



Local Solutions, Lasting Impact

FRRR 2000-2025

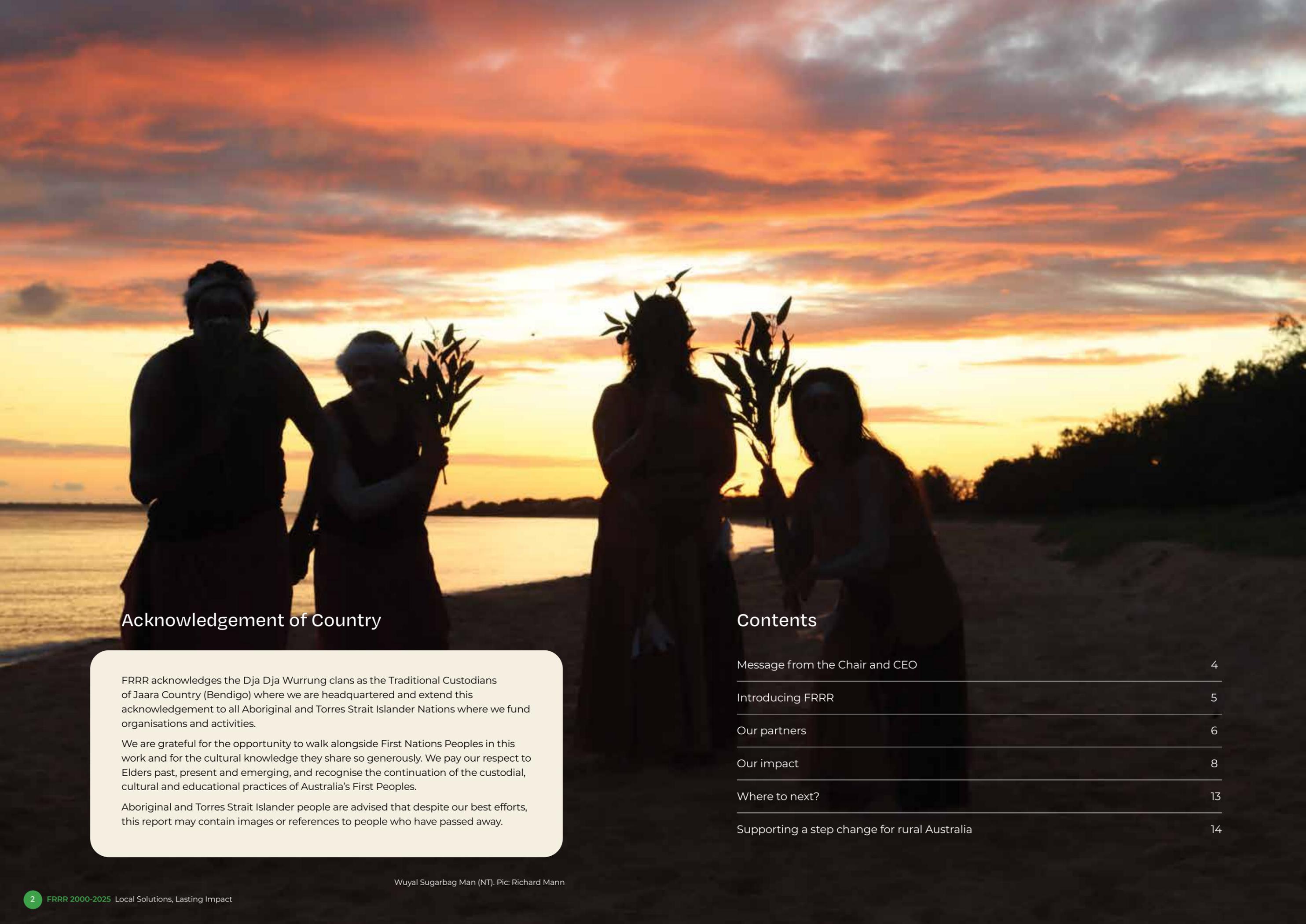


FRRR

Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal



Local Solutions,
Lasting Impact



Acknowledgement of Country

FRRR acknowledges the Dja Dja Wurrung clans as the Traditional Custodians of Jaara Country (Bendigo) where we are headquartered and extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations where we fund organisations and activities.

