

MEDIA RELEASE

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COVID-19 funding to help Indigenous youth stay engaged with learning

JOLI Community is the first Community Grant recipient to receive COVID-19 Emergency Relief Funding from St.George Foundation, allowing the organisation to adapt their TRACTION Bicycle Build Program and continue to help vulnerable young people.

St.George Foundation awarded a \$50,000 Community Grant to JOLI Community in December 2019 to support 24 Indigenous students in the Redland Bay area who are experiencing disadvantage and a disconnection with school.

The charity had to suspend its program as a result of COVID-19, and the additional \$4,300 in COVID-19 Emergency Relief Funding awarded by St.George Foundation for the purchase of Personal Protective Equipment has helped get its TRACTION programs running again.

“We could not have continued without vital PPE, including face masks, infrared thermometers, hand sanitisers and disinfectant cleaning supplies.” said Sandy Murdoch, Founder of TRACTION. “St.George Foundation’s additional funding through its COVID-19 grant means we can safely return to helping young people in need”

The TRACTION program provides a safe learning environment where vulnerable young people complete projects such as restoring bicycles, and in doing so, build self-esteem, find a sense of belonging, discover their potential and create their own future.

“The impact of COVID-19 meant the program was in doubt, so we’re grateful that St.George Foundation was willing to provide further funding to allow us to carry on. This means we can get back to partnering with schools, community organisations and government agencies to empower young people in need, helping them re-engage at school and lead better lives.”

Research shows that school attendance rates for Indigenous students have not improved over the past five years. Attendance rates for Indigenous students remain lower than those for non-indigenous students (around 82 per cent compared to 92 per cent in 2019). By Year 10, Indigenous students attend school 72 per cent of the time on average – a gap of around 17 percentage points. (*Closing The Gap Report 2020*).

The Program has so far helped more than 1,090 participants build new, practical and critical life skills leading to increased confidence in overcoming challenges in learning.



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The COVID-19 pandemic and recent bushfires have resulted in additional funding pressure for charities in Australia when the most vulnerable in the community need support.

To help the community, St.George Foundation has doubled the funds available in the next Community Grant round to \$1 million so that charities can share in a greater funding pool; and introduced a \$500,000 Bushfire Assistance Grant to support organisations working on the long term recovery of bushfire affected communities.

Vanessa Barry, CEO, St.George Foundation said that the goal of the Foundation is to ensure it's truly partnering with charities to achieve the best social outcomes for children.

"We understand that organisations need to adapt and respond to the increased community needs and ever-changing environment. We are committed to helping our charity partners like JOII Community continue their vital work providing opportunities for children to experience brighter futures."

Emergency payments of up to \$5000 for approved charities who are experiencing immediate funding pressure as a result of COVID-19 can also be accessed now by applying through the St.George Foundation website.

"We encourage our charity partners to share their needs with us, so that together we can find a way forward", said Mrs Barry.

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ABOUT ST.GEORGE FOUNDATION

St.George Foundation was established by St.George Bank in 1990. Since that time, it has partnered with more than 800 community organisations across Australia to invest more than \$30 million to help provide a brighter future for children in Australia who are experiencing physical, social or economic disadvantage.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

To find out more about the support packages available and apply:

<https://www.stgeorgefoundation.com.au/home/>

Closing the Gap Report 2020: <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/school-attendance>