



## The Know and the How: an update for FRRR's Partners and Supporters - SEPTEMBER 2025

Creating a safe space for Tassie teens | CEO's update | Thank you for your support  
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### Creating a safe space for Tassie teenagers

In Burnie and Devonport, more than 1,000 young people found a safe, supportive space to connect, learn and grow, in part thanks to an FRRR Strengthening Rural Communities grant, supported by the Sidney Myer Fund.

Delivered by Youth, Family & Community Connections (YFCC), the "ARVOs" program offered after-school and school holiday activities, ranging from cooking, woodcraft and arts, to hiking, surfing and cultural celebrations.

ARVOs was about more than just activities. It enabled experienced youth workers to build trusted relationships, ensuring young people felt safe, heard and supported in navigating life's challenges. It also helped connect them to support services, such as mental health, housing, family violence support and more.

By fostering connection, confidence and inclusion, ARVOs directly enhanced the liveability of these areas, while helping young people to feel supported by trusted adults, connected with services they may need, and confident to make friends and try new things.

**"We appreciate a safe space for teenagers to hang out at independently, while still being supervised by sensible adults, with whom they interact positively."**

Parent feedback



Some of the FRRR team will be in Burnie at the end of September for Takeover Burnie in partnership with the ABC. Youth, Family & Community Connections (YFCC) are one of the community partners working with the Takeover youth to co-design projects and will receive a small grant to bring that youth-guided project to life in the community. If any supporters and funders would like to connect with us in Tasmania, please [get in touch with Deb Samuels](#).

[Read More >](#)

## A word from Natalie



Hello,

It seems that Q1 is conference season! The FRRR team has been to a range of events to listen, learn, connect and present on key issues and opportunities in remote, rural and regional Australia. These events are important forums to build on collective efforts, to celebrate success and to understand where there is more to do.

I had the honour of presenting a **keynote to open the first panel session on Place, Power, and Possibility** at the **Social Impact in the Regions** conference in Grafton last week along with our People team helping out with the Youth Stream, while Nina, our Disaster Resilience team, and partners Red Earth Community Foundation from the Burnett Inland Disaster Resilient:Future Ready initiative were in Perth for the **National Disaster Resilience Conference**. Danielle attended the **AEGN conference** in Melbourne and Regina was at the LinkWest **Playing to our Strengths** Conference in Joondalup.

As you'll read below, we have also shared our key learnings and insights from the **South Coast Investing in Rural Community Futures** program. The evaluation, conducted using multiple tools over multiple years, confirmed that as a result of the program, the local not-for-profits in each community are in a better place across four pillars of organisational strength. We are on the cusp of launching a new program in that part of the world, which will build on this foundation. I look forward to sharing more soon.

We also launched the **Striking a New Deal** report in partnership with Projects JSA, The Next Economy and RE Alliance. The report is focussed on opportunities for communities to get a better deal from community benefit funds. The report draws on insights from a national network of regional leaders with significant renewable energy investments occurring in their regions. The Striking a New Deal paper presents practical

recommendations that energy proponents, policymakers and community leaders can consider in order for remote, rural and regional communities to be better off from the renewable energy transition.

In FRRR staff news, we will soon be farewelling two of our leaders as they move onto new career horizons. After eight years with FRRR, **Sarah Matthee** has secured a role with the Myer Foundation, focussed on environment and sustainability, which many of you will know is a personal passion of hers. Sarah started in our Partnerships team, before taking up the lead on our work in climate solutions. She has been a vital part of the team and will be sadly missed, but we congratulate her on this role. **Jillian Kirwan-Lee** will finish up with us in October after more than three years leading our Partnerships team, taking up a role

that will see her able to spend more time with her family and keep her closer to home in the Central West of NSW. I want to take the opportunity to thank them both for their commitment to FRRR. Working alongside them both has been an absolute joy.

We hope that you find these updates helpful and if there is anything on which you'd like more information, please get in touch.