We are grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside First Nations Peoples in this work and for the cultural knowledge they share so generously. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise the continuation of the custodial, cultural and educational practices of Australia's First Peoples.

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

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A message from FRRR's Chair and CEO

For the last 25 years, FRRR has played a critical role in backing remote, rural and regional communities to create and sustain vibrant places to live, work and play. With our laser focus on these communities, FRRR plays a unique role in connecting the good will of philanthropy, government, business and individuals with the good purposes of small, grassroots organisations that often can't access other support.

Together, we've invested more than \$200M in more than 15,000 projects in over 1,700 postcodes across the length and breadth of rural Australia. Our deep, trusted relationships with communities give us visibility of what is most needed, enabling us to direct funding to where it will have the greatest impact. A rigorous yet flexible approach ensures anyone interested in supporting remote, rural and regional communities can feel confident their funding gets to where it is needed most.

This report looks at FRRR's origins and evolution from providing small grants to working across a broad spectrum of support including deep place-based capacity building programs. We reflect on what we've achieved thanks to the generosity of the thousands of people and organisations that have trusted FRRR to help local groups seed and strengthen, adapt and evolve, and to innovate and renew.

We also look ahead and share what it will take for FRRR to walk alongside these communities as challenges and opportunities emerge, to enable the heartland of rural Australia to thrive for the next 25 years and beyond.

Our vision is for more vibrant, resilient, sustainable and empowered communities that are:

- culturally and economically diverse, dynamic and continually improving;
- resilient, with the capacity, knowledge and infrastructure to collectively respond to shocks and become better prepared for the future;
- empowered with the resources, agency and structures in place to make decisions about their own futures; and
- able to tackle social, economic, and environmental challenges to ensure the wellbeing and access to opportunities of future generations.

We invite you to explore this report and we'd love to chat to you about how we can collaborate to bring our vision into being.



Tim Fairfax AC
Chairman
on Turrbal and Jagera Country



Natalie Egleton
Chief Executive Officer
on Dja Dja Wurrung Country



Dandaragan Community Centre Management Committee used a small grant to install storage in this local community hub.

Introducing FRRR

The creation of FRRR recognised that remote, rural and regional communities face a different set of challenges to their urban counterparts, but that they are inherently resilient and hold the answers to their own challenges. It was the vision of our Founders - especially the late Baillieu Myer AC, with the support of Helen Morris AM, and Hon. John Anderson AC - that these communities needed people in their corner backing them, believing in them and providing support to make their ideas a reality. This foresight led to the Regional Australia Summit and the Howard Government committing \$10M to the creation of FRRR - a truly remarkable legacy. Our Foundation is just as relevant - and needed - now, as it was 25 years ago.

Formed in 2000, FRRR is the only national charitable foundation specifically focussed on ensuring the social and economic strength of remote, rural and regional communities. We align investment from government, business and philanthropy with the genuine local needs of rural people and places.

Our Early Years (1999-2006)

FRRR launched at the Regional Australia Summit by the then Prime Minister, John Howard, received DGR-1 endorsement & awarded 26 grants in the first year

First office in Bendigo opened and FRRR provides support for Community Foundation feasibility studies

Donors respond to Millenium Droughts with Pratt Water Grants and launch of Rural Education Program (REP) (Myer, Fairfax and Calvert-Jones families)

Major partnerships established with Gardiner Foundation and ANZ

First NFP fundraising account opened in 2006 for Bendigo & Central Victoria Community Foundation

FRRR's first disaster recovery program in response to Cyclone Larry in 2006



We take a community-led, place-based approach, with a preference for supporting smaller, more remote and less resourced communities that are most vulnerable to the effects of market failures. We also prioritise communities impacted by and exposed to disasters and other climate-related disruptions. We engage with these communities through the intersecting lenses of people, place, disaster resilience and climate solutions, and provide support through:

- broad-based grant programs;
- multi-year, place-based capacity building initiatives;
- brokerage and donor advised services that create leverage & partnership opportunities; and
- sharing our knowledge & insights to enhance policy and funding settings for remote, rural and regional communities.

