FRRR
Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal

Celebrating 25 years of Local Solutions, Lasting Impact

FRRR's Annual Review 2024/25

Acknowledgement of Country

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung people as the Traditional Custodians of Djaara Country (Bendigo) where we are headquartered and extend our acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, especially where we fund organisations and activities.

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

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

First Nations community members commencing a Smoking Ceremony as part of the Welcome to Country at the Blak Markets in Huskisson, NSW. Image: Mane Collective.

Welcome

Established in 2000, FRRR is the only national foundation focussed solely on the social and economic strength of Australia's remote, rural and regional communities.

We work alongside communities to catalyse locally led solutions. Our support helps them navigate disruption and unlock opportunity. We connect resources and build enduring local skills and knowledge to help reshape how remote and rural Australia is seen, valued and supported.

This reporting year marks 25 years since FRRR was founded. In those intervening years, we've connected good will of our supporters with the good purposes of local communities to create more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities.

To date we've awarded more than $213 million in grants to nearly 16,000 projects, however our work is about much more than money. We proudly back people and organisations in and of their place because we know that targeted, well-informed investment stimulates ideas that lead to positive changes, both big and small – especially in smaller communities.

This report looks back at what was achieved during this reporting year, showcases some examples of the impacts of our support and outlines our focus as we enter our next 25 years.

Contents

Cover photos, left to right: Dorrigo State School P&C purchased equipment to support the livestock curriculum; Heywire Summit Canberra in February; Eulah Creek Recreation Reserve Land Manager installed solar panels on the hall; Jayden from Gnarly Neighbours social enterprise.

Fast facts

Funding received

$35M*
received
FY24: $39.4M

557 donors made
1,007
donations
FY24: 1,452

Granting

2,075
applications
FY24: 2,909

$28.1M
requested
FY24: $54M

713
approved
(38% of eligible app's)
FY24: 1,188

$11.6M
awarded
FY24: $24.5M

65%
to non-DGR orgs
FY24: 69%

26%
of grants to first-time applicants
FY24: 21%

Reach

46%
to outer regional, remote or very remote communities
FY24: 45%

7%
of funds to WA
($0.8M, 68 grants)
FY24: 6% ($1.4M; 88 grants)

4%
of funds to NT
($0.5M, 29 grants)
FY24: 4% ($1.0M, 35 grants)

425
unique postcodes
FY24: 579

38%
of places received more than one grant
FY24: 43%

Community Fundraising

27 NFP Fundraising Accounts
22 Community Foundation Fundraising Accounts
FY24: 27 NFP; 16 CF

$7.8M
funds raised
FY24: $4.7M

$3.9M
granted out
FY24: $6.0M

* Note, donations are reported in this document on actuals received during the year and grants reflect funds awarded. These figures differ from FRRR's audited financial accounts lodged with ACNC, which reflect accounting standards.

Natalie Egleton and Tim Fairfax AC at FRRR's 25th anniversary celebrations in Melbourne.

A message from the Chairman and CEO

This reporting year marks 25 years since the formation of FRRR, which provides a wonderful opportunity to look back on the impact of the Foundation. As is often said, our founders showed great foresight in creating FRRR, particularly in endowing the Foundation with special tax status, enabling FRRR to channel support to the grassroots groups that are the backbone of so much of remote, rural and regional Australia.

We are grateful to our partners and supporters, who this year contributed more than $35M in donations, a large portion of which is for future programming. We awarded 713 grants, totalling $11.6M, which is less than last year due to the timing of the wind up and renewal of a number of grant programs. Demand for support remained high however.

Once again, our funding reached far and wide with grants awarded into 425 unique postcodes. The majority of the funding was small grants, which continue to be truly catalytic, backing the people and projects that contribute to vibrant, resilient and sustainable communities.

This year also saw us invest more in our operations, strengthening our systems and foundations to catalyse FRRR for our next 25 years. This included upgrading our donor management system, thanks to the generosity of one of our partners, and transitioning to a more efficient granting platform.

It also saw us finalise our strategy for the next three years. This new strategic plan sharpens our focus and targets our efforts where we can make the most difference – the communities in remote, very remote and rural areas, especially those that are often structurally excluded. Over the coming years, we will dive more deeply into our insights and use our voice and position to influence change for rural communities. We'll continue to collaborate with communities, strengthen their capacity and facilitate partnerships that co-create solutions that empower and foster vibrancy, resilience and sustainability of these communities, now and into the future.

In closing, we extend our deep appreciation to FRRR's Directors, our Patrons, volunteers, staff and our partners for your ongoing support. Through our collective efforts, we empower local community members to continue to strengthen Australia's heartland, which in turn drives the economic and social prosperity of our nation. We hope that you enjoy reading some of the stories from these communities, which showcase what is possible when we back these inspiring people and places.

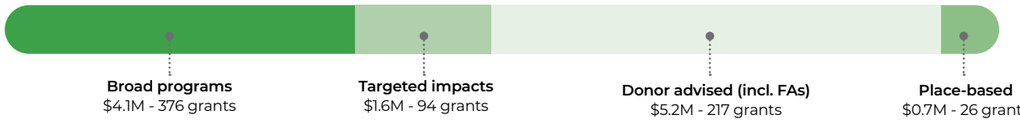
Tim Fairfax AC
Chairman
on Turrbal and Jagera Country

Natalie Egleton
Chief Executive Officer
on Darkinjung Country

Reach and impact

Thanks to the generous support of our partners, we awarded $11.6 million via 713 grants from 2,075 applications. (FY24: $24.5M; 1,188 grants, 2,909 applications). In total, we supported 38% of all eligible applications. (FY24: 45%) These funds were distributed through a mix of broad grant programs and all of these grants help local communities address local priorities.

For every dollar FRRR awarded, on average NFPs were able to leverage a further $1.46, bringing the total value of projects funded to at least $28.4M. In addition, FRRR delivered a number of capacity building initiatives, such as workshops and training sessions through our deep place-based work, which aren't reflected in the granting numbers.



Sixty-five percent of all grants were awarded to non-DGR organisations, highlighting the importance and value of FRRR's unique tax status in allowing us to support organisations that often miss out on philanthropic funding. For every $1 funded by FRRR, a further $1.46 was raised in communities, through either additional cash or in-kind contributions.

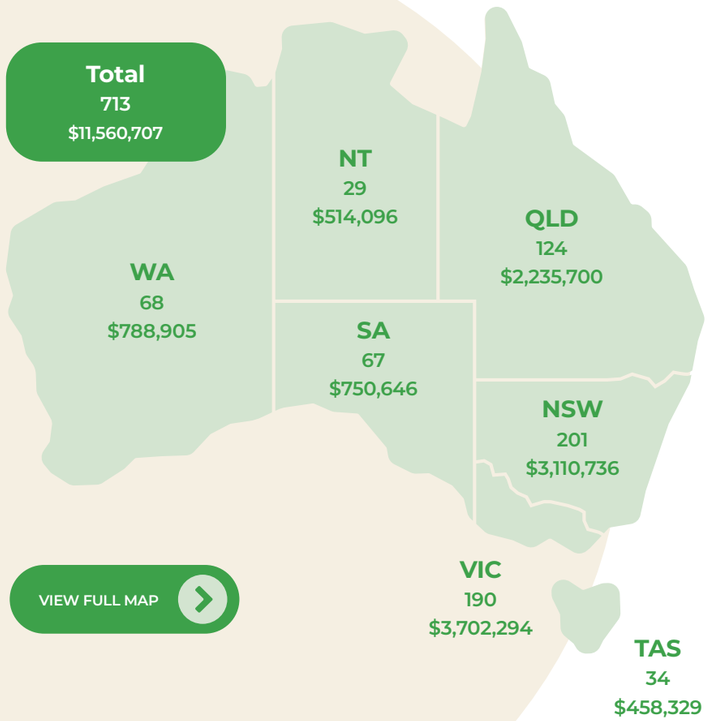
A further 258 projects were assessed as eligible and could have been funded if another $2.9 million was available. This unmet need is part of why FRRR is actively seeking to grow our Small Grants Fund, so returns can be put toward bridging this gap.

