

# IMPACT DEC 2015: LOCALISED ACTION IN REGIONAL COMMUNITIES



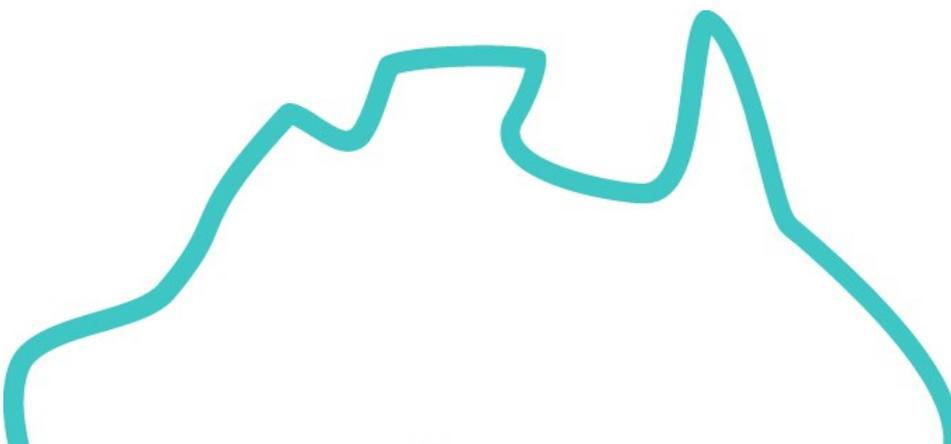
**PERPETUAL IMPACT**  
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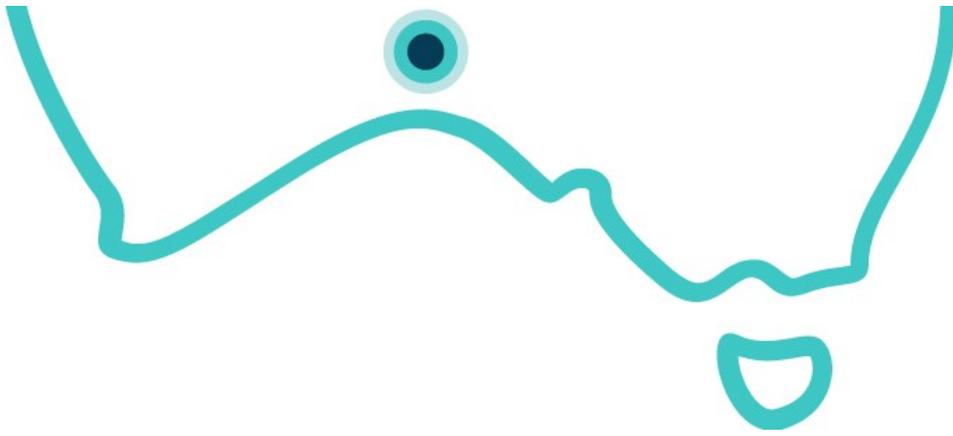
Oak Valley: Addressing community issues

## **POWER AND PASSION: LOCALISED ACTION IN REGIONAL COMMUNITIES**

**Who better to understand the needs, strengths and weaknesses of a community than the community itself?**

Localised action in regional communities is powerful in creating structural change. So is the role of philanthropy in supporting regional programs and services that help communities become sustainable. We look at two communities that are taking action to address local issues.





## **THE MARALINGA TJARUTJA COMMUNITY: ADDRESSING NEEDS AND PLANNING FOR THEIR FUTURE**

In the far western region of South Australia, bordering the Great Victoria Desert, lie the Maralinga Tjarutja lands, resplendent with the native Desert Oak tree and stunning red earth. This is where the Oak Valley community is located.

Oak Valley is an extremely remote Aboriginal community. The closest main hospital is in Ceduna - a 5 to 6 hour drive away, down a corrugated dirt road.

## **SUPPORTING THE SERVICES THAT SUPPORT THE REGIONAL COMMUNITY**

The Maralinga Piling trust manages compensation funds paid to the Maralinga Tjarutja community as compensation for damage caused by nuclear testing on their lands in the 1950s and 1960s, which displaced the traditional owners. Perpetual undertakes the management and investment of the trust assets; however, all decisions related to the use of trust distributions are made by the community.

While much of the Maralinga Tjarutja community's use of trust distributions has been allocated to improving immediate needs and planning for their future, the community has also demonstrated wonderful generosity by making a philanthropic contribution to the South Australian Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

This is the second donation by the community to the South Australian Royal Flying Doctor Service to support its work in remote regions of Australia.

"In addition to its 24/7 emergency services, the RFDS delivers essential primary health care services to isolated communities through 'fly-in' GP clinics. That includes the Oak Valley and Yalata communities," says Charlie Paterson, General Manager Marketing & PR, RFDS Central Operations.

