



The know
and the how

An update for FRRR's partners & supporters
March 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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Persistence leads to service equity

In a remote bushfire-affected part of East Gippsland, a dedicated and persistent group of volunteers from the Deddick Valley Isolated Community Group has brought to life an innovative solution to overcome a lack of access to basic healthcare services in their community.

The big idea was to establish a technology-enabled, nurse-led health service model. The 'Wellbeing Spaces' would be equipped with appropriate technology and high-speed communications to support provision of health, community, educational and professional services to allow community members to meet service providers privately face-to-face or by video conference.

A \$24,680 Strengthening Rural Communities (SRC) grant, supported by a private donor, went toward employing a project manager and undertaking a research study to identify community needs and assess the feasibility of establishing local medical and service hubs. The study validated the idea and FRRR awarded a further SRC grant of \$24,750 toward establishing the Hubs. However, the group secured State government funding for most of the works, so the money was redirected to signage, interior furnishings and equipment.

"We are most proud of the fact that as a community, we have remained central to delivery of a new health model for our district. It is a community designed and led approach to solving local issues. The support of FRRR and the East Gippsland Community Foundation enabled us to bring in the expertise and resources we needed to finally bring this key community priority to fruition. We have been able to do this whilst remaining in control, improving our district-wide community relationships and networks, and building community capacity."

Shelly McLaren, Chair of Errinundra to Snowy Community Recovery Committee (CRC)

The group has since secured funding to have the Hubs staffed regularly, through the Gippsland Primary Health Network, bringing their nurse-led model to reality.

To read more examples of the impact of your generous donations, head to our [latest Annual Review](#).



Goongerah - Tom McIntosh, MP for Eastern Victoria & Shelly McLaren, CRC

A word from Natalie



Welcome to FRRR's update for our donor partners and sector colleagues.

Our dedicated team recently came together for a three-day **'Staff Muster'** in Bendigo. This in-person gathering was so energising, with 29 staff members coming together to connect, engage in professional development and collectively plan for the future. This was important in building connections, especially as our team has grown over the last couple of years and several people had not met face-to-face.

Such events echo the importance of funding cohesion in remote, rural and regional communities and in recent months, we have awarded more than \$10M to support this key aspect of drought preparedness through our program delivered in partnership with the Future Drought Fund.

At the Muster we took the team through our **refreshed strategy**, as we are half-way through our current five-year strategy. The world has moved on considerably since we first wrote it and so we took the chance to reflect on what we've completed and what needs more focus. We continue to move in the same direction but are tightening our focus and putting more effort on areas where FRRR is best-placed to take action. We'll share more information soon with our partners and supporters, so stay tuned.

One of those areas is **climate solutions** and supporting community through the many transitions that are underway – climate, energy, economic, social and environmental. That's prompted us to separate out Climate Solutions from the Disaster Preparedness and Recovery portfolio, to give it its own dedicated focus. I am delighted to share that FRRR's Sarah Matthee will take that Lead role. Jillian Kirwan Lee who joined us in the Partnerships Team in 2022 will step up to lead FRRR's Partnerships team moving forward. Jillian brings great experience in strategic partnership development and relationship management and I'm delighted to have her joining our leadership team.

A few other things that you might find interesting:

- The Government's [State of the Regions Report](#), released in February, includes case studies from projects funded via FRRR and insights from FRRR about the crucial role of digital connectivity.
- In early February, FRRR and several of our supporters [attended the ABC Heywire Summit in Canberra](#). I had the privilege of making a brief speech at the Gala dinner, emphasising the need to empower young voices in rural areas.
- Our strategic efforts in Western Australia continue to progress and alongside Lotterywest, we recently co-hosted **a roundtable in Perth** about supporting communities in transition.
- We published the [2022/23 Annual Review - Backing Rural Communities](#). This report looks back on a year in which we saw the largest number of applications in our 23-year history. We distributed a record \$22.5M through 1,158 grants in more than 550 locations, covering more than 50% of Local Government Areas in Australia.