Increasing reach

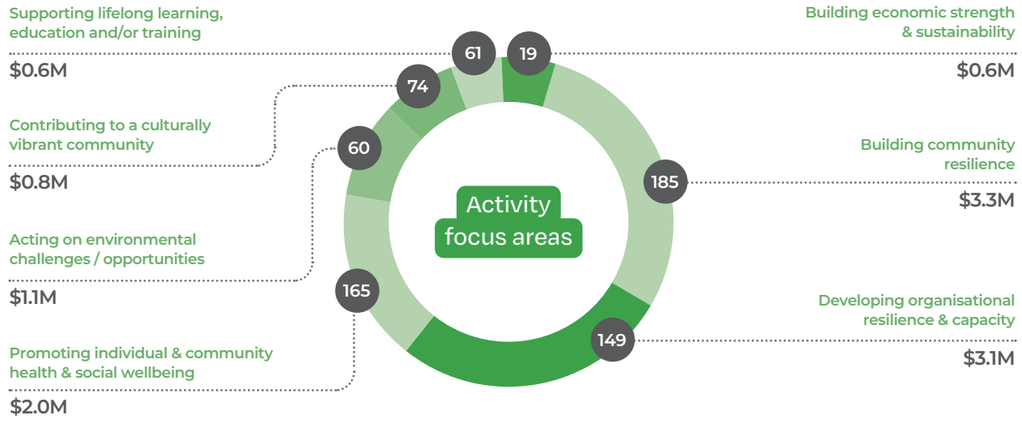
As in past years, funding was widespread, reaching 254 Local Government Areas and 425 unique postcodes. Most funding was awarded to VIC (190; $3.7M), while NSW received the largest number of grants (201 grants; $3.1M).

More than 45% of funding awarded went to outer regional, remote or very remote communities ($5.3M; 418 grants) and more than half of all grants and 40% of total funding awarded was in communities with a SEIFA index of 1-40 (50.1%; 357; $4.6M).

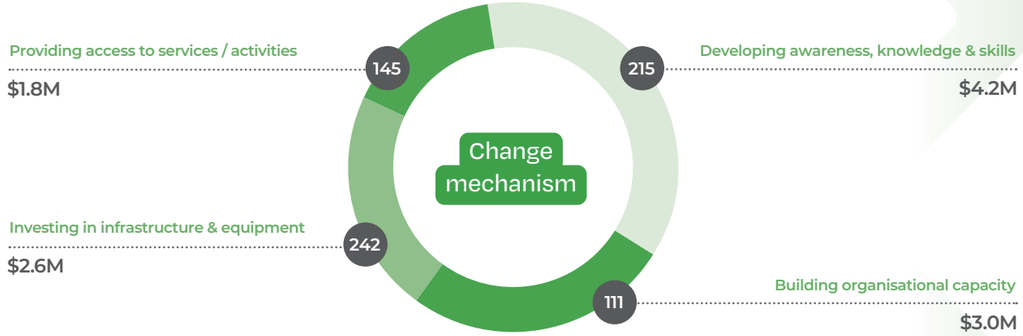
Nearly a quarter of all funded applications were from first time applicant organisations (24%). This indicates that FRRR continues to reach new communities, extending our impact.



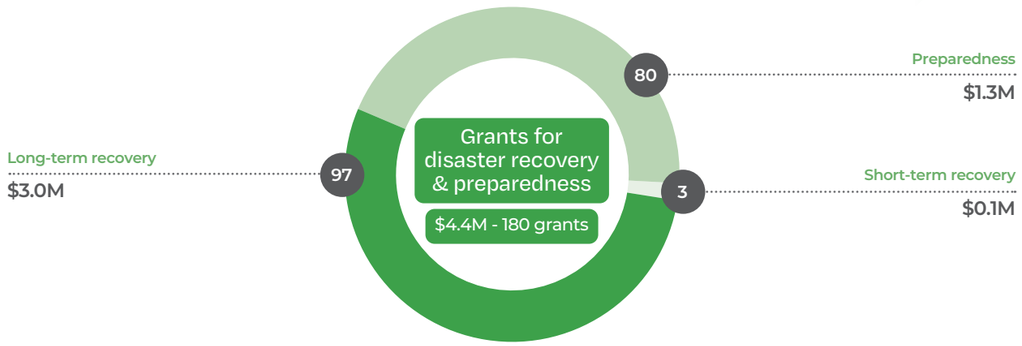
FRRR asks all grant recipients to report on their projects against seven activity focus areas, to help us track how funds are being used. This year, most funding went toward building community resilience; developing organisational resilience and capacity; or promoting individual and community health and social wellbeing. These three areas accounted for 73% of total funds awarded ($8.4M via 499 grants).



In terms of what the grants funded, nearly 37% was awarded for initiatives developing awareness, knowledge and skills; 26% supported building organisational capacity; 22% was invested in infrastructure and equipment; and the remaining 15% helped organisations to provide access to services and activities.



Disaster recovery and preparedness funding accounted for just over one quarter of all grants awarded (25%; 180 grants) and 38% of funding ($4.4M). Of this, 68% of the total funds awarded were for longer-term disaster recovery projects ($3M), with nearly half being distributed through Not-for-Profit Fundraising Accounts and Community Foundation Accounts (48%; 12 grants; $1.4M).



"FRRR doesn't just provide funding – it provides sustainability, encouragement and opportunity."

Bellingen Youth Orchestra

Members of Bellingen Youth Orchestra.

Our strategy

This reporting year marked the conclusion of our last five-year strategy. Our focus was on strengthening resilience and sustainability in the intersecting areas of People, Place, Disaster Resilience and Climate Solutions to address areas of greatest inequity, adjustment and disruption, and vulnerability. We did this through a combination of granting, capacity building, leveraging our networks and partnerships, and sharing our knowledge and insights.

Over the last few months, we have been developing our strategy for the next three years. It will build on the strengths and learnings of the last 25 years and sharpen our focus, increase our impact and spark real change in the areas where FRRR is uniquely placed to support communities.

To thrive, remote, very remote and rural communities need to be self-generating, prosperous and able to drive the kind of future they want for themselves. Yet the systems that shape access to funding, services, infrastructure and decision-making are largely designed for metropolitan and regional city contexts, creating persistent barriers to inclusion, investment and voice.

That's why our next phase will see us increase our focus on communities in remote and very remote areas, as well as those that are generally under-served and face particular structural inequities. We will continue to offer a broad range of grants and capacity building programs, as well as harness our insights and leverage our voice to reshape how remote and rural Australia is seen, valued and supported.

We will also lean into the cross-cutting themes that we have identified in recent years to work where we are uniquely positioned to collaborate with communities and facilitate partnerships that co-create solutions that empower and foster vibrancy, resilience and sustainability. These five areas will guide our strategic focus over the next three years.

The following pages share some examples of how we've delivered against these five focus areas over the last 12 months.

1

Next generation leadership (transition)

Exploring innovative ways to connect all generations, share leadership responsibilities and strengthen community groups for a sustainable future.

2

Outback and very remote communities

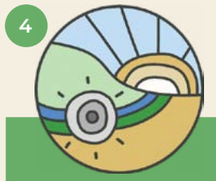
Working with outback / remote regions to help mitigate market failures through funding and sharing our insights.

3

Climate solutions

With rural communities on the frontline of our changing climate, we can help build capacity and resourcing.

