



The know and the how

An update for FRRR's partners & supporters
December 2024



FRRR acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work across Australia, and we pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

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Black Summer Bushfires, Five Years On

FRRR received more than \$26M in donations following the devastating Black Summer bushfires. We recently [released a report](#) looking back on where the funding we have awarded to date has gone and the lessons learnt. It highlights the vital, collaborative role FRRR and our partners play in disaster recovery, focussing on flexible, community-led responses, and reinforces the need for support over the medium to long-term. It illustrates how communities responded to the challenges of the prolonged fire threats, power outages and widespread anxiety, with reflections on the fires' immediate and long-term impacts.

The stories from community groups demonstrate the importance of your contributions and the lasting impact of (often small) grants, such as enabling a mountain bike trail project to secure significant additional funding that has helped restore economic and social prosperity; how the arts helped to rebuild connections; and how running camps on Country restored cultural ties.

The message is clear: by working collectively and supporting community-driven initiatives, we can help rural and regional Australia recover, grow and thrive after disasters.

WATCH the video below and check out more stories in our [Black Summer series](#).



A word from Natalie



As we head toward the end of 2024, I'm pleased to give you an update on our progress in the first few months of FY25. It's certainly been a productive and energising time.

We have been reflecting on some of our impact and have just launched the [Black Summer Bushfires, Five Years](#)

[On report](#). It was so rewarding to see just how far we've come and the impact that your donations have made, although recovery is still ongoing. We're also putting the final touches to our annual review for FY24. It was **another record year**, with FRRR receiving \$39.4M in donations and we awarded \$25.4M via 1,188 grants into 579 communities. I look forward to sharing more with you soon.

I'm delighted to share that **Sam Mostyn AC**, the new Governor-General, has graciously accepted our invitation to be **FRRR's Patron in Chief**. On the governance front, **Annabel White** has retired after nine years of service as a Director. Her generosity, kindness, and quiet yet strategic approach in the boardroom will be missed. We've also recently **welcomed new talent to our team**, with David Gunn joining as CFO/COO, Anna Palmer as People & Culture Manager and Regina Cruickshank as our WA-based Partnerships Specialist. All are settling in seamlessly, bringing fresh energy to their respective roles.

Personally, I was honoured to be appointed to the Department of Social Services' **Stronger Places, Stronger People National Leadership Group**. This group supports the implementation of place-based, collective impact strategies aimed at building stronger futures for children and families while addressing systemic disadvantage. I look forward to bringing a rural perspective to discussions and championing the unique challenges and strengths of remote, rural and regional communities. I have also joined the **Advisory Group for She Gives**, an initiative celebrating the collective contributions of women across Australia who are making a positive difference in many causes, with the aim of inspiring more giving nationally.

As usual, the **team has been out and about**, visiting communities and participating in forums and conferences, and they have shared some of the insights gleaned from these trips below. It was also a busy period for me too, as I attended the [Impact Economy Forum](#) in Perth, the [Social Impact in the Regions Conference](#) in Kempsey and the Climate Solutions funder event in Brisbane. I've also just returned from a wonderful few days on Bunjalung Country at the **Community Foundations Forum** - an inspiring network of backbones and enablers of more equitable futures, many or most in remote, rural and regional communities. These events were complemented by partner meetings in Melbourne, engagement with the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), and participation in the [SEGRA](#) conference in WA. We also contributed to critical conversations on disaster funding, and we were pleased to see the **Colvin Review** into Disaster Funding Arrangements picked up on some of the issues we raised.

We're so pleased to share that FRRR won the [Social Impact Measurement in Funding, Investment and Grantmaking award](#) at the SIMNA awards, for our evaluation approach to the Investing in Rural Community Futures program, further validating the incredible work of our team and all those involved in the IRCF communities.

Meanwhile, our team is gearing up for a change of scenery, as we've signed a lease on a **new office at 141 Mollison Street, Bendigo**. Just a block from our current location, this new space will officially become home from 2 December, although the team won't start working there until the new year. We're looking forward to hosting the Board in February, which will coincide with our annual Staff Muster - a great opportunity for Directors to connect with the entire team. If you are in Bendigo, please do pay us a visit.

Finally, as the holiday season approaches, we'll be taking a short **break from 20th December to 2nd January** to recharge after a busy and rewarding year. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our staff, supporters and partners for your continued commitment to strengthening remote, rural and regional communities.

As ever, if you'd like to know more about anything we share, please email partnerships@frrr.org.au.