As we reflect on these achievements, we recognise the critical role that your support plays in enabling FRRR to make a meaningful impact. Your commitment ensures that rural and regional communities continue to thrive, overcome challenges, and build sustainable futures.

Thank you again for being an integral part of our journey. I hope that you enjoy this update, as we share some insights from our recent granting over the last quarter, as well as learnings from the first few years of our Investing In Rural Communities Futures program, which focuses on building capacity in community. If you'd like to explore anything in more detail, please get in touch.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Natalie".

Natalie Egleton
Chief Executive Officer
on Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Investing in communities pays off

Late last year, we released an interim report on what we've learnt so far from our Investing in Rural Community Futures (IRCF) program. Over the past five years, through the IRCF program, FRRR has worked alongside not-for-profit sector leaders in eight rural communities, co-designing and supporting capacity building initiatives across four pillars: People, Systems, Strategy and Efficiencies. While the findings and insights are many, here are a few of the highlights:

Trust

- Community readiness to embrace the IRCF model is an important success factor, and trust building happens from

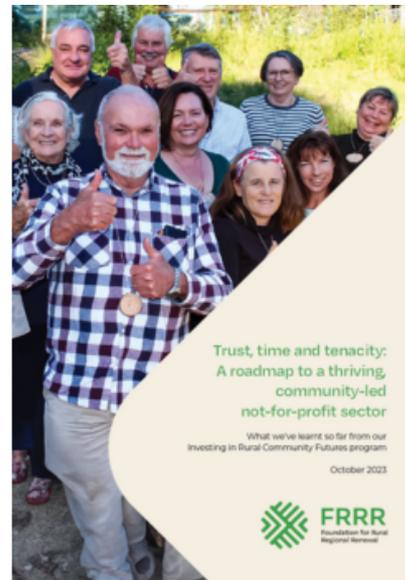
- the start of the engagement process.
- Leaders of local NFPs are keen for collaboration and networking opportunities. However, the support of a neutral facilitator is vital to establish trust in new connection pathways and practices.
- Building trust with First Nations organisations and leaders within each community needs to happen before cultural connections and collaboration can emerge.

Time

- Progress toward sustainability moves at the pace of community and each is unique.
- A minimum five-year commitment and investment of resources is optimal to allow the community and IRCF team to build trust and activate program elements at the right time.
- It's important to stay flexible as the program progresses to respond alongside community to emerging challenges and opportunities,

Tenacity

- Establishing clear pathways for future funding and resources is vital to sustainability.
- Early development of a lead organisation / backbone entity with community buy-in is emerging as a critical factor to ensuring impact can be sustained beyond the program.
- To ensure quality support and facilitation on the ground, it's crucial to have ongoing access to a qualified pool of subject matter expertise, such as NFP strategy, business development, fundraising, governance and systems.



[DOWNLOAD the full report](#)

Sharing Climate Solutions Learnings

In recent years, FRRR has seen increasing impact from climate change on small NFPs, especially those in remote, rural and regional communities. As Natalie noted above, that has led us to establish the Climate Solutions portfolio and last week, we announced [16 projects funded in the inaugural round of Community Led Climate Solutions](#).

We are extremely grateful to the support of [Hand Heart Pocket](#) and [Boundless Earth](#) for funding this inaugural round of projects, which are great examples of local communities activating climate solutions that respond to their context to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help address the impacts of climate change for positive and sustainable environmental, social and economic outcomes.

FRRR and Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network (AEGN) are co-hosting an event in Melbourne next month to share the stories of these grantees, let people learn about AEGN's Climate Lens tool and inspire support for community led climate solutions. We extend a warm welcome to our supporters to attend this even in person on Wednesday, 17 April, from 12.00-1.30pm.