4



First Nations self-determination

Step up as an ally and back First Nations-led initiatives that strengthen culture, Country, economic participation and reconciliation.

5

Disaster resilience

Invest in strengthening the social and built capital to enhance community capacity and ensure more prepared and climate resilient communities.

VIC

Buloke's Boredom Relief festival

The Figs playing at Buloke's Boredom Festival.

At the 2023 Heywire Summit young people told us that opportunities to connect safely are often limited to sport and the annual disco, which can lead to boredom, risk taking and poor health outcomes.

With a $10,000 Heywire grant, funded by the AMP Foundation, 2023 Heywire winner Blake Lee and Birchip Neighbourhood House brought young people together to co-design and deliver the Buloke Boredom Relief festival.

This inclusive, youth-led celebration featured live music, creative workshops, cultural activities and sensory-friendly spaces, all hosted in a safe, drug and alcohol-free environment. It empowered local young people to develop leadership skills, showcased their talents and built stronger connections within the community. The success of the festival laid the foundations for future youth-led events across Buloke.

"Visitors to the region for the weekend were exposed to a culturally-diverse, all-aged event that showed rural communities are innovative, diverse and vibrant. Visitors were constantly amazed that Birchip could have something like this."

Simone Christie, Birchip Neighbourhood House

NI

Youth drop-in centre fitted out

On Norfolk Island, NI-Connect has established a youth drop-in centre to address urgent mental health and wellbeing needs.

The centre offers a safe, supervised environment for 12-18 year-olds to socialise and access support, including immediate mental health assistance from staff and volunteers. A $19,998 In a Good Place grant, funded by CCI Giving, was used to furnish the space with youth-friendly equipment and technology.

The centre has quickly become a valued hub, fostering inclusion and wellbeing, while giving young people a positive place to belong.

Local youth enjoying the facilities at a new youth drop-in centre on Norfolk Island.

"This grant has enabled us to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive space where young people can connect, access mental health support, and participate in activities that foster their growth and wellbeing. The centre has already made a meaningful impact on our community. Thank you for making a lasting difference in Norfolk Island's youths' lives."

Dr Dianne Jackson, Key Assets Australia

VIC

Trailblazer creates better future for Seymour youth

Young rural youth experienced skateboarding as part of Gnarly Neighbours social enterprise.

In Seymour, VIC, a $5,096 grant through the Sally Foundation Trailblazer Development Fund helped Jayden Sheridan build the capacity of his social enterprise, Gnarly Neighbours. The funding helped expand creative workshops for rural youth to include STEM learning, such as 3D printing and digital design.

The program demonstrates what can be achieved when local leaders step up and rural youth are given opportunities, space and resources. By combining creative arts with STEM learning, the project has empowered young people to explore new skills, boost confidence and engage with their community in meaningful ways.

WA

Connecting community in Corrigin

Corrigin in WA's Wheatbelt has a population of approximately 1,000 people, with the economy reliant on sheep and cereal farming. As is the case in many country towns, the community is strongly anchored by sports and the local pub. While these meet the needs of many residents, surveys revealed high levels of disengagement and isolation among core members of the community.

1922 & You is a local organisation dedicated to keeping rural towns safe and thriving. They developed a long-term vision to restore the site of the former town hall, which was built in 1922, so that it could be used once again as a community hub for the people of Corrigin.

Through grants, donations and volunteers, the empty and derelict lot was transformed into a vibrant space for the community. A $3,500 grant from Nutrien Ag Solutions Community Program facilitated the completion of the landscaping works and beautification of the unused lot.

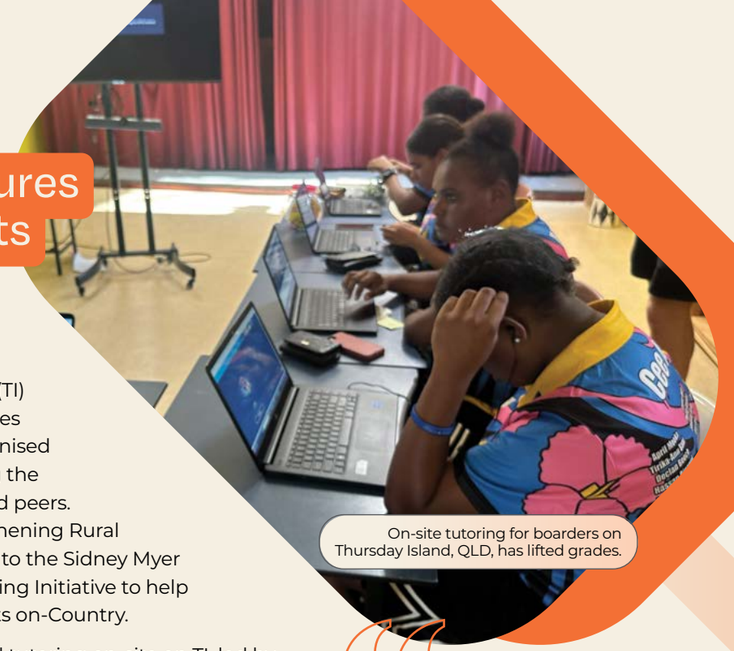
"After securing the FRRR funding, we received additional financial support for the courtyard space from a number of sources including RAC, Central AgCare, and CHB, which allowed us to expand upon our initial project idea (as funded by FRRR) and deliver a bigger courtyard initiative with an associated launch event … FRRR has been instrumental in bettering our rural community and we are extremely grateful for the support received! Thank you again!"

Sophie Birch, 1922 & You

New community hub and recreation space in Corrigin, WA.

QLD

Creating brighter futures for remote TI students



On-site tutoring for boarders on Thursday Island, QLD, has lifted grades.

Torres Strait Kaziw Meta (TSKM) offers on-Country accommodation on Thursday Island (TI) for students from the outer island communities who study at Tagai State College. TSKM recognised that many of the boarders were not achieving the same educational outcomes as their mainland peers. With a $10,000 grant through FRRR's Strengthening Rural Communities – Small & Vital program, thanks to the Sidney Myer Fund, they launched the Bright Futures Tutoring Initiative to help close this gap and support educating students on-Country.

The program provides structured, after-school tutoring on-site on TI, led by local teachers who have become both mentors and role models.

The initiative is now a well-embedded feature of boarding life at Kaziw Meta, fostering a culture of learning that's increased English pass rates from 24% to 68% in just one term. All Year 12 boarders graduated in 2024 with more confidence and brighter futures.

"Our kids are smiling and happy when they see the tutors walk in."

Thomas Dunsmore , TKSM CEO

WA

Broome CRC gets a technology boost

Upgraded IT facilities are helping connect locals in Broome, WA.

The tyranny of distance is very apparent in remote locations such as Broome, which lies more than 2,200 km from Perth. Access to services and digital connectivity are often a challenge in remote communities and the Broome Community Resource Centre (CRC) sought to replace ageing technology and equipment to meet the community's needs and expectations.

They used a $10,000 Telstra Connected Communities grant via FRRR that went towards purchasing 10 new PCs, while funding from other sources enabled them to upgrade the video-conferencing equipment and peripherals for use with the new Windows 11 machines.

"We were thrilled to receive this grant from FRRR through Telstra's Connected Communities program. Our project was essential to our ongoing services and with the grant funding from FRRR, as well as the other programs involved, we were able to complete the full project and upgrade our Centre without compromising on equipment specifications in any way. That is so gratifying and ensures our technology will serve us and the community well for quite some years."

Frank O'Connor, Broome CRC

Representatives from Jacana Energy and Original Power celebrating the microgrid's impact in Borroloola, NT.