It's much more than just grants. It's about strengthening networks, building capacity and creating opportunities where they're needed most - creating local solutions with lasting impact.

"We recognise that FRRR will be able to get the funds to places that we wouldn't be able to reach. FRRR has a deep understanding of needs on the ground, are very hands on and great at supporting applicants!"

Kirsty Allen, Sidney Myer Fund

Our partners

FRRR is special because of the people who believe in our mission. Our donors and partners understand that small grants can spark big changes and that by empowering local leaders, we create lasting impact - not just for today, but for generations to come.

Together we've enabled communities to seed and strengthen, adapt and evolve, innovate and renew. Thank you to all our partners big and small, old and new. You have all played a critical role and what can be achieved through shared action on a common mission is truly inspiring.

While the Australian Government legislated FRRR into existence, the Foundation was born from philanthropy. With early backers including the Sidney Myer Fund and Pratt Foundation, as well as support from long-term corporate partners including ANZ, FRRR has been able to mobilise philanthropy for the benefit of regional Australia.

Collaboration is imprinted in FRRR's DNA and nothing that we have achieved could have been done without the input of our thousands of generous donor partners and supporters. We estimate that more than 12,000 donors – some giving only once, others up to 170 times through regular workplace giving – have contributed to the FRRR story and impact. Every donation makes a difference, especially when it is pooled with other like-minded donors.

The flexibility of our structure means that we can work in a variety of ways – from being a conduit and connector, to being a deep collaborator, and all points in between. We are grateful to our partners for sharing a commitment to learning together and trusting us to ensure that funds reach those who really need the support for the things that they prioritise.

We are also a connector and conduit between communities, philanthropy, business and government, and we share our insights from assessing more than 2,000 applications each year to advocate for remote, rural and regional communities.



Growing Partnerships (2007-2015)

Partnerships grow in response to legislative changes such as early years requirements and water reform; programs launched for Early Childhood initiatives, McEwen grants in the Goulburn Valley, aged-care support, Culture and the Arts

First of many partnerships with the ABC launched – Drought Not Out; followed by Me Change, Revive and Thrive, Heywire, Trailblazers and Takeover

A growing focus on agricultural innovation with Aussie Cotton Farmers Grow Communities Grants and Fast Track Ag Innovation programs

Disaster recovery philosophy and first major programs developed, including Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (VBAF) programs, Cyclone Yasi and flood response, cementing FRRR's role as a leader in community-led and medium-to-long term philanthropy

FRRR releases its 10 Years of Impact report



FRRR's growth reflects the generosity of our partners. It also reflects how we have shifted our focus and approach in response to significant contextual changes over this time – from embedding local giving through nurturing Community Foundations in their early stages, to collaborative giving to our flagship, long-running small grants program, now known as Strengthening Rural Communities, through to more recently working alongside funder collaborations to bring a shared idea to life, such as the Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program.

"FRRR sits alongside community; it doesn't dictate how things should happen. They are very much a trusted partner and enabler. I knew FRRR would deliver in a way that respected the agency that communities need to have."

Michelle Gortan, Macdoch Foundation

Red Ridge plays a backbone role for western QLD

Red Ridge Interior (Queensland), based in Blackall, started as an arts organisation but has evolved to become a backbone organisation. It supports outcomes like intergenerational connection, First Nations economic self-determination, women's health and wellbeing and leadership development. They have received \$176,200 via nine grants from FRRR, including funding to support Channel Country Ladies Day (CCLD) and Dress the Central West.

CCLD was an idea born during the drought, when the load that women were carrying in caring for family, finding ways to generate off-farm income, managing the farm business, and that they weren't caring for themselves – was noticed. Now an annual event, it brings hundreds of women together for reprieve, wellbeing support, fun, and skill development. It also builds economic opportunity by creating space for micro-enterprise, and enterprise development.



