Youth Mentoring Inc. received a Community Impact Program grant, through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative. They have employed staff to expand their offering and reach, including finding more mentors and diversifying the way the programs are delivered. Part-way through the two-year program, they have connected with seven high-schools and begun planning their second annual camp for mentees, working with a Student Leadership Team to shape the activities. Engagement and support have also increased with the growing pool of mentors. All of these activities are helping to increase the social resilience of Wheatbelt communities, ensuring they are better prepared for future droughts or other disruptions.



## Christmas Island education program

LeMessurier Charitable Trust and a Private Donor

\$10,000

With a focus on diversifying the Christmas Island economy, The Trustee for National Parks Conservation Trust on behalf of Director of National Parks identified opportunities to invest in conservation and tourism. They used a Strengthening Rural Communities grant to engage students and the community in developing and launching a Crab Cadets and Junior Rangers school-based program. The project is enabling around 250 children on Christmas Island to learn about the incredible biodiversity of the land and develop employment-ready skills tailored to local opportunities.



## Painting for better mental health

Nutrien Ag Solutions

\$5,000

In sparsely populated regions like Morawa, few opportunities exist for women to gather together to combat isolation and strengthen wellbeing. With a Nutrien Ag Solutions Community grant, the Shire of Morawa collaborated with the Community Resource Centre, the District High School and Desert Blue Connect to run six art workshops. In addition to networking and acquiring skills in painting, participants had access to mental health support from counsellors. The events were so impactful, they have now become a permanent offering in the community.





## Tasmania

55 Grants

\$1.3M

Nearly 4% of all funds were awarded to Tasmania this year. The availability of targeted funds for drought-preparedness activities through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative (HRCPI) drove a year-on-year increase in both total applications (up 30%) and grants awarded (up 57%). Fourteen grants were awarded through HRCPI, accounting for nearly two thirds of the total funding awarded across the state (66% | \$869K). Twenty-six Strengthening Rural Communities grants were also awarded (\$342K), with the balance distributed through a further seven programs. Disaster recovery and preparedness activities accounted for nearly 74% of all funding, although only 42% of all grants awarded. Nearly 72% of all funding went toward to develop awareness, knowledge or skills.

## Connecting through creativity

Bertalli Family Foundation

\$10,000

Lightwave is a free regional festival on the Turrakana - Tasman Peninsula established to encourage tourism, create connections and bring in income for regional artists, artworkers and local businesses in the traditionally slow winter months. After a successful inaugural event in 2022, Turrakana Tasman Arts wanted to expand the scope, vision and impact of the festival, and increase community engagement.

They used a Strengthening Rural Communities grant to run a series of artist-led community workshops in the run up to the main event. Around 200 local people were involved in creating art, craft, costume making and photography, all of which was presented in one form or another to the community at the 2023 festival.



"The festival was a valuable event bringing joy, excitement and cultural interest. With very little happening in the middle of winter, the event lifts the spirits of the community and encourages artistic and cultural practices."

## Building community capacity to restore native vegetation

ANZ

\$14,766

King Island's prosperity relies on a healthy natural environment. The King Island Landcare Group plays a key role in restoring native vegetation and monitoring restoration impacts, and adapts their efforts based on results. Using an ANZ Seeds of Renewal grant, the group engaged a consultant to co-develop a 'Restoration Kit' to guide their activities. Since their training, community members are using it to protect and enhance biodiversity values and habitat for threatened species.



## Going solar ensures viability

Bertalli Family Foundation

\$10,000

Rocky Cape Public Hall is the hub of the 200 person community in the north-west. The management committee wanted to install a solar system to reduce operating costs and increase their viability. They used a Strengthening Rural Communities grant to have a solar PV system installed. This has enhanced wellbeing by reducing financial stress on the committee, at the same time as reducing the environmental impact of the Hall.





## Northern Territory

35 Grants  
\$962K

The number of applications received (78) and grants awarded (35) both increased in the NT year-on-year, as did the funding awarded (\$962,470, up from \$425,611 in FY23).

With a focus on drought preparedness, the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative's Small Network Grants program made up 52% of all funding (11 grants | \$501K). Most grants were awarded through the Strengthening Rural Communities Program (17 grants), while the opening of an FRRR Fundraising Account by Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation and two distributions (\$112,500) also boosted the figures.