NT

Powering a stronger future in Borroloola

Borroloola, a remote Aboriginal township in the Gulf region of the NT, faced severe energy poverty, frequent power disconnections and escalating climate vulnerability. These factors undermined health, wellbeing and economic stability.

Since 2019, the Borroloola community and Original Power, a First-Nations owned community development organisation, have partnered to undertake a feasability study for a project to install a utility-scale solar migrogrid. This would supply reliable power to Borroloola. In 2023, the NFP Ngardara Cooperative was formed to formally represent community interests in the project, including managing their majority stake of the facility. While initially auspiced by Original Power, Ngardara Directors and members needed to boost their governance capacity. A $20,000 grant supported training, which has enhanced the governance, administration and financial management capabilities of Ngardara as they embark on the implementation of this utility-scale renewable energy project.

The microgrid will include a 2.1 MW solar array and a 3.2 MW / 6.2 MWh battery system designed to supply clean, affordable energy to the township. Combined with new commercial agreements with Jacana Energy, it will deliver direct financial relief to 150 households, reduce energy costs by 80% and save over one million litres of diesel annually. The construction phase is expected to create 25 jobs and train 35 Indigenous workers.

> "This project [demonstrates] key innovations in how First Nations ownership, supported through targeted capacity development alongside project development, can drive uptake and investment in community energy solutions that build social, economic and climate resilience across our regions."
>
> *Lauren Mellor, Original Power*

NSW

River Warriors protect the Brunswick River catchment

Monitoring progress of the Rewilding Our Floodplains project in NSW.

The Brunswick River catchment in northern NSW, which was significantly impacted by the February 2022 floods, faces mounting threats from development, pollution, invasive species and climate change. To tackle some of these challenges, River Warriors, led by Positive Change for Marine Life (PCFML), designed, coordinated and delivered a replicable riparian restoration project on the Brunswick River, called Rewilding Our Floodplains. The goals were to prevent and prepare for future climate related impacts, strengthen ecosystem services and protect carbon sinks.

PCFML received a $24,941 grant from FRRR through the Strengthening Rural Communities program (funded by Suncorp) to fund a cultural induction for volunteers, cultural monitoring, permits and approvals, purchase of a drone and camera traps, kayak hire, design and development of a digital platform, and part payment of the program coordinator's salary. It also funded the creation of a series of educational and program videos that are available on YouTube.

This initiative has created a movement towards climate resilience, with both a new online community and a dedicated core of individuals committed to restoration, environmental monitoring, and climate change preparation.

> "Overall, our achievements align with our goal to engage the community, strengthen their capacity and capability as researchers and restorers, and provide proactive solutions to prepare for future climate-related events. The project's success has contributed to the collective emotional and mental health recovery of the community from previous flooding events, fostering a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the health of the Brunswick River and its resilience to future weather events."
>
> *Lucy Jepson, Positive Change for Marine Life*

VIC

Demystifying electric vehicles

Building understanding about electric vehicles in Kiewa Valley, VIC.

In northeast VIC's Kiewa Valley, misconceptions about electric vehicles (EV) have hindered uptake in the region. Kiewa Catchment Landcare Groups Inc, a not-for-profit network supporting sustainability across eight sub-groups, identified a need to address these barriers through community education.

They partnered with Kilowatt Cars to deliver a four-part EV education series. Events included community sessions, a school visit and production of a YouTube video, funded through an FRRR Community Led Climate Solutions grant for $7,460 supported by Boundless Earth. Hands-on demonstrations and practical insights boosted confidence and demystified myths around use of EVs, effectively promoting sustainability in rural communities via clean transport solutions.

WA

Couture with Culture

Fashion has become a powerful tool for healing and cultural storytelling in Broome, thanks to the vision of First Nations women. Nagula Jarndu (Saltwater Women), a First Nations women's art centre and community hub, initiated a project to foster belonging, pride and improved wellbeing and recovery following COVID through creativity and celebration.

With the support of a $10,000 SRC Rebuilding Rural Communities grant funded by the Australian Government, 12 artists created a couture wedding collection for the annual Country to Couture runway in Darwin. Participants designed and hand-printed textiles inspired by Country, bush medicine and Dreaming stories, and crafted accessories embellished with embroidery and beading.

The collection was selected as the show's finale and received national and international media coverage. Yawuru Elders provided cultural guidance and the wider community celebrated the work at Broome's KAFTA Runway fashion parade. The project sparked new opportunities for the artists and Nagula Jarndu, with hopes to showcase the collection at fashion weeks in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

WATCH

One of the wedding dresses designed by First Nations women that closed the Country to Couture show in Darwin, NT.

"The First Nations women artists who created the designs on the fabric and the outfits themselves were able to tell important stories from their culture and were able to share these in a celebratory space with a huge national and international audience ... We are most proud that this standout collection has come from a remote community that does not have easy access to resources and supplies or any great experience in creating wedding collections. The feedback has been very positive, and the project has created many new opportunities for the art centre."

Sheree Ford, Yawuru Jarndu Aboriginal Corporation

Photo: Dylan Buckee

QLD

Safe water underpins revitalisation of remote First Nations community

Finding potable water and installing infrastructure is helping revitalise this remote QLD community.

The Indigenous-owned and managed Mt Baird Station is close to the remote community of Hope Vale on Cape York Peninsula in Far North QLD. It is key to the Binthi Warra clan's plans to grow the economic and social wellbeing of local Indigenous people. However, the lack of water infrastructure hampered efforts to safely run cultural and tourism activities that would increase revenue for the community.

This lack of water security placed stress on families and community members who depend on the homestead as a safe base for work, culture and gatherings.

Binthi Land Holding Group Aboriginal Corporation received a Rebuilding Regional Communities grant funded by the Australian Government to help them to clean out bores, install pumps and other infrastructure and connect water to the homestead to create access to fresh water and improve sanitation. This enabled the community to focus on bigger infrastructure projects and establish programs and activities that foster economic and social resilience, and support their post-pandemic recovery strategy.

"Having an uninterrupted, safe water supply has been a major morale booster for the community. This project represented hope and progress, especially in the wake of the pandemic, providing tangible improvements in daily life. For remote communities, such enhancements reduce the stress associated with resource shortages and bring a renewed sense of stability and pride."

Ramona McIvor, Binthi Land Holding Group Aboriginal Corporation

NSW

Knowledge Circle strengthens cultural connections in Batemans Bay

First Nations leaders in Batemans Bay, NSW are sharing their cultural knowledge across their community.

Oral story telling is an integral component of First Nations culture. It is how traditions, lore and beliefs are passed on to the next generation. SEARMS Community Housing Aboriginal Corporation identified a need to enhance internal cultural safety and build stronger community ties through storytelling events.

Supported by a $14,000 Investing in Rural Community Futures grant funded by the Snow Foundation, they created their Living Library – Knowledge Circle project to celebrate the cultural gift of language and the art of storytelling in Aboriginal culture.

This initiative brought together Elders and future leaders to share cultural knowledge through a series of interactive engagements with schools, community groups, organisations and government bodies, promoting truth-telling, cultural pride and collaboration in an inclusive way.

SA

An inclusive approach to drought resilience

In SA's Limestone Coast region, consultation revealed that formal volunteering and drought preparedness were relatively unfamiliar concepts for many newly arrived migrants. The Australian Migrant Resource Centre led the Volunteering for Impact Exchange project to build understanding of the impact of drought and extreme weather on local communities, while increasing people's capacity to contribute.

It was supported by a $49,000 Community Impact Program grant through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative, funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

Activities included volunteer expos, emergency preparedness sessions, aged care and school placements, accredited Food Safety and First Aid training, environmental activities, farm excursions and large-scale events like Harmony Day and the Multicultural Soccer Carnival. To make these truly inclusive, organisers engaged interpreters, ran peer-led sessions and embedded informal volunteering opportunities within the celebrations. In total, more than 1,500 people and migrants from 20+ cultural backgrounds participated. This flexible, inclusive approach built trust and laid strong foundations that can be drawn upon in future droughts.