Until next time,

Natalie Egleton
Chief Executive Officer
on Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Thanks to you, communities thrive



In the first quarter of FY25, your generosity made a real impact. We granted **\$2.4 million** to support **169 community-led projects** across remote, rural, and regional Australia.

With **\$3.7 million in donations received**, we're able to continue helping communities tackle challenges and seize opportunities. Your support fuels this vital work - thank you for making it all possible!

Supporter spotlight



Suncorp and FRRR have partnered for the last three years and, pleasingly, Suncorp has just agreed to another three years. The alignment of our philosophies around disaster recovery and preparedness is a strong base for this relationship.

As an insurer, Suncorp is on the ground, front and centre supporting communities and customers when natural disasters hit. Vicky Power, Executive Manager Employee Communications & Community, noticed FRRR's work in community - as a grassroots organisation that was present throughout Australia.

"Suncorp looks for partners that are community-centric, with a strong, direct presence, delivering local impact—that's really crucial for us. The other reason that's really important is measurable impact and setting clear goals. The FRRR team does that very well and is very clear about the impact that they can have on communities."

The partnership has evolved from the Rebuilding Futures Grant program, which responds to specific disasters, to one that is shaped around building resilience and driving preparedness activities in communities more broadly.

When Natalie hosted an FRRR workshop at Suncorp, she spoke about the research FRRR was doing in and around communities after a weather event. She described how passionate communities were about doing more work in the prevention and preparedness space, but that they were hindered by being both time-poor and resource-poor. Suncorp saw the opportunity and the alignment with their giving philosophy. They also have other partnerships in the preparedness space, for example with Get Ready Queensland.

"I think what's excited us most is that the grants are getting into the right hands. They're getting into the hands of people that really need them. And we've been really thrilled that it covers all different components, whether it's infrastructure, building a safe space for when a weather event hits, or a lot of it is also about the mental health of the community and helping people on the ground with the emotional toll that weather events have. We've seen that time and time again with some of the grants that have come through. People often see just the physical impacts of buildings and homes, which are really important, but it is the emotional toll, and the grants program really taps into that."

"Looking ahead, what I really like about partnering with FRRR is that thinking about new ways to explore and address challenges. And that's what we want to do. We want to be quite innovative and look for and talk to those experts on the ground who can help us show up in new ways and help people in different ways."

By working together with FRRR, Suncorp is excited about offering fresh solutions that benefit customers and communities, and foster purpose-led resilience, helping communities for the long term.

A background image of yellow flowers, likely mimulus, with green foliage, used as a decorative header for the 'Insights from the bush' section.

Insights from the bush

Our team spends plenty of time connecting with grantseekers and community groups - on the phone, over email and face-to-face in communities. This summary highlights the current challenges and insights the FRRR team has observed in their interactions, as well as the proactive and positive steps communities are taking to address them.

- NFPs in renewable energy zones are increasingly collaborating to **navigate impending energy transitions**. FRRR's support is focussed on capacity building to enable better collaboration, so these communities can secure funding opportunities to benefit their communities.
- The **costs** of delivering programs and services in **outback locations** are increasing with many core expenses such as freight, wages, and accommodation on the rise, and difficult to secure grant funding for. We are actively considering **what a 'right-sized' grant is for remote and very remote communities**, holding conversations to learn more about what it takes for these communities to live well.
- **Connectivity**, both **digitally** and via more **traditional media**, remains challenging. We are seeing more frequent requests for community-owned Starlink subscriptions to ensure digital connectivity. Alongside that, we are also receiving more requests to ensure established local newspapers, newsletters and community radio are sustained, with applicants concerned about the loss of community connection and identity, and increased social isolation if these local institutions are lost.
- **Community-led climate preparedness** efforts are growing, but we're hearing that affordability of insuring some of these community assets, such as batteries, remains a challenge. Meanwhile, our preparedness focus is at the fore with program design (Suncorp) and prioritisation (through the Disaster Resilience & Recovery Fund). Dry conditions are worsening in many regions and we are increasingly receiving requests for funding to support water security for small towns, which is also affecting local food security.

FRRR's partnerships and advocacy efforts are prioritising resilience through funding and project design, particularly in strengthening social cohesion and networks.

