

October 2020

## ***St.George Foundation funding to help strengthen Indigenous student engagement***

- *At least one in four children in Australia are reported to be disengaged at school*
- *Educational challenges in remote and very remote locations further impacting Indigenous students*
- *St.George Foundation's Inspire Grant continuing critical investment in education for students who might otherwise miss out*

St.George Foundation has named Cathy Freeman Foundation as the recipient of its 2020 Inspire Grant to help strengthen student engagement in Indigenous communities through its Starting Block Program. Currently the program supports students in four of some of the most remote communities in Australia, working to empower students and communities through education.

With the support of the Inspire Grant, Cathy Freeman Foundation will work towards strengthening and elevating its program over the next three years.

The grant is awarded to one eligible Australian children's charity each year to help children impacted by physical, social or economic disadvantage through innovative programs that provide alternative pathways to education that will change the course of a child's life.

Data shows school attendance rates for Indigenous students have not improved over the past five years with students in both primary and secondary school in remote and very remote locations reported to have considerably lower attendance rates than students in major cities or regional areas<sup>^</sup>.

Tara Beath, Acting Chief Executive of St.George Foundation said: "It is vitally important we work to ensure access to education for as many young people as possible. Everyone should be afforded the same opportunity to go to school and learn in a supportive and safe environment. This is fundamental to ensuring a child's future development and success."

Tara continued, "A crucial part of ensuring access to education is building and supporting student engagement through offering alternative and multiple pathways, especially for those experiencing disadvantage."

We were inspired by Cathy Freeman Foundation's innovative and targeted approach to helping bridge the gap between children, the community and the education system. Key to this is having local Indigenous staff in each community delivering the program, ensuring local people lead local children through a culturally appropriate lens.

St.George Foundation is delighted to be able to support Cathy Freeman Foundation to help Indigenous children and their families recognise the power of education to achieve their goals and dreams through our 2020 Inspire Grant."

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Jade Colgan, CEO Cathy Freeman Foundation said: “The Cathy Freeman Foundation is beyond thrilled to have received the 2020 St.George Foundation Inspire Grant to support the work of the Starting Block Program; helping children to realise their potential through education from preschool to year 12.

The Starting Block Program is really important because it promotes and rewards regular school attendance and works to bridge the gap between families and school.

The program works in true partnership with each community and walks the journey of education with a child, intersecting at critical transitions and challenging times, as a constant and consistent source of encouragement and strength to students who really need it the most.

Support, passion, and dedication for the Cathy Freeman Foundation is key, and it is a privilege that through this grant and partnership we will see the Starting Block Program flourish.”

Since 1990, St.George Foundation has partnered with over 800 community organisations and invested more than \$32 million to positively impact the lives of thousands of children experiencing disadvantage in Australia. Through the Inspire Grant, St.George Foundation continues to help children access education, paving the way towards a brighter future.

^(Closing The Gap Report 2020 & Attendance Matters, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2019)

## ENDS

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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 \$32 million to help to provide a brighter future for children in Australia who are experiencing physical, social or economic disadvantage.

To find out more about the St.George Foundation Inspire Grant, please visit [stgeorgefoundation.com.au](http://stgeorgefoundation.com.au) or email [stgeorgefoundation@stgeorge.com.au](mailto:stgeorgefoundation@stgeorge.com.au)

### About the St.George Foundation Inspire Grant

Every year, St.George Foundation's Inspire Grant provides up to \$200,000 per year for three years to one eligible Australian children's charity. The grant is designed to provide innovative interventions that will change the course of a child's life through access to education. The Inspire Grant is designed to help children who are impacted by physical, social or economic disadvantage through innovative programs that provide alternative pathways to education.

### About Cathy Freeman Foundation

Cathy Freeman Foundation works to empower Indigenous Australians through culturally supportive educations, delivering programs that are designed to travel the journey of a child's education from preschool through to Year 12. The programs aim to improve school attendance and ultimately increase Year 12 attainment and are effective in extending the children's horizons and future opportunities.

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## **Previous winners of the Inspire Grant:**

- PCYC (2019) – for their Fit to Learn Program helping to empower and equip more than 400 vulnerable young people to re-engage with school or other educational pathways.
- Whitelion (2018) – for a program supporting young women aged 12-17 who have been suspended from school with a less formal, flexible environment that maintains educational momentum, with life skills workshops and learning sessions.
- Missing School (2017) – dedicated to bridging educational and social gaps experienced by children with serious medical conditions by providing telepresence robots to continue their connection to their regular school.