A series of initiatives helped migrants understand drought and its impact on their community on SA's Limestone Coast.

WATCH

"Staffing proved critical to successful delivery. The grant funded the employment of a part-time bilingual staff member who possessed strong language skills that significantly improved communication with key priority groups. Her appointment, supported by training and mentoring, enabled increased reach and deeper engagement, while also freeing up the Project Coordinator to focus on strategic oversight."

Mirsia Bunjaku, Australian Migrant Resource Centre

TAS

Creative solution to building climate resilience

RANT Arts' Close Up: Drought Preparedness Project focussed on engaging youth in climate resilience efforts.

A $31,059 Community Impact Program grant through the Helping Regional Communities Prepare for Drought Initiative, funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, enabled Tasmanians aged 18-35 to participate in creating three short, accessible, educational videos. The aim was to build awareness of and attitudes to drought preparedness and climate resilience at the community level.

The videos were launched publicly and distributed via a free toolkit, which was shared nationally. The culturally and linguistically diverse participants gained valuable skills and the project fostered pride in low-literacy, low-socioeconomic communities. Close Up was recognised by government, featured in exhibitions and nominated for a Resilient Australia Award. It demonstrated the power of the arts to amplify youth voices and contribute meaningfully to community disaster resilience and climate adaptation activities.

WATCH

Films developed by young Tasmanians, designed as a way to build understanding of disaster and climate resilience, were shown at a series of events.

"The most successful aspect of the project was the authenticity of youth voices. The Close Up experience enabled the youth participants to see themselves as community leaders capable of leading their community through challenges such as climate resilience and adaptation."

Karen Revie, RANT Arts

QLD

Glastonbury Hall: a rural hub rebuilt for resilience and connection

A new kitchen was part of a significant upgrade of this local QLD hall, which is a place of refuge after disasters.

Glastonbury, a rural community in QLD's Gympie Regional Shire, faced significant challenges following the 2022 floods. The disaster exposed the urgent need for a central, well-equipped refuge. Glastonbury Hall & Recreation Association launched a future proofing strategy to upgrade the hall's kitchen and establish it as a recognised Disaster Centre Hub.

A Rebuilding Futures grant, funded by Suncorp, contributed to the expansion and refurbishment of the kitchen. The revitalised hall now supports emergency response efforts and hosts a wide range of community events. The Association was awarded Community Organisation of the Year in 2024, and is now a source of pride, resilience and connection, benefitting more than 1,500 people and strengthening the social connection of Glastonbury and surrounding districts.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

FRRR's special tax listing allows us to partner with approved community-led organisations, including not-for-profits and Community Foundations, to help them fundraise for specific initiatives that the FRRR Board has approved. In this reporting year, FRRR hosted 49 Fundraising Accounts (27 Not-for-Profit Accounts and 22 Community Foundation Accounts. In total, Community Foundations and not-for-profit organisations raised more than $7.8M through these accounts (FY24: $4.7M) and FRRR regranted $3.9M of that through 64 distributions (FY24: $6.0, 83) to approved projects.

Most funds were raised by the Transition Accelerator Not-for-Profit Account, which raised $3.8M, while Southern Highlands Botanic Gardens received the most donations (61).

Participants in Youthrive's leadership development activities.

VIC

Youthrive Victoria

The Rural Foundation, trading as Youthrive Victoria, helps to develop and encourage action by future leaders of rural and regional communities. They focus on supporting young people disadvantaged by distance, personal circumstance or economic hardship.

Youthrive Victoria (a legacy of Helen Macpherson Smith) has had a Not-for-Profit Fundraising Account partnership with FRRR since 2019, through which they've raised more than $215,332 to date.

This year, Youthrive Victoria trialled a new style of capacity building program – the Youthrive Victoria Rural Summit. Over four days, attendees aged 18-30 heard from motivational speakers and worked on small group projects tackling big issues. They learned about getting support for projects, setting goals and handling tough workplace conversations. The Summit achieved its aims to enhance participants' community contributions, foster peer connections, build communication and leadership skills, and raise awareness of opportunities for young rural Victorians. Participants also learned about future Youthrive opportunities, including volunteer roles, upskilling events and alumni gatherings.

> "We would not have been able to secure the generous support for our recent Youthrive Victoria Rural Summit without the great relationship we have with FRRR. We are now confident of longer-term support for this pilot event."

Andrew McGuckian, CEO Youthrive Victoria

Riding for the Disabled Warrnambool (left) and Stoked Surf Therapy (right) are among the beneficiaries of South West Community Foundation's fundraising partnership with FRRR.

VIC

South West Community Foundation

South West Community Foundation (SWCF) covers the local government regions of Colac Otway, Warrnambool, Moyne, Glenelg, Corangamite and Southern Grampians. By pooling their donations, bequests and endowments, people and organisations in South West VIC can help build and strengthen local community groups and organisations, incubate and advance ideas and opportunities, and respond to issues and needs at both regional and local community levels.

This includes offering local community grants and programs like Back to School, which they stepped up to lead in their region when FRRR discontinued the program. More recently, they've partnered with FRRR to support and administer funds to boost capacity of NFPs in two communities that were shortlisted for the Investing in Rural Community Futures program in Victoria.

SWCF established a Community Foundation Account with FRRR in 2020, through which they have raised $633,886. They have used their Account to receive donations on behalf of local non-DGR organisations such as Food & Fibre Great South Coast, Warrnambool Cemetery and Colac Botanic Gardens, in addition to helping to reach non-DGR's through their community grant rounds.

> "I love our relationship with FRRR! The Community Foundation Account has opened up an extraordinary ability for us to support community philanthropy and see this partnership and the function as a core part of our ongoing strategy. FRRR also has deeper knowledge and experience on the reality of working in rural and regional communities and we have benefitted from that hugely over the years."

Annabel Cussen, Outgoing Executive Officer, SWCF

FRRR hosted a panel at the Philanthropy Australia Conference with representatives from Snow Foundation and Mujaay Ganma, about learnings from our Investing in Rural Community Futures program.

Insights & influence

Throughout FY25, we published a number of program evaluation and insights reports, sharing what we've learned to influence and shape change, and activating strategic alliances that amplify remote, rural and regional perspectives. This included:

- Tackling Tough Times Together Impact Report
- Investing in Rural Community Futures NSW Pilot Impact Report
- HRCPDI Mid-Term Evaluation Report
- Black Summer Bushfires, Five Years On
- Celebrating 25 Years of FRRR
- Nature-led Community Resilience Toolkit (in partnership with DEECA)

Submissions we made included:

- Response to the Consultation Draft of the Australian Government Drought Plan
- Response to the review of Commonwealth Disaster Funding Arrangements
- Submission into the Inquiry on Volunteering in Queensland

We also presented at a number of conferences and joined several advisory boards, bringing our insights and perspectives to the table.

- Natalie was appointed to the National Leadership Group to support the Australian Government's Stronger Places, Stronger People strategy
- Philanthropy Australia conference in Adelaide, SA, presenting alongside Munjaay Ganma, Spinifex Foundation and Snow Foundation to share our experiences of supporting First Nations communities
- Social Impact in the Regions conference, where Natalie was a keynote speaker and delegations from IRCF communities attended, made new connections and shared their insights
- SEGRA Summit in Busselton, WA
- Community Foundations Australia Forum in Byron Bay, NSW and visiting Resilient Lismore and Northern Rivers Community Foundation
- Natalie joined the Institute of Public Administrators Australia for a 'Hypothetical' style event about public policy, bringing a rural perspective

Natalie Egleton speaking at Social Impacts in the Region conference.

