

# ENDURING INNOVATION - THE 2018 CEO STUDY TOUR TO STANFORD PACS



**PERPETUAL IMPACT**  
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It's been three years that Perpetual Private and Stanford Centre on Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS) have been working together. It's a collaboration to share research but also to share insights, garnered from our various stakeholders.

A key part of the relationship is a CEO study tour that sees a group of Australian Not-for-Profit (NFP) leaders travelling to San Francisco to engage deeply with key scholars, and the innovative energy of Stanford University.

In this article we'll dive in and share some of the insights from this year's delegation, but first we're excited to announce that the relationship with Stanford is going to continue. The partnership has been renewed for another three years, and we look forward to giving more NFP leaders the opportunity to take their practice to a higher level.

## **Class of 2018**

The opportunity to travel to a global centre of excellence in the field of philanthropy and social impact is surely transformational. When asked to offer some succinct insights about the trip, the 2018 group responded with energy and vigour that shows the benefit of these kinds of projects.

In a bid to share their learnings with a wider audience, and further spread the energy of innovation and collaboration, we asked the cohort a question:

*"What was one key insight you took away from the trip around dealing with change in the NFP sector?"*

### **Gildi Carty – Life Education Australia**

For Gildi Carty, of [Life Education Australia](#), the trip to Stanford was a 'life-event' that will never leave her.

*"NFPs that thrive, are the ones that can demonstrate they have the business acumen to scale, as well as manage the bumps in the road.*

*Stanford have a 5-year plan to grow at a steady pace through the next life-cycle, and they use KPIs to measure how they're tracking.*

*They genuinely take on board insightful and honest feedback from those they serve to understand how to improve the design of their service.*

*They embrace technology in all aspects of their organisation, and they have the ability to tell their story in an emotive and visual way that has meaning to others, particularly millennials, who are online and looking to connect."*

### **Scott Chapman – Royal Flying Doctors Service**

Scott Chapman is CEO at the [Royal Flying Doctors Service](#). He valued gaining a global perspective, and the conviction that an NFPs hard-work is vital in our community.

*"To share the week with other Aussie CEO's was like being with a living library of experience, cocooned in a safe place where one could explore concepts and share thoughts freely.*

*As the week progressed it became clearer that all over the globe NFPs are working on the hardest problems in society, and that philanthropy goes where over-stretched and under-funded governments and private markets cannot! Philanthropy is societies' 'risk capital' in addressing these hard problems."*

### **Paul Edginton - SYC**

Paul Edginton, from [SYC](#), revelled in being surrounded by peers, and being afforded the luxury of time to think broadly about the big-issues and reflect on the purpose behind it all.

*"I came away from the experience with some profound personal learnings, gained from each and every CEO that was on the tour. Those incredible conversations over breakfast, lunch and dinner are priceless and rare opportunities to exchange ideas and experience, at times where we are not in 'work mode' and absent from the competitive landscape of our home context.*

*I never cease to be amazed by the enormous value that can be gained from opening my mind (and schedule) to learning – the chance to reflect on how community, funding, digital evolution and leadership will influence the future of our sector and services cannot be under-estimated."*

### **Rosi Simpson - Children's Hospital Foundation**

For Rosi Simpson, of the [Children's Hospital Foundation](#), it was one particular lesson, from one very wise practitioner, that had a big impact:

*"I learned a great deal from Rashid Robinson, he is from the Colour of Change advocacy group that deals with this issue of cut-through and action in a noisy world. He talked about the complexity of issues we all face, he explained his model of innovation and scale that has three pillars:  
Respond, Build and Pivot.*

- *Respond with what will give the best outcome.*
- *Build something very clear and strategic for people to do when they are feeling powerless.*
- *Pivot, don't try to influence those who will never change their views, focus on the enablers of change."*

## **Steve Clifford - Doxa**

Steve Clifford from [DOXA](#) went back to first principles to offer some core processes for NFP success:

*"If you don't have a strategy, then you won't have impact. To keep on track, ask these 5 questions:*