Funding mainly supported projects that contributed to building community resilience (43%) and developing organisational resilience and capacity (17%) - a shift from last year where the focus was on culturally vibrant communities and activities to promote individual and community health and social wellbeing.

### Preserving culture, sustaining connections

The Yulgilbar Foundation

\$10,000

Culturally significant songline dances traditionally performed at corroborees in the Jawoyn region had not been danced in cultural practice for more than two generations. To preserve these vital cultural practices for future generations, Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation ran three dance camps to transfer cultural knowledge. Significant songmen, cultural facilitators and dancers met on Country for these immersive sessions. A Strengthening Rural Communities grant covered the costs of permits from Traditional Owners, accommodation and transport costs for all attendees at the camps. The traditional dances, which were performed at the 2023 Barunga Festival, were the conduit for deepening spiritual connections, a sense of belonging and pride in culture and cultural practices.

"I feel so proud to be here from Daly River and dancing for you mob in Katherine, telling our story of how we learned that Wanga and Lirriga ... knowing I make you happy and I am being the next young one to know this dance and keep it alive."

L Marranya



## Gurindji Freedom Day Festival

Tim Fairfax Family Foundation

\$10,000

The Freedom Day Festival, which marks the Wave Hill Walk-off and the birth of Land Rights, is one of Indigenous Australia's most important events. Each year, thousands come together on Gurindji Country to remember. Delivering the festival is a major undertaking for the Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation and the community, with significant surge capacity and logistics required to accommodate such large numbers and activities. A Strengthening Rural Communities grant contributed to the event's smooth delivery by enabling them to comply with COVID safety plan requirements for ablutions.

"While not the most fun topic, our festival ablutions situation required urgent attention and is hugely important to the broader goals of the festival (keeping culture and stories alive) ... We couldn't have done it this year without FRRR!"

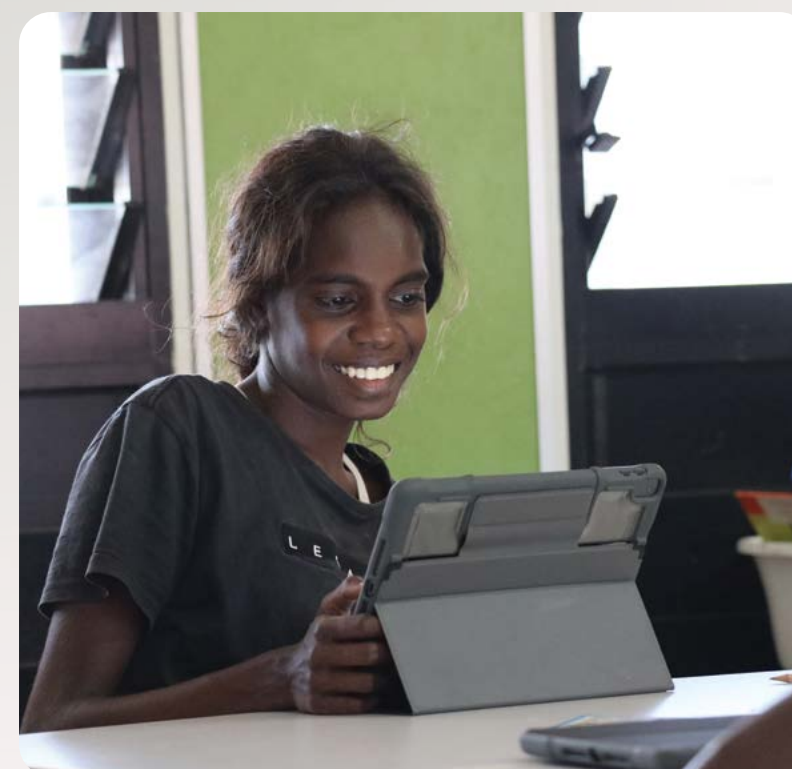


### New IT enables place-based education

Tim Fairfax Family Foundation

\$10,000

The Karrkad-Kanjidji Trust (KKT) recently scaled their remote bi-cultural school, the Nawarddeken Academy, from one campus to three. Thanks to a Strengthening Rural Communities grant, KKT was able to boost IT capacity across the two new campuses by purchasing iPads. With local education now available, rangers and their families can live, work and be educated on their homelands.







## Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

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