Please [register for the Community Led Climate Solutions event](#) by Tuesday 2nd April.



Our progress, with your support

In the second quarter of FY24, FRRR awarded \$6.06 million in grants to support 370 projects. The total number of applications was up 4% on the same period last year, totalling 785. Pleasingly, around a third of those we funded were new to FRRR, which means we continue to reach more communities. And most of those are in the more remote or very remote parts of the country, where it's harder to raise funds locally or access philanthropic support. Our focus also continues on supporting communities of fewer than 10,000 people, with 47% of grants supporting those areas.

However, we can't do it without your support - so thank you.



Insights from the bush

With the team out and about, as well as spending many hundreds of minutes on the phone to local leaders or reviewing the nearly 800 grant applications we received last quarter, we garner insights and trends into what's happening beyond urban Australia. Below we've shared a few that we've recently encountered or are seeing come through more strongly.

- **Rural Australia is changing, and generational expectations are shifting.** Communities are looking towards future generations of young people to step up, and young people themselves are seeking support to transition into leadership roles. Investment in programs that activate young people, next generation community leaders, and their aspirations for the future, have never been more important.
- The **energy transition** continues to impact RRR communities, presenting both challenges and opportunities. In many places, it can be divisive. Remote, rural and regional communities want a better seat at the table, and a better deal that balances energy production, biodiversity, community wellbeing, and genuine enduring regional economic benefits.
- Community level **conditions remain highly variable for all communities** with ongoing disasters occurring. Originally forecast as a high-risk fire season with extreme heat and drought, we've had a summer of cyclones, storms, flooding, emerging pockets of drought (e.g. 56.6% of NSW is in intense drought, drought or drought-affected, up 6.6% from last quarter) and now, much later than usual, bushfires are occurring.
- Small and remote areas are **increasingly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters**. They experience capacity challenges in responding and preparing, and existing disadvantage is exacerbated. Preparedness and strengthened social and built capital and environmental health needs significant investment.
- Australia's **pathway to reconciliation continues**. There's much work to do towards Closing the Gap targets. There is strong leadership in First Nations communities but stretched capacity and resourcing. In the last round of SRC, we saw an increase in requests to support projects focused on reconciliation.
- Outback / remote regions experience **market failures at all levels** due to their remoteness and size; yet are drivers of significant national output. Simple, innovative, and cost-effective solutions to improve livability and health in all its dimensions need tailored and well-informed funding and partnerships to realise their potential.
- Pressures on community groups from the **increased costs of living** continue to grow month by month, such as an increase in applications for projects supporting food relief and scarcity.
- With 20 disasters declared nationally during Q2, another sad development is an increase in disaster-impacted (specifically flood) areas for projects to reduce **family violence** or support FV victims.
- Additionally, in NSW & VIC on-the-ground agencies and service providers are reporting a **gap between flood response and recovery support**. Finding meaningful medium to long-term recovery support is challenging, especially in the more remote communities.
- Another interesting trend has emerged of some remote, rural and regional communities reporting a **gap between flood response and recovery support** during COVID - prompting applications focused on social connection and projects to preserve and record pre-COVID culture.
- More and more regional or state organisations are applying for funding to work in remote or rural communities, but they often cannot demonstrate appropriate place-based approaches for small communities, nor support of, or engagement with, those targeted communities. This has reinforced the **importance of community-led solutions**.

There are many more insights 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.

Supporter spotlight



The partnership between FRRR and the **Helen Macpherson Smith Trust (HMST)** highlights the value of grassroots-focused capacity building in community development, including following a disaster event.

We are pleased to share this Q&A featuring **Debra Morgan**, an accomplished leader with two decades of executive experience in the philanthropic and for-purpose sectors. Debra joined HMST in October 2021 and has been instrumental in shaping and delivering philanthropic programs that make a meaningful difference.