Until next time,



Natalie Egleton  
Chief Executive Officer  
on Dja Dja Wurrung Country

## What inspires you to give to FRRR?

We know that people give to FRRR for different reasons. Long-term donor, Michelle Nightingale, a former executive with Boston Consulting Group, grew up in the country, and began supporting FRRR around the time of the Black Summer bushfires. She recently spoke with us about why she gives to FRRR and why she decided to name FRRR as a major gift recipient in her Will. [WATCH THE VIDEO.](#)

"I have confidence that the money will be well used and will give me an opportunity to leave something for rural Australia which I feel very passionate about."

- Michelle Nightingale, Long term FRRR donor



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for the generations to come.  
Make a lasting difference  
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Lasting Impact



## Insights from the bush

Our team is in daily contact with remote, rural and regional communities through our grant programs, partnerships and advocacy, giving us a unique position from which to amplify community voices and drive meaningful change. The following are some of the issues, observations and opportunities that have come up recently. There is more detail in the story on our website

- **Energy and industry transitions continue to roll out with limited avenues for genuine local agency in decision-making.** While State-based policies aimed at community benefit schemes are emerging, communities still need support to shape outcomes that work for them. The ['Striking a New Deal' report](#) and new [Community Renewal Fund service](#) are examples of ways we are working to strengthen community voices in these transitions.
- Across our network, young people in remote, rural and regional communities are calling for **more pathways into leadership, opportunities to share knowledge inter-generationally, and stronger involvement** in decision-making. Systemic barriers from transport and services to negative narratives about youth continue to limit their participation. FRRR ABC Partnership programs like Takeover and Heywire demonstrate the potential of investing directly in youth-led solutions and shifting the narrative towards their strengths and contributions. FRRR will soon embark on a program of consultation with youth to better understand their needs, especially when it comes to being involved in shaping their community, resulting in a Next Gen Blueprint.
- More applicants are seeking to **deepen their knowledge and connection to First Nations culture** through initiatives such as **integrating traditional language and ecological knowledge into school-based wildlife education, yarning circles, intergenerational learning in preschools**, or including First Nations art in historical museums. This trend highlights the importance of FRRR continuing to **build cultural competence** to ensure these projects are appropriate and well-connected to local First Nations knowledge and people
- **Food Security in disaster-prone communities has featured strongly** in recent applications, with communities emphasising preparedness and resilience of local and regional food systems and networks.
- Volunteer retention continues to be a high priority for many communities, with some adopting **innovative incentives like offering gym memberships to strengthen volunteers engagement and health and wellbeing.** The broader issue of expanding the volunteer base continues to be a significant challenge for many rural areas. FRRR is connecting communities with resources and encouraging community groups that are growing their volunteer base to share their stories and learnings with others. However, some of our recent insights from programs like DR:FR Victoria reinforce that sometimes **investing in paid roles** is needed to maintain momentum and build future resourcing capacity.
- Remote and rural communities across several states are turning to FRRR to address **service gaps for children and young people**, ranging from difficulties attracting staff for day care and providing appropriate playgroup and youth facilities, to supporting mental health outreach programs or further education and job opportunities. FRRR staff are connecting with organisations that align with this work to better understand issues and inform granting work.
- Groups are looking to **enhance liveability of their communities by addressing structural issues at the local level.** This includes organisational stability and capacity building, and a strong emphasis on maintaining community meeting places/hubs and places of recovery/last resort. Many of these projects are driven by new younger committee members.

There is much more that we could share, so if you'd like to know more about any of these comments, or are interested in a particular geography or issue, please get in touch via [info@frrr.org.au](mailto:info@frrr.org.au).

## Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE)

For rural communities to thrive, they need a strong economic and social backbone – and that requires skilled people who want to live and work in these areas. The Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE), established in 2012, is a globally recognised social enterprise, learning organisation and field builder for rural social entrepreneurship.

ACRE unlocks the power of entrepreneurship and social enterprise to solve local issues and create new opportunities. It does this through running entrepreneurial learning programs, incubators & accelerators and advisory services for social enterprise and community-led rejuvenation. ACRE works with young people and leaders from all sectors of the community to build new local cultures of entrepreneurship that enable the next generation to prosper in place and work with others to reverse rural decline.

FRRR has partnered with ACRE since 2013, facilitating more than \$2.3m in funds towards their programs.