**"This generous donation from the Maralinga Piling Trust will be directed to capital-raising for a new 'flying intensive care unit' – at a cost of \$6 million – which will conduct over 7000 missions over its decade of service to the community of South Australia."**

**Charlie Paterson, General Manager Marketing & PR, RFDS Central Operations**

## **OTHER REMOTE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES ARE ALSO FINDING THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS**

Remote communities with Native Title trusts are increasingly active in directing their trust distribution income to addressing systemic issues within their community. Commonly, this relates to health, education, caring for the elderly and alleviating

poverty.

“All of the Native Title trusts we see have funds set aside for education scholarships - to provide kids with computers, school fees, uniforms and other essentials,” says John Hender, Senior Manager - Native Title Trusts and Investments at Perpetual Private.

Funds from trusts are also allocated to training adults, creating jobs and building long-term sustainable, community owned businesses.

**“We have seen trusts funding cattle stations, service stations, mining services, hotels, tourism ventures and even a bakery.”**

**John Hender, Senior Manager - Native Title Trusts and Investments, Perpetual Private**

“Remarkable things happen when people are given the opportunity to make informed decisions and plan for the future of their community,” Hender observes.



### **THE BENALLA REGION INVESTS IN ITS FUTURE**

Benalla is in rural Victoria and has been recognised as an extremely socially disadvantaged region, rating in the ‘top 40’ of disadvantaged areas across Victoria’s 726 postcodes in a landmark study of social disadvantage in 2007. Led by Professor Tony Vinson, the study was a joint project with Jesuit Social Services and Catholic Social Services Australia.

Levels of educational attainment across Benalla were found to be well below the state averages. Significantly, the study observed that limited educational attainment made it difficult for people to acquire economic and life skills – thus entrenching economic disadvantage.





**Benalla: Hands on learning**

## **BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SOCIOECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE**

The community began its own investigation, through the Tomorrow:Today Foundation, to better understand the issues related to Benalla's social disadvantage. Local and external experts assisted the research over a two-year period and the conclusions were clear.

"No one project or activity could successfully change socioeconomic disadvantage in Benalla," explains Liz Chapman, Convenor of the Education Benalla Program. "A multi-faceted approach was needed across all institutions and organisations."

The Education Benalla Program was created to achieve substantial, measurable improvements in student educational attainment - specifically, for education and training completion rates for 17 – 24 year olds to equal or exceed the Victorian average for non-disadvantaged districts by 2030.



**Benalla: Education through mentoring**

Uniquely, the program is a whole-of-community response that spans family, business, school and other institutions. "We have 110 groups in the community partnering with the Benalla Education Program to support its objectives," says Chapman.

## **A LONG-TERM CRADLE-TO-CAREER APPROACH**

The program aims to support children from the day they are born through to age 24.

Improving literacy and numeracy are clear aims of the program. Interestingly, improving the wellbeing of students is also a key objective. So far, evaluation metrics show that the wellbeing programs, which are run in the community and in Benalla's schools, have outperformed expectations.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF A COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH**

What makes the Education Benalla Program unique is that it operates at the grass roots.

**“Because the community understands its own strengths and weaknesses, it has devised a program that is right for Benalla.”**

**Liz Chapman, Convenor, Education Benalla Program**

It draws on local volunteers to support its activities and programs, such as reading groups and mentorships for students. Local businesses are engaged to contribute their ideas, provide kids with training opportunities and be part of the change process.

“We focus on making sustainable, long term structural changes that will strengthen the community,” says Chapman.

## **HOW PHILANTHROPISTS CAN MAKE MEANINGFUL INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS**

According to Chapman, philanthropists can create change by taking a hard-nosed business approach to the objectives of a project and its performance indicators. “Just because a program is focused on social change, doesn’t mean that there should be a softening of the edges of that approach. Philanthropists should be asking community foundations what results are being sought, how long it will take to achieve those results, and getting progress updates along the way.”

**“Community foundations need to be able to explain to funders how results will be achieved and to report on what’s working and what isn’t working.”**

**Liz Chapman, Convenor, Education Benalla Program**

Chapman notes that the Education Benalla Program is heavily dependent on philanthropic partners. As the program is focused on sustained changes over the long-term (to 2030) it requires patience and stamina from philanthropists.

“Philanthropists can take comfort that a social program such as the Benalla Education Program has a dry-eyed view of its plan and performance metrics,” she says.

Regional communities such as Oak Valley and Benalla show that community-based action is powerful in creating structural changes from within and they also remind us that communities are best positioned to understand their own unique needs.

Philanthropy plays a critical role in helping regional communities to be empowered to make these changes and work with partners who will help them realise their vision.

[Read more about Maralinga](#)