- **Generational transition**, and especially volunteering succession, remains a challenge for remote, rural and regional NFPs. Youth-led applications increased slightly through Heywire but are limited by access to resources and mentoring. Opportunities to join FRRR at events like the Social Impact in the Regions conference and the Philanthropy Australia Conference foster confidence, build leadership and encourage collaboration. Our new partnership with Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation's Backing the Future program is revealing key insights into what younger changemakers need to succeed in grantseeking – i.e. feeling informed, connected and confident. Against a backdrop of rising youth disengagement and the resultant backlash, prevention models like [ShoreTrack](#) are gaining attention. However, there is more to be done to understand the issues and uncover potential solutions. Continued investment in the root-cause and in building options for young people and capacity for them to engage and shape the solutions are important considerations in FRRR's granting.
- FRRR is **strengthening its commitment to First Nations funding** and collaboration through culturally safe practices and partnerships, including joining Philanthropy Australia's First Nations Funders Network. We continue to seek to direct more funding to First Nations' controlled organisations and to ensure that First Nations' voices are heard more widely, by facilitating attendance at conferences and events when we can.
- Demand for **mental health support** in remote, rural and regional communities continues to increase, with request for our In a Good Place program far exceeding available funding. However, new partners and an additional round each year will help meet some of the demand, although there will still be significant unmet need.
- Groups are sharing **challenges around policy issues** such as housing for key workers; a shortage of venues, including shop fronts, for service delivery; how best to approach preventative solutions to youth crime as a community; and cost imposts of things like changes to health and safety requirements of community facilities. FRRR continues to share stories about the impacts of these kinds of issues, highlighting the need for localised information and context to understand the impacts of decisions.

You can find [more detail on these points here](#), and deeper insights from our in our recent reports, including the [Tackling Tough Times Together report](#) sharing recommendations for future drought programming; and the [Black Summer Bushfires: Five Years On report](#). These reports are complemented by [videos](#) and even a [podcast series](#).

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.



Help us support communities impacted by future disasters

For nearly 25 years, FRRR has worked with remote, rural and regional communities to support medium-to-long-term recovery efforts and preparing for future disasters.

Whether it's bushfires, floods or cyclones, we believe in empowering local groups to rebuild, reconnect and prepare for the future.

We focus on supporting local NFPs and community groups, who are so often the backbone of disaster recovery and preparation. We are a critical connector, linking donors and communities with flexible funding to enable long-term recovery. Our funding empowers community-led projects, because local people understand their needs best. We support grassroots projects that foster resilience and have a ripple effect across communities. Together, we can transform vulnerability into resilience.

With this summer likely to see several disaster events, we are seeking donations today to fund local solutions for lasting impact.

[Donate Now](#) or read more about [how funds would be used](#).

Fundraising Account



IBE Foundation

Bushfire is a high-stress situation. Climate change is making bushfires larger, faster and more unpredictable. All these factors impact decision-making during bushfire threats.

The IBE Foundation Incorporated is a registered charity, founded in 2019, dedicated to enhancing bushfire preparedness by fostering a deeper understanding of the emotional and psychological aspects of survival planning. The IBE Foundation was founded by Carol and Dave Matthews after the tragic loss of their son, Sam, on Black Saturday. That event catalysed their lifelong mission to increase communities' emotional preparedness for bushfires. Using innovative tools like a Virtual Reality (VR) Immersive Bushfire Experience, the IBE Foundation delivers workshops that simulate vicarious threat scenarios, helping communities, families and individuals identify their "trigger to leave" and commit to proactive, informed bushfire survival plans. These workshops are complemented by storytelling, interactive activities and collaboration with local organisations, including the Country Fire Authority (CFA).



Through its fundraising partnership with FRRR, the IBE Foundation seeks to secure support for its operational costs, further development of the VR program, and the delivery of educational materials and workshops. Recent efforts have focused on rebuilding momentum post-COVID disruptions, transitioning from a mobile trailer model to a more accessible VR platform. The Foundation prioritises community wellbeing by embedding wrap-around care in its programs and aims to equip rural and regional Victorians with the tools needed to navigate the complex emotional and psychological challenges posed by bushfire threats.

If you'd like to support IBE Foundation, [you can donate via FRRR](#).

Pictured: Michael Mortimer, Project Manager at Deakin University who is developing the Virtual Reality component of the IBE.

Fundraising Accounts enhance an organisation's network and fundraising capabilities by offering tax deductibility for donors. FRRR manages the funds and offers valuable administrative support. If you'd like to know more about how this works, contact [FRRR](#).

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

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

Rural and remote communities are critical to so many aspects of Australian life: food production, tourism, energy supply, logistics infrastructure and so much more. It's more important than ever to make sure RRR communities have strong local not-for-profits and community groups, functional infrastructure, and well-developed plans in place to ensure they not only survive but thrive into the future.

[DONATE NOW](#)

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Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

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