

# Education Benalla Program

THE FIRST 10 YEARS

TOMORROW  TODAY  
Benalla. Stronger together



Benalla and district is in North East Victoria.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land  
on which we all live, work, study and volunteer.  
We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

We'd like to acknowledge that a number of the photos in this  
publication have been provided thanks to our program partners.

Tomorrow Today Education Foundation  
ABN 90 610 420 123



# CONTENTS

Foreword	5
About Tomorrow Today	7
Our Impact	8
The Story So Far	10
Education Benalla Program Described	14
The Early Years	18
Future Work	20
Collaboration	24
Covid-19 Side-Step	26
Our Home	28
Governance	30
Farewell To Liz Chapman OAM	32
Thank You To Our Funders And Partners	35



Kids as Catalysts which we ran in Benalla 2016-2018, supported Year 6 Benalla P-12 students to pitch their ideas for positive community change and then work with community partners on real-life philanthropic projects.

# FOREWORD

Philanthropy could easily have looked the other way in 2009 and 2010 when Tomorrow Today applied for funds to start rolling out the Education Benalla Program. Benalla’s community foundation was small and unproven. They boldly claimed to have a local solution to an international problem — that children living in poorer areas do not reach their full life potential. And they were telling us that it would take 10 to 20 years to achieve!

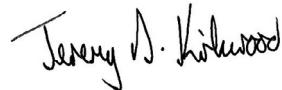
Their “whole-of-community” approach was different to what we had seen elsewhere. It was multi-faceted and it was well researched. It was compelling particularly because it was a local community organisation proposing a local solution that potentially could be an example to benefit many other disadvantaged areas.

Often in philanthropy we back people as much as ideas. The people at Tomorrow Today demonstrated leadership, community and government support, professionalism and personal commitment. Philanthropy enables a long-term approach to the achievement of social change. We have enjoyed working with Tomorrow Today to enable the people of Benalla and district to create a stronger, more resilient and prosperous community, through the improved education and engagement of their young people.

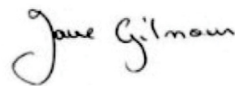
There is more work to be done and we are confident that Tomorrow Today will continue to achieve even better outcomes in the future. We commend this ten year celebratory publication and hope it provides many other communities a frame of reference for their efforts to improve healthy child development and educational outcomes.



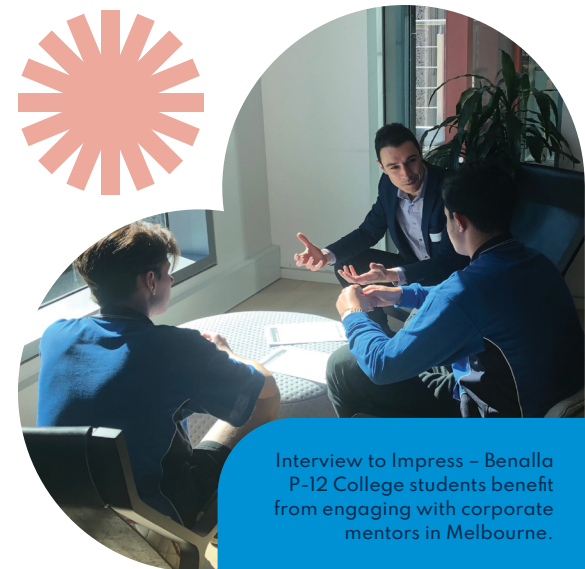
Mr Charles Goode AC, Chairman  
**The Ian Potter Foundation**



Mr Jeremy Kirkwood, Chair  
**The R E Ross Trust**



Dr Jane Gilmour, Chair  
**The William Buckland Foundation**



Interview to Impress – Benalla P-12 College students benefit from engaging with corporate mentors in Melbourne.



The annual Tomorrow Today PEEP Christmas party is regularly attended by over 200 parents, babies and young children.