These programs include ACRE's award winning Social Enterprise Schools program, a practical, student-led experience that develops citizenship and enterprise capabilities. It brings students, teachers, and social entrepreneurs together to develop skills, build confidence and make a positive impact. Students identify a social cause, before establishing and running their own social enterprise, preparing them with self-employment and job creator capabilities for their future lives beyond the school gate.

ACRE also supports rural leaders to develop local and social entrepreneurship, often through community asset ownership to retain valued local services. ACRE led the local buyback of the Old Beechworth Gaol in 2016, the largest small-town buyback in the world that year. The site is being repurposed as a national demonstration site, cultural tourism destination and action learning centre (called Breakout) for community-led rejuvenation and social entrepreneurship. ACRE has worked with over 70,000 students, 400 rural enterprises and 3,500 rural leaders from across Australia, and growing!

Learn more about ACRE and if you'd like to contribute, you can donate via their Not-for-Profit Fundraising account.

[Give to ACRE](#)

In case you missed it

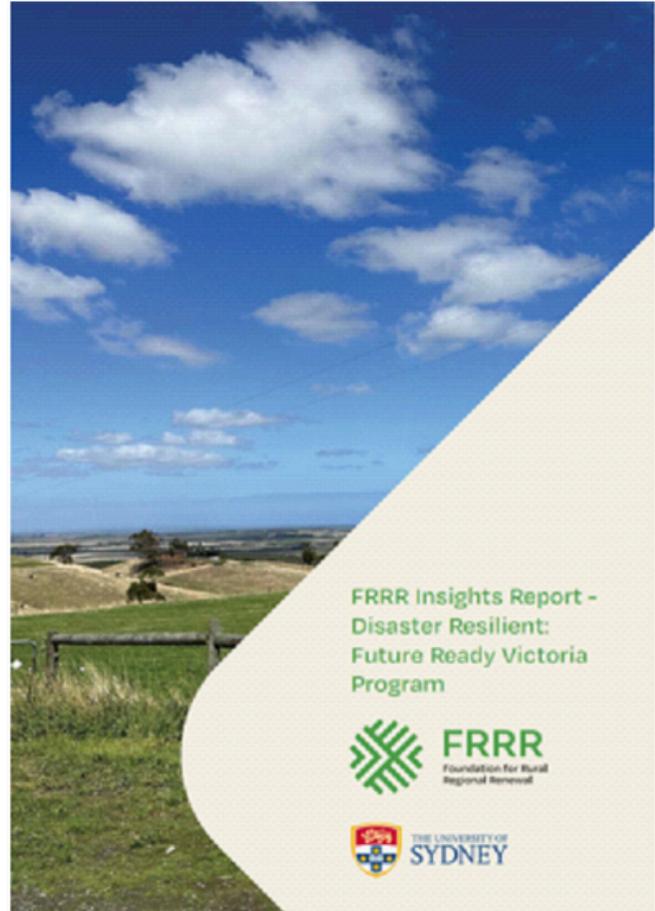


## Research confirms value of DR:FR model in building resilience

Since 2021, FRRR's Disaster Resilient: Future Ready (DR:FR) program has supported local leaders in three Victorian towns to co-design disaster and disruption resilience strategies with workshops, coaching and small grants.

The recently released DR:FR Victoria Insights Report, which draws on action research undertaken by the University of Sydney, highlights the importance of flexible funding, inclusive processes and long-term, place-based investment. It showcases how each community developed tailored initiatives like Korumburra's Helping Hub, Whittlesea's Prepared Network and Myrtleford's First 72 Hours disaster response map.