"FRRR is more than a partner. They were the formative force in the days before Community Foundations Australia and we wouldn't have come into being without them. Over the years they have invested in and facilitated community foundation development and operations, most especially in remote and rural contexts. This continues, and we are also making plans for a deepening collaboration."

Ian Bird, CEO, Community Foundations Australia

- Australian Disaster Resilience Conference in Perth, WA and hosting a booth in Resilience Lane
- Natalie joined the Advisory Committee of the She Gives initiative, a campaign to highlight women's giving
- Co-founded SaND – Striking a New Deal - a partnership between The Next Economy, RE-Alliance, FRRR and Projects JSA to work with community leaders to find better ways to develop renewables in the regions

We appreciate the support and collaboration of our partners, including the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation, Collaboration for Impact, Community Foundations Australia, Collaborative for Community Resilience and First Nations Clean Energy Network.

EXPLORE OUR REPORTS AND SUBMISSIONS

FRRR's team at the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference.

Natalie Egleton (centre) with board members Donna Digby and Georgie Somerset at Community Foundations Australia conference

Natalie Egleton spoke at the Rural Councils of Victoria conference.

Committed team

The team walking on Country in Bendigo with Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, Aunty Marilyne Nicholls during our annual Muster.

At the end of June 2025, FRRR had 40 staff (34.8 FTE), nearly all of whom are based in remote, rural or regional areas. Because they live, work and volunteer in these places, they understand the complexity, challenges and opportunities of the community groups that FRRR supports.

For most of the team, it is this deep understanding of the important role that community groups play in creating even better places to live, work and play that keeps them working at FRRR.

This year, we continued the tradition of coming together in February to renew and create connections, agree priorities and celebrate what we've achieved together.

We take this opportunity to thank all of our people and acknowledge the effort that they each put in to supporting the communities we work with.

"Our experience with FRRR has been both friendly and seamless. It is always nice to talk to someone who is encouraging when we call! Thanks."

Wyndham Historical Society Inc

"We particularly love being able to discuss our projects in the planning stage with FRRR staff and have always found them very helpful. Thank you very much."

Home Start National Inc.

Team members listening during a presentation at our annual Muster.

"As always FRRR, you are down here in the debris with us. Thank you for your tangible and ongoing support of community in the face of climate change. Not only are we stronger together but we are stronger thanks to you."

Resilient Uki

Viv, Sarah and Amanda met up in Tasmania to facilitate workshops with community.

"Your staff are incredible. They always get back to me regarding my MANY queries. We appreciate what your organisation does for communities like ours around the country."

Kangaroo Island Wildlife Network Inc.

Our three Carolyns, with Brooke in the background at Muster.

Hayley, Jane, Natalie, Darius, Kate and Sarah in FRRR's new offices in Bendigo, which we moved into in January this year.

FRRR's Board held a strategic planning session in Seymour, VIC visiting Seymour FM as part of the trip.

Responsible governance

FRRR is a company limited by guarantee with DGR-1 status, accountable to its members, the Sidney Myer Fund and the Australian Government, as well as the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission. FRRR's governance framework is underpinned by rigorous policies, annual independent audits and a commitment to ethical investment practices that align with its mission to foster positive social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes for remote, rural and regional communities.

FRRR is overseen by an experienced, independent Board of Directors, all of whom volunteer their time to ensure strong governance, transparent processes and clear strategic direction. The Board is also responsible for approving grants, monitoring performance and guiding the long-term prosperity of the organisation.

This year, we farewelled Annabel White and Anne Grindrod, both of whom were long-serving Directors (nine and 10 years' service respectively), as well as the Hon. John Sharp AM. Kylie Hansen and Amy Crawford joined the Board in January 2025, bringing a wealth of experience to help FRRR continue to build a strong culture that maintains internal and external trust, assurance and confidence, and adopts contemporary NFP governance practices.

FRRR Board

- Tim Fairfax AC (Chairman)
- Anne Grindrod (Deputy Chair to 31 Dec 2024; Retired 30 June 2025)
- Sue Middleton (Deputy Chair from 1 Jan 2025)
- Annabel White (to Nov 2024)
- Hon. John Sharp AM (to Dec 2024)
- Amy Crawford (from Jan 2025)
- Kylie Hansen (from Jan 2025)
- David Hardie
- David Mackay
- Donna Digby
- Georgie Somerset AM
- James Flintoft
- William Myer
- David Gunn (Company Secretary from Sept 2024)

Patrons

- Sam Mostyn AC – Patron in Chief
- Rt Hon. Ian Sinclair AC
- Bill Kelty AC
- Hon. John Anderson AC

Long-serving FRRR Director and Deputy Chair Anne Grindrod retired in June and was farewelled by Natalie Egleton and Tim Fairfax AC.

Thank you to our volunteers

FRRR deeply values the many individuals who voluntarily contribute their time and expertise to our Committees, which include Finance, Risk and Audit; Nominations and Appointments; and Program Advisory Committees and our WA Advisory Board. These committees play a vital governance role in supporting the Board and provide independent perspectives and offer insights that strengthen the rigour, relevance and effectiveness of our work. We sincerely thank all of these people for their ongoing commitment to vibrant remote, rural and regional communities.

Adhamh Clear, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.	Geraldine Roche, Sally Foundation	Michelle Curran, ANZ
Alicia Chau, ANZ	Holly Roberts, Suncorp	Miranda Guy, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.
Amanda Schultz, ANZ	Imogen Archer, ABC	Natalie Sommerville, Industry Rep.
Amy Tobin, Trailblazer Alumni	James Spence, Suncorp	Pacey Lucas, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.
Ashleigh Stennett, Suncorp	Jamie Henderson, WA Advisory Board	Penelope Amanatadis, ANZ
Assoc Prof Ben Lyons, University of Southern Queensland	Jason McFarlane, WA Advisory Board	Prue Pateras, FRRR Donor Partner
Brody Gogler, ANZ	Jenny Gray, Telstra Group Limited	Rebecca Anderson, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.
Caroline Gorman, External Member	Jessica Capps, Suncorp	Ryan Bettens, Telstra Group Limited
Caroline Robinson, WA Advisory Board	Jodie Gosel, The John Villiers Trust	Sam Houben, Elders Insurance
Claudia Filer, ANZ	Joe Collins, Trailblazer Alumni	Sarah Ebbelaar, Telstra Group Limited
Daisy Barham, AEGN	Jong Sok Oh, Suncorp	Shelley Nauschutz, ANZ
Dan Hirst, ABC	Josh Fulwood, Telstra Group Limited	Solange Ntigonza, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.
Dan Simpson, ANZ	Kara Bust, Suncorp	Stephanie Sabrinkas, Community Rep.
Darren Sibson, ANZ	Kim Farrant, Dept of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry	Talitha Devadass, ABC
Deborah Bowles, ANZ	Kim McGuire, Nutrien Ag Solutions	Terese List, Suncorp
Donna Bashforth, Telstra Group Limited	Kirrilee Warr, Community Rep.	The Late Adam Levin, WA Advisory Board
Dr Alexandra Williamson, Community Rep.	Lola Cowle, Community Rep.	Tommy Hicks, Indigenous Energy Australia
Dr Dorin Gupta, University of Melbourne	Lucy Markoff, Community Rep.	Tony Rossi, ANZ
Elanor McCormack, Trailblazer Alumni	Madeleine Muirhead, Nutrien Ag Solutions	Tracy Lefroy, WA Advisory Board
Eliza Bale, Suncorp	Mahsa Nabizada, ABC Heywire Youth Rep.	Travis Hughes, Suncorp
Emilee Rigby, ABC	Mark Bennett, ANZ	Yousef Mohammadi, Trailblazer Alumni
Emma Funnell, ABC Heywire Producer	Melissa Brooke, Community Rep.	
Galina Laurie, Paul Ramsay Foundation	Michael Flagg, ANZ	

Sarah (far right) visited Alpine Outreach Inc. in Bright, VIC to see their project in action.