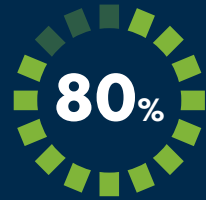


## ABOUT TOMORROW TODAY

**Tomorrow Today is Benalla's independent community foundation. We connect people, resources and ideas, to create a bright future for our great rural community. We believe that everyone should have the chance to thrive - and that education is the answer. Working together with families, schools and the community, we are leading a 20-year project to ensure all of our children and young people can achieve their potential in school, work and life.**

# OUR IMPACT

## EARLY YEARS



of Benalla families attend PEEP <sup>(1)</sup>



Significantly improved rates of healthy early childhood development



**5,214**

volunteer hours given by Reading Buddy volunteers

## FUTURE WORK



**254**

young people mentored<sup>(2)</sup> by trained community volunteers



**350%**

increase in work experience placements <sup>(3)</sup>

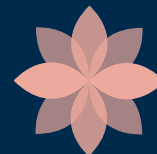
**10%**

increase in transition to work or study post-school <sup>(4)</sup>

## COLLABORATION

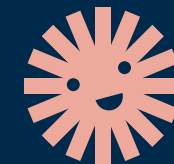


Government + business + community working together



**124**

local organisational partners



Whole of community: Child by child

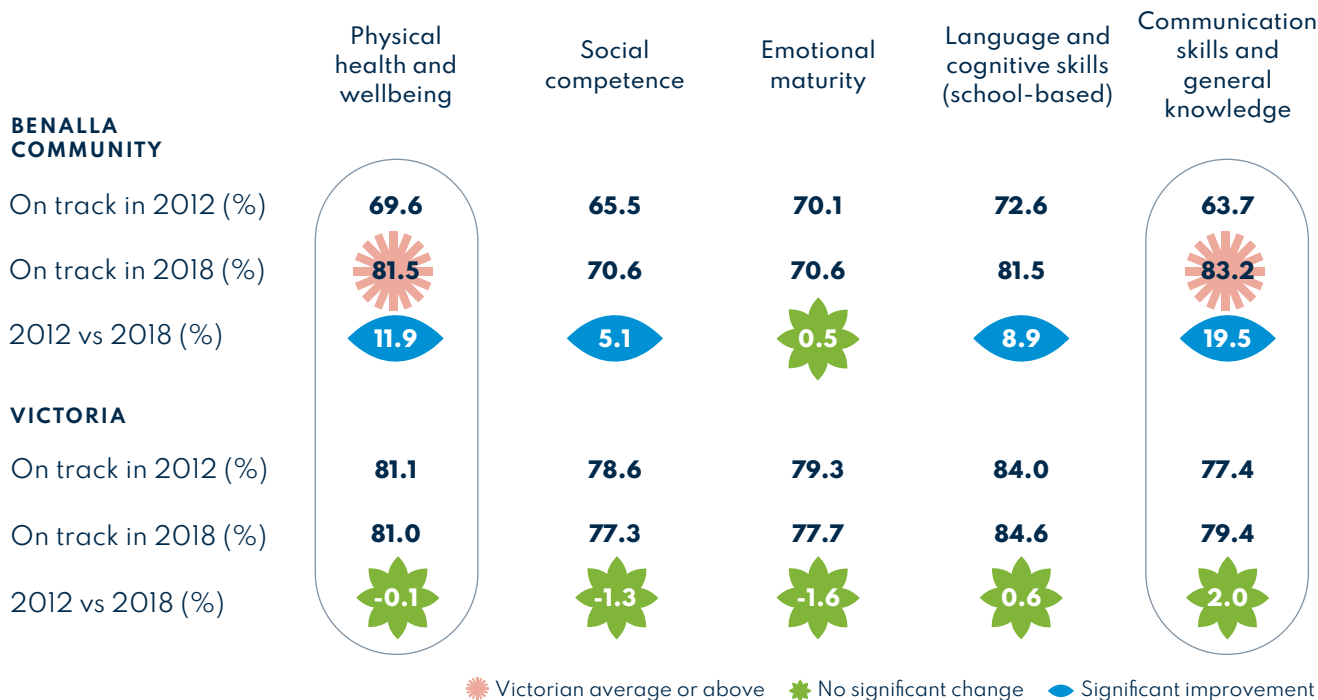
**Footnotes:** 1. Includes families with preschool aged children who attended at least 10 weeks of Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) between 2015-2019 2. Through our Connect9 program, 2011-2021 3. Benalla P-12 College data, increase in work experience placements in 2019 compared to previous four years (2015-2018) 4. Benalla P-12 College and FCJ College, dandolo analysis of Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) data, 2014 to 2018