- What are we aiming to accomplish?*
- What tactics and tools do we have?*
- What are our present capabilities?*
- What outcomes do we expect along the way?*
- Where are we now regarding our goals?*

*As well as monitoring (continuous internal tracking of programs and their impact) and evaluation (occasional independent third-party review), don't underestimate the importance of feedback (listening to stakeholders, and reporting back to them). In seeking feedback, use the best forum (eg. social media or device apps may be good for teenagers, whereas paper forms or personal interviews may be better for older people).*

*Don't collect data! Unless it is good data. Collecting loads of data that you can't use effectively is a waste of time."*

## **Melodie Potts – Teach for Australia (TFA)**

For Melodie Potts, of [Teach for Australia](#), it was design thinking that most impacted her vision for the future, plus the rare opportunity to work closely with her peers.

*"We are taking a Human Centred Design approach to designing and embedding our Alumni strategy into all aspects of our program value chain and regional operations. I am now in a position to act as an executive sponsor for this work, which increases the likelihood of it getting done and sticking. Those three hours with Nadia Roumani and the d.school, getting exposed to the theory and process, were an absolute highlight, and we'll be using that type of action cycle going forward in a number of other innovation areas.*

*On a more personal note, it was inspiring to meet other CEOs of NFPs of various sizes and ages in Australia. I've been at the helm of TFA for almost 12 years now. I started this organisation at 28, with a fair bit of "hutzpah" but relatively little exposure to other CEOs and their personal/professional capabilities and challenges. The personal benefit to me was feeling more confident in my own leadership and more inspired to stay the course in the non-profit sector alongside other amazing leaders."*

## **Mara-Jean Tilley – Garvan Research Foundation**

Mara-Jean Tilley, [Garvan Institute](#), revelled in the interactions with her peers, and the opportunity to think deeply about why we work so hard at what we do.

*"My 'first-day-of-school' butterflies were quickly quelled by the warmth and comradery of the group and the hospitality of the Perpetual team. A week of whirlwind learning ensued as we traversed topics from creative design and innovation, to the digital revolution, and issues of inclusion and diversity. For me personally, the biggest gift was the opportunity to think deeply about the challenges and opportunities facing my own organisation in an immensely intellectually stimulating and inspiring environment."*

## **Dermot O’Gorman – Wildlife & Environmental Conservation Organisation (WWF)**

Dermot O’Gorman is CEO of [WWF](#) and he engaged deeply with the importance of long-term thinking, and that collaboration with those on the cutting edge of innovation is a huge opportunity for scale.

*“By ourselves, NFPs are often ill-equipped to tackle issues of scale over a very long term. The ideation process within Stanford’s d.school is a case in point.*

*Restricted three-year project funding is great to develop and achieve tangible results in the short-to-medium term. But this model needs to be complemented by longer term partnerships to foster innovation that can effectively tackle the big, curly problems in the SDGs, in a way that can scale globally.*

*While entrepreneurs are less restricted and therefore better placed to tackle issues of scale, the Digital CS lab made me realise that they are not necessarily best-equipped to understand the social problems and moral challenges that undermine a fair and equitable society.*

*For the team and I at WWF, this presents an amazing opportunity for collaboration. By partnering, innovators and the not for profit sector can form a complementary relationship that addresses some of the shortcomings we might experience by working alone.”*

## **Anthony Ryan – Youngcare**

Our final intrepid CEO was Anthony Ryan, of [Youngcare](#). For him, the trip to Stanford was a reprieve from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and an opportunity to put it all in perspective.

*“The trip allowed Youngcare to step away from the NDIS rollercoaster and truly reflect and refine our strategy in a sector that is dealing with huge amounts of disruption. Not only did the CEO trip provide the opportunity to study new models of thinking and innovation, it exposed me to a group of extraordinary NFP leaders that I can forever engage with. The atmosphere created by this program provided a platform for me to learn from genuine thought leaders, develop a new network of professionals and to build new friendships. All in all, I feel much more equipped to be a more innovative and increasingly brave NFP leader.”*

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