HMST made a substantial donation to FRRR's Bushfire Recovery Fund, developed innovatively in collaboration with the Sidney Myer Fund. This grant program was designed to meet a gap in the funds being made available to Victorian communities affected by the 2019/20 bushfires - building the capacity of organisations in those communities to address challenges in their operations, supporting their growth and development to enable their continued support of their communities' recovery.

[Watch the video](#) or [read the Q&A text](#) to hear Debra Morgan shed light on the intricacies of this impactful partnership.



Partnering opportunities



Empowering rural youth

An essential part of FRRR's commitment to fostering vibrant remote, rural and regional communities is a focus on empowering rural youth. Two standout programs, **Heywire** and **Takeover**, exemplify the impact of investing in the voices and ideas of the next generation.

In 2024, the ABC's **Takeover** program is heading to Lismore in the Northern Rivers of NSW. This initiative champions the voices of young people, placing their ideas at the forefront of rural communities. There will be a second site in the La Trobe area in Victoria too.

Takeover provides a platform for the unique perspectives of youth to be heard and celebrated. Through a partnership with ABC, the Australian Government Office for Youth (and in Victoria, the Department of Health and Human Services) and FRRR, this program ensures that the ideas generated by young leaders at the Takeover Summit are acted upon. FRRR is offering funding to enable community organisations to work with local youth to implement the projects to benefit the remote, rural and regional communities they were designed for.

Similarly, **Heywire** involves young people from across Australia coming together to share the issues that matter

to them and then developing ideas to address those issues. FRRR and our partners also offer grants so local communities can adapt and adopt those ideas in their community.

We support these programs because it's vital that the next generation is equipped to play an active role in shaping rural Australia's future. As donors, your contributions to FRRR's growing youth programs make a tangible difference, enabling community groups to focus on initiatives that make young people feel seen and empowered.

To find out more, or become involved, speak to our [Partnerships Team](#).

Fundraising Accounts

Fundraising Accounts enhance an organisation's network and fundraising capabilities by offering tax deductibility for donors. FRRR manages the funds with a team of financial experts and offers valuable administrative support, ensuring proper allocation and supports good governance by providing financial statements to account partners for donations supporting their activities.

Currently, FRRR hosts 51 fundraising accounts (made up of 32 Not-for-Profit Fundraising Accounts and 19 Community Foundation Accounts). Below we share how Motherland Australia is leveraging FRRR's special tax status. If you'd like to know more about how this works, contact [Jo Kemp](#) at FRRR.

In Focus: Motherland Australia

Founded by Stephanie Trethewey, **Motherland Australia's** mission is to eliminate the crippling social isolation many rural mums face by connecting them to a supportive online community and offering a mothers' group program that every rural mum can access, regardless of her location.

Its core initiative is the Motherland Village program, an innovative online mothers' group program designed to transcend geographical barriers. The six-week program provides a personalised virtual space for rural mothers, creating connections and support networks that endure well beyond the program's duration. Eighty-seven percent of participants report significant positive changes in their lives.

Over the past six months, Motherland has utilised an FRRR Fundraising Account to fund a crucial Partnerships and Sales role. This strategic move has enabled the organisation to capitalise on the demand from the rural motherhood community, leading to a 50% increase in the online community and a 25% increase in projected partnership revenue for FY23/24.

"Our NFP Account has been a gamechanger in helping us secure the funds required for this role, which has been pivotal to our charity's growth and impact across rural Australia."

[READ MORE](#) or [Donate now](#).



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

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal
PO Box 41
Bendigo VIC 3552

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

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While it is critical to provide support to communities as they recover from disasters and the pandemic, it's more important than ever to support all communities to have the basic infrastructure, capacity of local not-for-profits and community groups, and well-developed plans in place, so they are ready when new opportunities arise.

Learn about where the funding needs are and donate here:

[DONATE NOW](#)

You are receiving this newsletter, as you have previously kindly supported FRRR or one of our Fundraising Account partners.

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Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal

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