Our impact

FRRR has been there with communities through disasters, drought, down-turns and other challenges inherent in regional Australia. This is illustrated in building community resilience being the largest strategic focus for FRRR over its 25 years to date.

We have learned from this experience that effective and vibrant local organisations are vital for resilient communities. The lack of investment in building and sustaining the capacity of local grassroots NFP organisations is a gap that FRRR has been addressing, along with our forward-thinking partners in the four iterations of the Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program.

Our Strengthening Rural Communities (SRC) flagship program and other programs delivered with our partners have proven small grants are valuable and can be catalytic in enabling local responses to issues and opportunities. Communities often leverage FRRR funding to secure more investment, expand projects and tackle tough times together.

Investing in resilience and capability

\$56M via **3,740** projects to drive community resilience

\$35M for **3,719** projects supporting lifelong learning

\$28M to **2,899** projects strengthening organisational capacity

Greatest unmet need also in developing organisational capacity - **\$88M** gap

Half of all FRRR funding has supported outer regional, remote and very remote communities. This is in line with the FRRR strategic focus on remote and very remote communities that typically receive less support because they are difficult to reach.

Being responsive to regional community needs, FRRR has also invested extensively in disaster resilience, which is reflected in the representation of inner regional funding since 2017 (following Black Summer, East Coast flooding and COVID).

Prioritising our rural heartland and grassroots NFPs

Outer regional received **>50%** of all funds (\$102M, 8,938 grants)

Since 2017, outer regional funded \$41.7M; inner regional (\$47M)

2,190 unique postcodes reached, with 1,722 places funded

83% of grants to non-DGR organisations - only 2,645 DGR groups funded (\$39M in grants)

Deepening Our Impact (2015-2025)

IRCF, our flagship place-based, capacity-building program was launched off the back of our 2000-2016 Impact Report. Piloted in partnership with VFFF in three NSW towns, it extended to a further five places, thanks to Snow Foundation, Aust. Govt and Bendigo Bank Community Enterprise Foundation

Widespread drought supported by Tackling Tough Times Together (TTTT), initiated by philanthropy and supported by \$15M from the Aust Govt; TTTT won Best Grant program at Aust. Philanthropy Awards. Delivered a series of Aust. Govt Future Drought Fund resilience building programs

Increasingly frequent disasters see Disaster Resilient: Future Ready (DR:FR) Program in NSW, VIC and QLD, and the Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund (DRRF) established just prior to the Black Summer Bushfires and NSW floods

Deepening Our Impact (2015-2025)

Programs launched to respond to mental health crises (In a Good Place), COVID recovery and drive disaster recovery and preparedness including Rebuilding Futures (Suncorp); Investing in NFP Capacity in Regional NSW (Paul Ramsay Foundation); The Yulgilbar Foundation Fund and the Volunteer Emergency Services Fund (Lachlan & Sarah Murdoch Foundation)

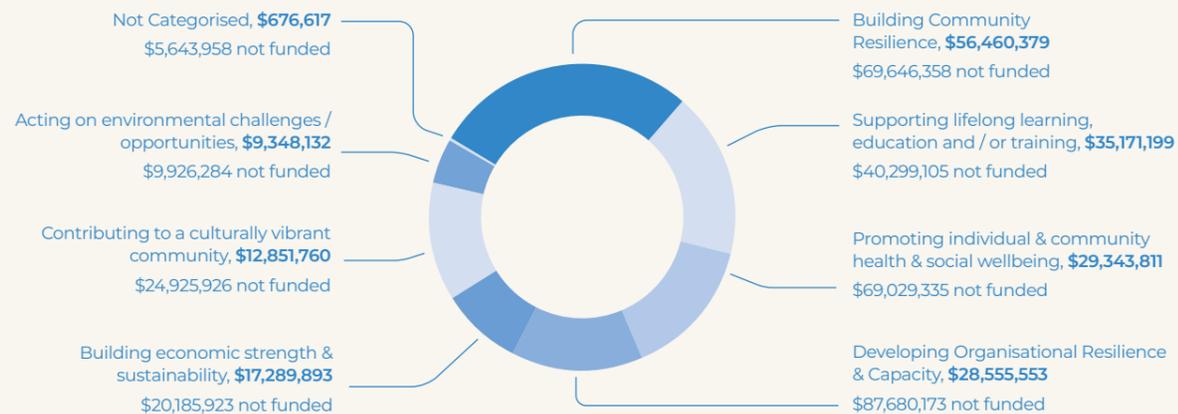
Growing awareness of climate change and increased focus on energy transition results in creation of Community Led Climate Solutions program