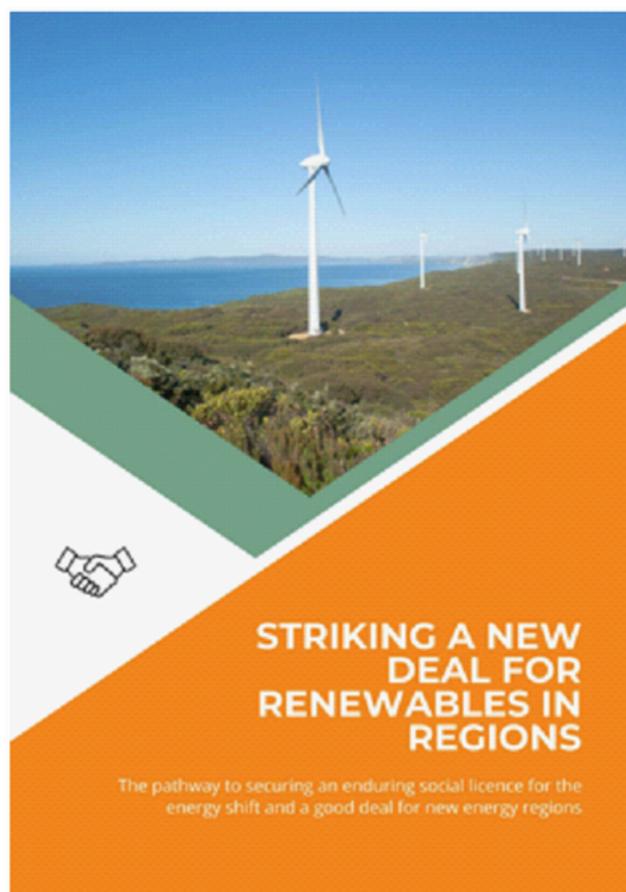
The report validates the community-led DR:FR model as a scalable approach to resilience that aligns with national priorities and builds long-term resilience. FRRR's Disaster Resilience Lead Nina O'Brien shared [key learnings on LinkedIn](#) and you can [read the report here](#).



## Striking a new deal for communities hosting renewables

As Australia undergoes the shift to renewables, rural and regional communities are demonstrating new ways of securing a good deal from large-scale solar, wind and battery projects. This is the conclusion of a new report – [\*Striking a New Deal for Renewables in Regions\*](#) – co-authored by FRRR and Projects JSA, as part of the Striking a New Deal collaboration.

Drawing on insights from leaders in areas with significant renewable investments, the report highlights both the opportunities and common risks of the energy shift, including uncertainty about what will be built and when, limited local influence, and fragmented information. It calls for practical measures such as transparent “risk and opportunity accounts”, upgrades to community services and housing, and ongoing local input, to ensure communities get a fair deal and retain enduring support for the transition. [Read the report here.](#)



“Communities simply want a good deal in return for hosting this new energy infrastructure. They want certainty, more clarity on the opportunities and risks of these projects, more resourcing and more agency in the decisions being made that will impact their regions for decades to come.”

- Sarah Matthee, Climate Solutions Lead, FRRR

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## Investing in community capacity pays long-term dividends

The Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program, supported by the Snow Foundation, has concluded after five years on the NSW South Coast. Evaluation found that 30 core not-for-profits that FRRR partnered with progressed on nearly every aspect of the core pillars identified for a sustainable NFP sector – strategy, people, systems and efficiencies.

Snow Foundation CEO, Georgina Byron, said that the program ended up being very timely, given the Black Summer bushfires and the impacts of COVID.

“The IRCF program provided a framework to strengthen community capacity by empowering people and enhancing strategies and systems. It helped local organisations navigate disasters, fostered community resilience and encouraged collaboration among community groups in a way that enabled them to thrive and provide the critical support they do across our region,” Ms Byron said.

FRRR welcomes new partnerships to roll out this model in other communities. [Read the report](#)



“The findings of the report tell the story of how different parts of the local NFP sector have shifted from surviving to thriving - individually and collectively. It sends a powerful message about what is possible when vital organisations are trusted and empowered, and bolstered by targeted, place-based capacity resourcing and funding.”

- Natalie Egleton, CEO, FRRR

*“FRRR plays an amazing role – really working deeply with communities to understand needs, and I credit them with the work that they do on the ground with communities to help them navigate – often complex – granting regimes that we impose as funders, and to understand how we can practically make a difference.”*

- Debra Morgan, CEO Helen Macpherson Smith Trust

**FRRR is grateful for your support of remote, rural and regional communities.**

**Donate Now**

If you have any questions about any of these stories or would like to chat at all, please contact our Partnerships Team on 03 5430 2399 or via [partnerships@frrr.org.au](mailto:partnerships@frrr.org.au)