**The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures how young children are developing in their first year of full-time school, every three years across the nation.**

Children in Benalla are catching up to the State average of being 'on track' at the start of school. Benalla's children have caught up to the State average in the areas of 'physical health and wellbeing' and 'communication skills and general knowledge'.

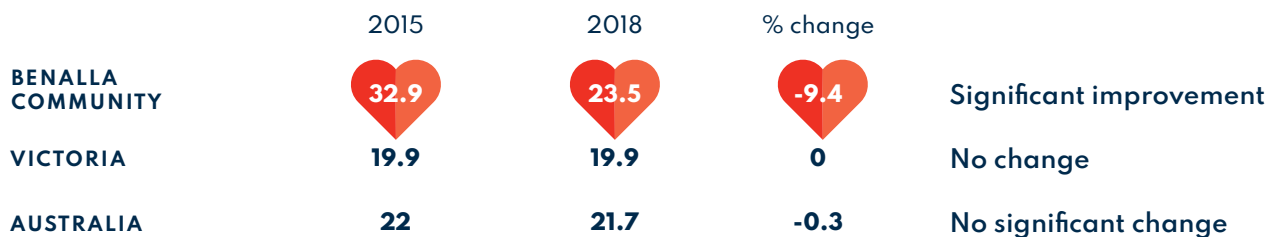
**PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN ON TRACK (%)**



**Significant decrease in children's developmental vulnerability**

A dramatic reduction in levels of child vulnerability now positions Benalla much closer to state and national averages.

**PERCENTAGE OF CHILDREN DEVELOPMENTALLY VULNERABLE ON ONE OR MORE DOMAIN**





# THE STORY SO FAR

From Liz Chapman OAM,  
outgoing Education Benalla Program Convenor

**It has been a wild ride. There was a lot to learn and do.**

**Back in 2007, Tomorrow Today started investigating poor rates of school retention and discovered a horrible merry-go-round: poor school retention led to life-long social and economic disadvantage; and disadvantage resulted in poor levels of school retention.**

**It was self-perpetuating.**

As Benalla's community foundation, what could Tomorrow Today do about it?

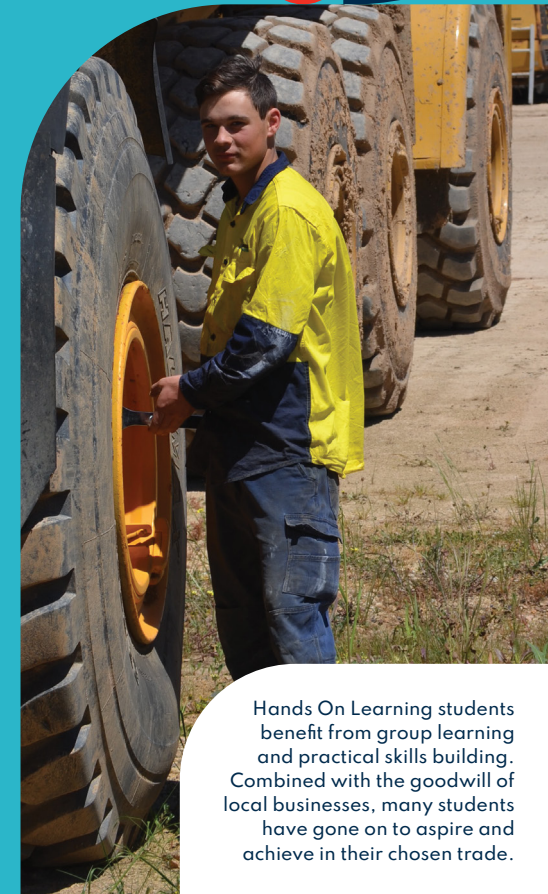
Development requires the commitment and cooperation of a great many people, organisations, networks, groups and agencies to achieve an impact. Benalla was no different to other communities in that government agencies, community groups and businesses all generally looked within themselves and acted in isolation. What we realised we could do was bring all these groups together to work, listen, and stand up.