IRCF expands to Victoria, thanks to a collaboration between FRRR, The Ross Trust, HMST, William Buckland Foundation and the Jack Brockhoff Foundation

Small Grants and Backbone Endowment Funds established to enable FRRRs impact into the future



Grants awarded by impact area



Focus on Lismore

Lismore, in Northern NSW, is our most funded community to date, receiving more than \$8.5 million in investment through 152 grants. Nearly \$6.7M of this came through the Northern Rivers Community Foundation fundraising account. The scale, timing and type of funding illustrates the power of our partnerships with community foundations and the catalytic role they play when disaster strikes. The remaining \$1.9M made up of grants addressing diverse needs, predominantly borne out of building disaster resilience. This included arts trails to drive connection and re-engagement in the CBD; community events to drive awareness of flood risk and management.

Most recently, recognising the strength of community-led resilience in Lismore, and the growing need for adequately resourced medium to long-term recovery and preparedness efforts, FRRR has become a foundational funder in the newly established Community Resilience Alliance.

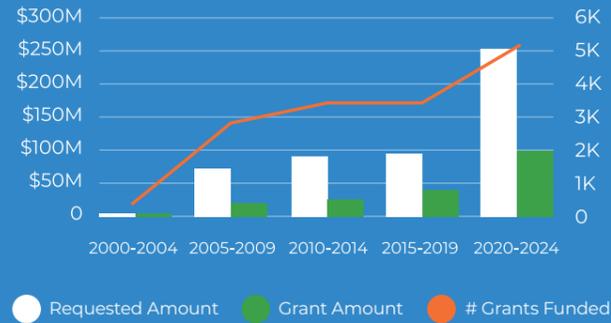
This work speaks to FRRR's strategic priorities of building disaster resilience and preparedness by place-based networks of community-led organisations.

Support in high demand

Over 25 years, FRRR has awarded more than \$200M via more than 15,000 grants. With more than 41,000 requests for support, each application has been carefully assessed to ensure that the funding goes where it will make the greatest impact.

FRRR's rolling five-year granting rate is a story of significant growth. Demand has also grown significantly, requiring FRRR to evolve in order to more efficiently and effectively meet the need, especially following significant events like sustained drought and more recently the Black Summer Bushfires and COVID.

Requests & Granting over five year increments



Building resilience in disaster-impacted areas

After Victoria's Black Saturday bushfires, Toolangi Castella Community House became the central point of connection and information in their community. Largely volunteer run, with a tiny budget for operations and programming, they stepped-up and played a leading role in the complex rebuilding activities for the town and its people.

They brought together the ideas and needs of the town, prioritised them and went about gradually planning and actioning the projects. As such a small town and organisation, they couldn't accept too much support at once. FRRR worked with

them, supporting the community with small grants when they were ready and as needs evolved.

Significant need emerged around wellbeing. People were at risk of becoming isolated and mental health was a growing risk. In a largely ageing community, physical wellbeing was the way in to addressing mental wellbeing. A weekly community fitness program was established, which had a huge impact on the community as they recovered and found a new normal. An evaluation of this program found significant reduction in risk factors and increases in wellbeing at a population level. The program continues today.