Listening, learning and connecting

From the kitchen tables of small-town halls to the stages of youth summits, we are inspired by the energy and determination of local leaders working tirelessly to build strong, vibrant futures. That's why we spend time in the communities we serve. Each conversation helps us better understand the unique challenges, opportunities and aspirations of remote, rural and regional places. These insights shape our activities and ensure our programs remain responsive and relevant.

This year, our outreach took us far and wide – from our headquarters in Bendigo to the Burnett Inland, across Queensland's Central Highlands and Capricornia; from Roma through to Goondiwindi, Boggabilla, Toowareenah and Gilgandra; to Kangaroo Island, Nuriootpa and Orroroo in South Australia, Burnie, Sheffield, Launceston and Wynyard in Tasmania, and Geraldton, Kalbarri, Busselton and Boulder in Western Australia; as well as to nearly every capital city. Along the way, we visited inspiring projects, ran grantseeker workshops and shared practical information about funding opportunities. But most of all, we listened and followed through.

It is a privilege to be welcomed into communities and we are grateful to all the groups who made the time to host us, share their stories and show us firsthand the impact of their work.

Outreach locations

Webinars and workshop registrations

1,813 (FY24: 1,125)

Website visits

517,671 (FY24: 518,474)

4,874 calls, lasting **29,395** minutes

(FY24: 3,055, 15,420 mins)

Alysia (left) with local community leaders at Hawker in SA's Flinders Ranges for International Women's Day lunch.

Regina met with community organisations at the Port Hedland Grants Fair, WA.

Alysia (left) and Marls (third from left) met with representatives from several Central Wheatbelt groups in Merriden, WA.

Fee (front left) travelled to Yarraman, QLD to meet with local leaders at the Heritage Centre.

April and Marls (centre) meeting with representatives from Maranoa Regional Council in Roma, QLD.

Coonalpyn, SA, is a great example of a small community where FRRR has funded a number of projects over the years, helping boost the local economy and build a sense of pride. Pic: Radiant Media

Catalysing change

FRRR's work is grounded in a simple but powerful principle: **meet communities where they are and back locally led solutions.** Remote, rural and regional communities face unique challenges often compounded by structural inequities and systems designed for metropolitan contexts. That's why our approach spans a continuum of support, from small grants to multi-year, place-based initiatives.

Our granting model is intentionally flexible and works across a spectrum. At one end are hundreds of small grants that seed ideas, strengthen local capacity and respond to immediate needs. These grants often spark innovation and build confidence in communities that might otherwise miss out on funding. At the other end, we invest deeply in place, partnering with communities over multiple years to tackle complex issues and create systemic change. These initiatives are collaborative, resource-intensive and designed to build resilience and sustainability for the long term.

Why this matters

This broad-to-deep approach ensures that FRRR can:

- Respond quickly to urgent needs while laying foundations for future prosperity;
- Support communities that are often under-served or structurally excluded;
- Foster capability, collaboration and leadership at the local level; and
- Leverage insights and partnerships to influence broader systems and policy.

By connecting resources with locally prioritised solutions, FRRR helps communities unlock opportunity and shape their own futures.

BROAD — Approaches becoming increasingly more systemic, ambitious, collaborative and resource intensive — DEEP

- Funding individual projects in remote, rural and regional communities across Australia
- Implementing identified, targeted shorter-term solutions to tackling specific issues within communities
- Changing how people work together in RRR communities and across the sector to tackle big issues and create lasting change

Small grants to seed and strengthen
e.g. SRC

Targeted focus
e.g. In a Good Place (mental health) or Community Led Climate Solutions (climate adaptation)

Donor advised
e.g. Telstra's Connecting Rural Communities or Fundraising Accounts

Multi-year, embedded, place-based responses
e.g. Investing in Rural Community Futures or Disaster Resilient: Future Ready

Multi-year grants supporting larger projects involving collaborative co-design
e.g. Future Drought Fund's Communities Program

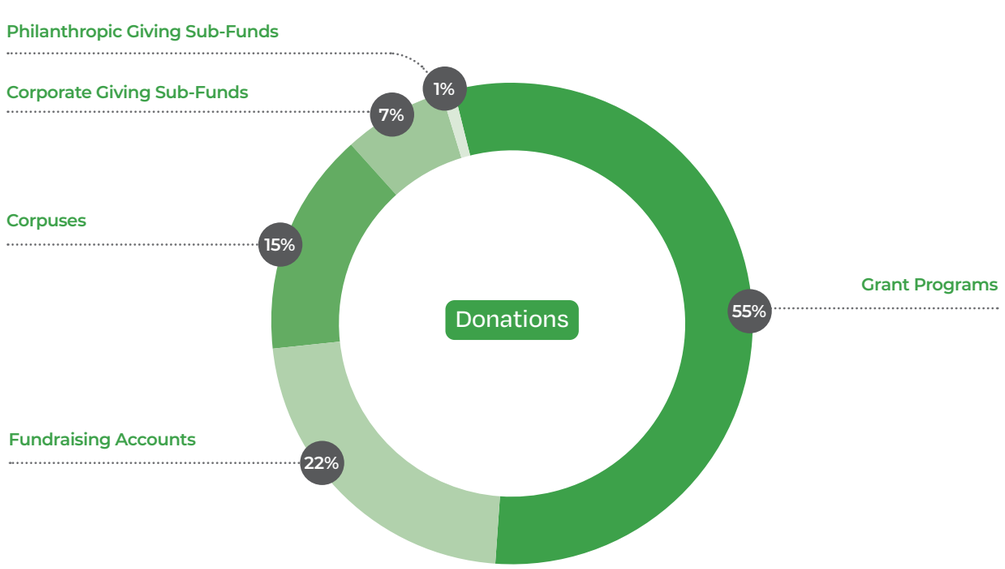
Fundraising and operations

The granting and capacity building activities we undertake are only possible thanks to the generous support of our donor partners. In FY25, we raised more than $35M via 1,007 donations (FY24: $39.4M; 1,452 donations), with many contributions from regular donors. A significant portion of this funding (46%) was for grants that are to be awarded in the coming years. We thank each and every donor for your generosity in supporting remote, rural and regional Australia.

Most funding came from Philanthropic Trusts and Foundations (53%), with a further 29% from Government. Pleasingly our corporate partners also continue to increase (14%; up from 7% in FY24). The remainder was funded by Individuals (3%) and Organisations (1%).

The single largest donation was $9.75M from the Australian Government for the new Future Drought Fund's Communities Program, which rolls out from late 2025 through to 2028. The median donation was $102.41, again demonstrating the immense collective impact that smaller amounts can make.

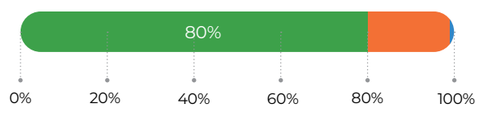
Donors partner with FRRR in a number of different ways. This year, as has been the case in the past, the majority of funds go toward grant programs. More than 420 donations went toward our flagship collaboratively funded Strengthening Rural Communities program. We also offer Fundraising Accounts for NFP and Community Foundations, as well as a Giving Sub-Fund service, allowing donors to support particular communities or causes they care about. We also appreciate the donors who choose to contribute toward FRRR's operating costs.