We established a Community Advisory Committee to consider what had been done in other communities and countries, discuss Benalla-specific information, and advise the Board of Tomorrow Today on creating an education program that would improve student outcomes. We worked behind the scenes with local school Principals, Hume Regional Office of the Victorian Department of Education and Training, Benalla Health and Benalla Rural City to firm up the program design. We also discussed emerging themes and possible approaches with "critical friends" from universities and other research bodies external to Benalla. Everyone locally turned up to early pre-work meetings and

followed through with their bit. One early morning I saw the fatigue on a school Principal's face and it pulled me up short. I apologised for another early morning discussion. She responded by saying "it's about the kids. Let's get going."

It takes a village to educate a child, and thanks to that attitude we did "get going".

Early on we made a decision to co-design a place-based, long term response rather than shape a project to suit short term funding opportunities. Children learn across three environments - the family, school and community - so the program would require multiple points of contact with children and families across those three environments to measurably improve literacy, numeracy, wellbeing, school completion, job readiness and aspiration. Additionally, the systems surrounding those three learning environments needed to work together. Fortunately, there is enormous goodwill in all communities to see local children succeed. The Education Benalla Program has used this goodwill to melt competitiveness and false boundaries so that children can fare better. Our motto has always been "whole of community, child by child".



Hands On Learning students benefit from group learning and practical skills building. Combined with the goodwill of local businesses, many students have gone on to aspire and achieve in their chosen trade.



Joining a local hobby or sports club is good for wellbeing and helps young people stay engaged with learning. Astronomy is one of the many options offered at our 'Come and Try' Days.

Now, Benalla and district's level of healthy early childhood development has dramatically improved. From an unenviable position - the worst level of early childhood vulnerability of any local government area in Victoria - Benalla is now on par with State averages in the Physical Health and Wellbeing, and Communication Skills and General Knowledge domains of the Australian Early Childhood Development Census; and has significantly improved in the domains of Social Competence and Language and Cognitive Skills. Together, we have created a significant improvement in the proportion of children starting school ready to learn, at a time when there has been no change across State or national averages.

**“I am immensely proud and thankful to all who have been a part of this first decade of transition towards a more advantaged community, able to envisage a stronger tomorrow by taking action today.”**

Liz Chapman OAM

Pursuing a collaborative approach has been a goal from the very start. Where necessary, we deliver activities ourselves to children, young people and parents. We also work very hard to connect vulnerable and marginalised families with community groups and government funded services and supports. There have been numerous highs and lows, but now there are 120 groups, organisations and agencies involved locally in partnerships with Tomorrow Today to help improve student outcomes in Benalla. This will continue to offer up advantages for young people and families beyond what the program is designed to achieve.

Any group looking to adapt our approach to their local situation should know that a key ingredient has been individuals bringing their best selves to do what they can; and often a bit more. Development work can be lonely, and thankfully I never was lonely. From the start, outgoing Chair of Tomorrow Today, Sally Gamble, has been fundamental to program success in too many ways to catalogue here. Together, our board members took up the challenge to enthusiastically engage with and guide the program. I trod the pavements in Melbourne in the early days with fellow Board members Bill Dobson or Sally Gamble