Broad reach over 25 years

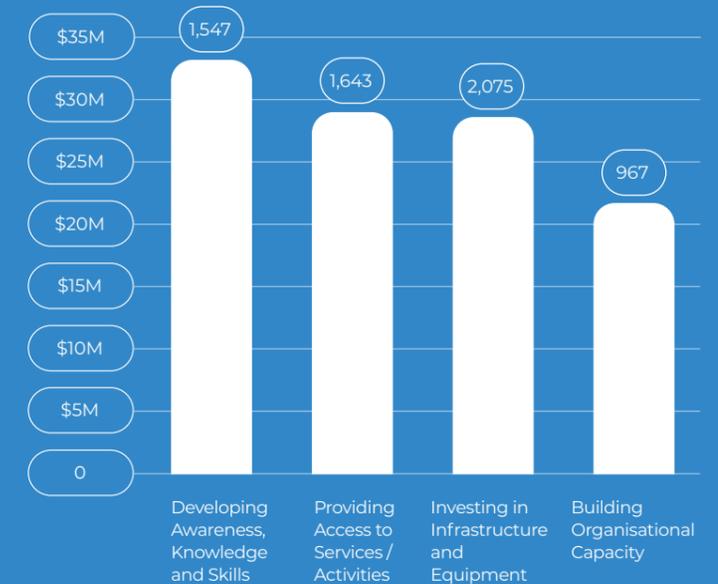


"FRRR funds that are small and vital play a huge part of allowing community groups to undertake works and programs that otherwise wouldn't happen."

Omeo Community Hall & Hub Committee

Change lever

Since 2018, FRRR has categorised each grant by one of four change levers. For the most part, the spread is relatively even, year on year, although they often change order slightly. Consistently however, the largest number of applications is for infrastructure or equipment.



Cumulative investment effects

Sustained investment in a region builds capacity and confidence, as well as helps make local communities vibrant places to live, work and play. The breadth of programs that FRRR delivers also means that grants can address diverse issues and opportunities.

Supporting communities over many years also helps develop a sense of trust and deep understanding. This means that when difficult times come, such as disasters or economic adjustments, or new opportunities emerge that require a different way of working, the groundwork has been laid.

Within the South Burnett LGA, in QLD, over the last 25 years, 16 towns have shared 118 grants, valued at \$1.4M (from 189 requests, seeking \$4M). The first was \$4,800 through our Small Grants program, with subsequent funding through a further 21 different programs. These grants supported initiatives ranging from mental health to emergency equipment, aged care services and the arts, plus education and lifetime learning.

Funding Awarded in South Burnett



After supporting their formation, Red Earth Community Foundation has emerged as an important partner for FRRR. For the last few years, our Foundations have partnered on significant resilience building projects around disaster preparedness, including preparing for future droughts. Beyond granting, FRRR has also had input into strategic planning in the region, as the economic landscape changes. This is only possible due to the deep relationships, trust and shared vision between FRRR and these communities.



60%

funds for disaster recovery or preparedness

44%

through TTTT (in-drought support)

"We are very grateful for the opportunity to partner with FRRR and other local entities on our new floor. This has further developed this small community's financial resilience and capability!"

Ironpot Hall Association



Where to next?

Regional Australia is home to around nine million people and accounts for around 40 per cent of the national economic output, employing nearly one in three Australians. The regions are a driving force for the social and economic prosperity of our nation.

FRRR's 2050 vision is for a thriving rural Australia that is economically sustainable, enriched by cultural diversity and equipped, connected and confident to take up opportunities or tackle challenges locally.

The wisdom of FRRR's first 25 years has been honed into five focus areas when supporting regional Australia into the second quarter of this century.

These five cross-cutting lenses are some of the greatest challenges, and therefore opportunities, facing regional communities.

1



Generational transitions

2



Climate and energy transitions

3



Strengthening community-level disaster resilience

4



First Nations self-determination

5



Enhancing the liveability of remote and outback areas

FRRR will continue to provide small grants and, increasingly will also work deeply with communities – meeting them where they are at. We're trialling multi-year grants, coupled with mentoring and access to trusted, paid expertise. The focus of FRRR's next steps is innovating how we partner with donors to offer communities leading-edge support and generate positive impact. For example, FRRR's longer-term place-based capability building work has demonstrated that collaborative community-led granting partnerships can spur local leaders to learn from each other as they envision a thriving shared future.

This is illustrated by FRRR's recent foundational support for the Kimberley Remote Aboriginal Community Leadership Network. At the nexus of FRRR's strategic focus on liveable remote communities, intergenerational transition and supporting First Nations led organisations, FRRR's know-how, leadership and reputation are all being leveraged to attract other investors and donors.