Operational performance

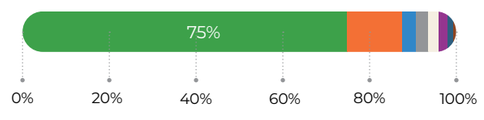
FRRR recorded an operating surplus of $1.7M this year thanks to sound financial management and operational performance. Our operations are underpinned by strong systems and processes and our impact and reach are driven by a talented team; all enabled by a blend of donations, earned income and investment income. This year, those contributions ($8.9M) covered our operating costs, which were just over $7M, with wages being our largest expense. This investment is the backbone of our impact, enabling FRRR to walk alongside communities to build their confidence and sustainability, provide on the ground support and ensure grants deliver lasting impact.

Operational income



Delivery & engagement fees and operational income	80%
Investment and interest	19%
Administration, service and project fees	1%

Operational expenses

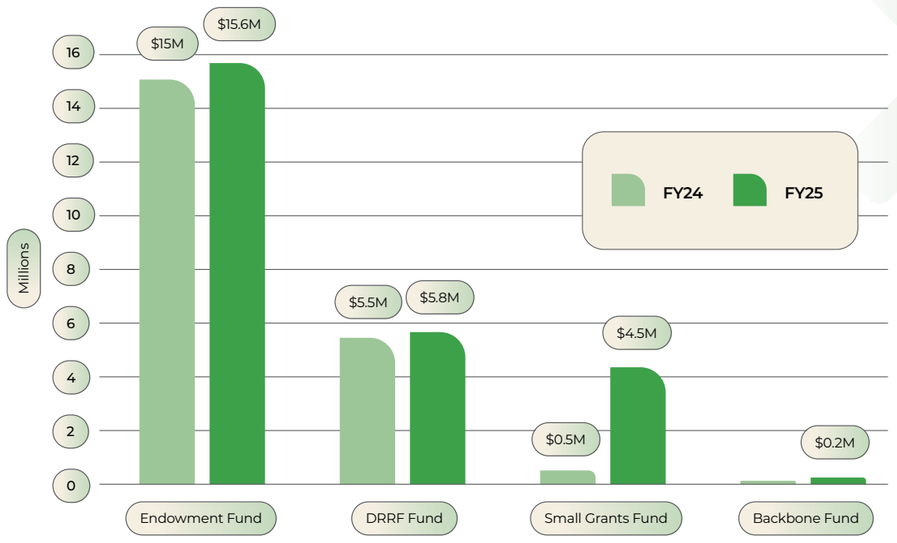


Employees, contractors and facilitators	75%
General administrative expenses	13%
Consultancy fees	3%
Technology	3%
Finance (incl equipment leases)	2%
Accounting and legal	2%
Depreciation	1%
Marketing	1%

Corpus growth

A key focus in this financial year was to grow our corpuses (Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund (DRRF); Small Grants Fund; and the FRRR Backbone Fund). Contributions of $4.1M, together with returns on investments, saw their combined year-end value, including our base Endowment Fund, reach $26.2M (up from $21.4M in FY24).

With fundraising becoming increasingly competitive, being able to invest these funds in perpetuity and draw down a portion of the annual income to distribute via grants is becoming more and more important. This approach also means that donations to these sub-funds will be leveraged time and time again, ensuring they keep having an impact, rather than being spent once.



Thank you to our partners and supporters

Every donation to FRRR is greatly appreciated. Listed below are some of the supporters who made larger donations. We also acknowledge and thank the many private and individual donors who support FRRR with their time, talents or treasure.

Fund and Program supporters

ABC
ANZ
Australian Government
Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation
Bertalli Family Foundation
Bunnings Group
CCI Giving *
Colonial Foundation Limited
David Mactaggart Family Foundation
Doc Ross Family Foundation
Dr George Jacobs
Estate Late Harold Gordon Jones
Findex Community Fund
GlobalGiving
Hand Heart Pocket - The Charity of Freemasons QLD #
Helen and David Hains Foundation
Helen Macpherson Smith Trust
Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer
Ian Rollo Currie Estate Foundation
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Tim Fairfax Family Foundation
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Well Thanks
Wyandra Fund
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James Frizelle Charitable Foundation
Judith Brooke
Kassa-Miller Giving
Kate Brettell
Lansdowne Foundation
Libby Prell
Marrich Equity Pty Ltd
Maureen Purtell
Norman Mavis & Graeme Waters Perpetual Charitable Trust
NT Link Pty Ltd
Outback Parks & Lodges
Scott Williams Foundation
Seaton Foundation
Stephen Pfeiffer
The Eric Sussman Foundation
The Gall Family Foundation
The George Lewin Foundation
The Isobel & David Jones Family Foundation
The Kyamba Foundation
The Medich Foundation
The Thyne Reid Foundation
The Vedmore Foundation
The Willow Foundation
Trawalla Foundation
UBS Optimus Foundation Australia
Vysenet Pty Ltd
Wildwood Family Foundation
William & Susan Wood

Pro Bono Partners

ABC Heywire
Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer
Nous Group
Origin Energy
TOYOTA via the services of TSSC Australia

Also donated to Fundraising Accounts. + Managed by Equity Trustees. * A giving fund of the APS Foundation.

FRRR Director Kylie Hansen with Sarah Wall.

FRRR Directors Anne Grindrod and Sue Middleton with Paula Thompson (second left) and Jenny McGregor AM (right).

FRRR's Carolyn Munckton with representatives of the social impact group from our long-term partner, ANZ.

Natalie Egleton with Anna Marinovich and Director Annabel White.

FRRR Director Amy Crawford with Anna McCann and Natalie Egleton.

Tim Fairfax AC and Natalie Egleton with former Patron Lady Marigold Southey AC

Celebrating 25 years

WATCH

This year we celebrated FRRR's 25th anniversary, marking a quarter-century of walking alongside remote, rural and regional communities. One of the highlights was a gathering of around 100 partners, supporters and staff at Cranlana in Melbourne, the Myer family home. It was a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the milestone and reaffirm FRRR's enduring commitment to vibrant, resilient rural communities.

During the year, we invited communities to share their story of FRRR's impact and these are a few comments from the submissions.

"Donors to FRRR should be pleased and proud to know that their donations have been well-spent. Congratulations FRRR on your 25th anniversary."

Living Well Yallourn North Inc.

FRRR Directors, former Directors, Patrons, staff, former staff and partners gathered at Cranlana.

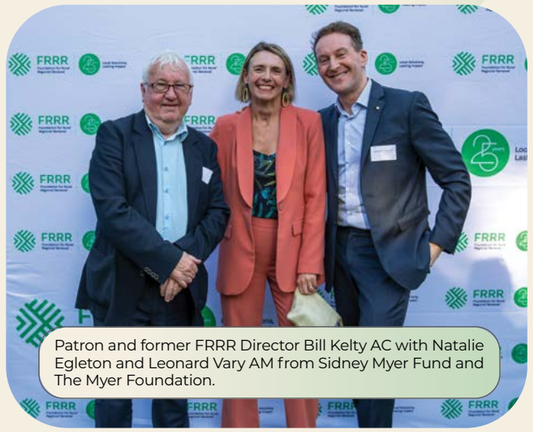
FRRR Director William Myer welcoming guests to the Myer family home, with Tim Fairfax AC.

"Funds provided through FRRR have created positive outcomes Australia-wide. These have been in the form of a hand-up not a hand-out, ensuring the long-term success of many projects."

Monto Magic Tourism Action Group

"FRRR has been a cornerstone in empowering rural and regional communities across Australia."

Eden Community Access Centre



Patron and former FRRR Director Bill Kelty AC with Natalie Egleton and Leonard Vary AM from Sidney Myer Fund and The Myer Foundation.

Coral Sea Foundation

Join us in helping more remote, rural and regional communities to thrive.

Visit: frrr.org.au/giving

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

Dja Dja Wurrung Country

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