Will you support FRRR in making a step-change for rural Australia?

FRRR's well-informed investment in people and organisations that are in and of their place is stimulating ideas and action, both big and small, right across regional Australia.

FRRR provides funding and capacity building support at the hyper-local level. We have reach, relationships, networks and know-how to align funding, big and small, to community-led solutions that build resilience and long-term sustainability, vitality and resilience of smaller remote, rural, and regional communities across Australia.

Over the last 25 years, we've become a trusted partner to community groups. We have proven that we know what works and how to reach these communities and we are preparing to deepen our activities, as significant unmet need remains. Together with our partners, we've supported local solutions that create lasting impact.

As we celebrate 25 years, we honour the strength of remote, rural and regional communities, their resilience in the face of challenges and the opportunities that arise when people come together with the right support. But there's more to be done to sustain and grow the heart of the nation. FRRR is committed to supporting the capacity and capability of these communities, so they can be on the front foot of disruption, navigate transition and seek sustainable futures for themselves and Australia.

To do that, they need ongoing support. Granting well takes resources and we need your support to scale our operations to provide the investment needed to close the gaps in what community needs. Our priorities are:

1

Small Grants Fund:

FRRR's small grants are our most popular and most in demand. We have awarded more than \$38M through our core small grants programs but have been unable to meet a further \$91M in requests. We are seeking to build our Small Grants Endowment Fund so we can provide ongoing flexible support for community-led priorities well into the future.

2

Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund:

Established in 2019, FRRR's Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund (DRRF) focusses on building resilience and strengthening communities for a more prepared and resilient remote, rural and regional Australia by investing in human, social and built capital and environmental health. Demand for this support is increasing – there were 71 major disaster events in 2024, double the prior year. Increasingly, our focus is on preparedness as research shows that for every dollar invested in preparation or mitigation activities, \$9.60 is saved in recovery costs.

3

Backbone Fund:

Contributions to our Backbone Fund would allow us to improve our systems and platforms to create efficiencies in our granting and donor reporting, simplifying our operating environment and freeing up staff to focus on the high value work. It would also allow us to extend our outreach work and build the skills and capabilities of community organisations, as well as invest in deeper evaluation of our programs. Most importantly, it will allow us to continue to innovate so we can meet the changing needs of communities long into the future.

Donate



We would greatly appreciate your support as we move into our next 25 years. Please contact our Partnerships Team to discuss how we can work together to achieve our vision of empowered, vibrant, resilient and sustainable remote, rural and regional communities.

Small grants, big impact

Small grants have always been in high demand, with most requests since 2000 for grants up to \$25,000. Without access to this flexible funding, the identity, liveability and viability of many towns will be lost, affecting our prosperity as a nation.

Small grants reduce inequity and are often seed funding that groups can use to catalyse leverage to make amazing things happen. Other times, it funds things like a photocopier, catering or room hire for a community event, removing barriers to participation and strengthening social cohesion and resilience.

Quairading Community Resource Centre Inc supports its small agricultural township in the wheatbelt of WA. They received a \$10,000 small grant to strengthen social connections and wellbeing by holding community market days, yoga sessions, craft workshops and First Nations language classes.



"We are most proud of the success of the Noongar Language Lessons. Witnessing the engagement from those in the sessions and the joy and pride beaming from local Elders, seeing their culture shared and celebrated was very heart warming. However, the bonds created within the groups of people that attended each workshop was very special, and such an important activity for them all!"

Recovery and preparedness

Supporting our Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund would mean groups like Gnarly Neighbours can do more to support their communities. After floods in Seymour, they received funding through FRRR toward new premises so they could continue to support young people in the community. This group is now a social enterprise, selling clothing and other products, as well as a cafe to help fund ongoing engagement activities for local young people.



Enabling FRRR

Alongside investing in core systems, contributions to our Backbone Fund would enable FRRR's staff to spend more time in community, especially in remote and very remote areas, meeting with local groups, understanding the issues, supporting and advocating for them.



Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

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