to make the case for philanthropic support. Board member Adrian Aldous boldly debated with counter arguments and helped strengthen everything we did. Ex-mayor Cr. Pat Claridge left local government to deftly lead the program's staff and achieve essential partnerships across the service system. More recently, Rosie Koop has stepped in to lead and communicate with inspirational skill. Our major philanthropic funding partners have not just provided critical long term funding, but also provided senior staff to share knowledge and join in ongoing strategic discussions about multiple issues as the Education Benalla Program continues to unfold. Community volunteers have found time they did not have to undertake training and deliver services, supporting and coaching children and adolescents in school and the community. Clubs have opened up to welcome new young members, providing young people with positive role models additional to their parents. Parents and carers have engaged and offered advice, connection and fellowship to others. Business owners have taken up opportunities to coordinate across the private sector to make a difference in young people's lives. Our staff team spend their downtime laughing and planning together, and in their working hours

persistently and skilfully changing lives by connecting with families, little children, young people and service providers.

At time of writing, the Victorian Government has committed as a major partner. Their funding will allow us to focus on what we do best; bringing the community together to address community challenges. With partnerships that cross over public, private and civic systems, we believe that despite the social and economic costs our population is yet to fully realise due to the pandemic, Benalla families, children and young people will be able to aspire and achieve.

I am immensely proud and thankful to all who have been a part of this first decade of transition towards a more advantaged community, able to envisage a stronger tomorrow by taking action today. To the teachers, farmers, Mayor, retirees, School Principal, managers, gap year students and education department staff who participated as members of the original Community Advisory Committee — thank you, and look what you started!

**Liz Chapman OAM**  
Education Benalla Program Convenor

# EDUCATION BENALLA PROGRAM DESCRIBED

## Our Aims

The Education Benalla Program collaborates with over 120 local organisations to ensure that:

- every Benalla child starts school ready to learn,
- numeracy and literacy is measurably improved,
- student wellbeing is improved, and
- community expectations for children's education are raised.

A 'Masterchef' session where mentors and mentees all work together to cook and share a meal is a regular feature of each 10-week Connect9 program.



## Our Approach

### The problem

A high level of social disadvantage in the Benalla district adversely impacts on educational attainment.

### The solution

Completion of Year 12 or an apprenticeship is necessary for young people to improve their lifelong health, economic, and social outlook. Improvement in Benalla's Year 12 completion rate, to state average or better, can be achieved through a whole-of-community development program (place-based) that mitigates the effects of disadvantage.

### Creating change

#### Families – Schools – Community

Children learn in three environments - the family, the school and the community. Supporting children in each environment will be more effective than a schools-only approach.

### Whole of Community

It takes a village to educate a child. Cross-sectoral partnerships that help to collapse silos and that encompass schools, community groups, business, government and non-government agencies are necessary to achieve the desired outcomes.

### Child by Child

While collaboration across the service delivery system is key to the program, the whole focus is to change individuals' educational attainment levels, child by child in Benalla and district.

### Birth to Career

No single activity will achieve the desired outcome. Addressing the impact of social disadvantage requires a long-term approach, combining many complementary projects and activities - from birth to career.

### Community-led

As Benalla's independent community foundation, Tomorrow Today is in the best position to bring together everyone with an interest in Benalla's children. We have developed a long term, whole-of-community program that spans family, school and community life. Implementation commenced in 2010, after two years of research and development. It is now an advanced Australian example of a collective impact approach to addressing complex community problems.

### Stronger together

When public agencies, private business, local families, schools, local government, community groups and external philanthropy all work together, with the common focus of improving Benalla student outcomes, there's an opportunity for real change. As we find ways to help a generation of children achieve their individual potential, benefits to the community will be significant, measurable and ongoing.

## Our Program Design

There are three sub program areas. Each area has multiple activities and projects at any time.

- Early Years (0 – 8 years)
- Future Work (from age 11 years)
- Collaboration - Working in partnerships across Benalla to achieve a whole of community focus on improving child development and educational outcomes

Benalla P-12 College Hands On Learning students proudly presented their work to local MP Steph Ryan at Parliament House in Melbourne, accompanied by Ed Bishop and Pip Rowe from the College and Tomorrow Today Executive Officer, Pat Claridge. Tomorrow Today and P-12 College have partnered in delivering this program for over 10 years.



**“As a community we can be immensely proud of the groundbreaking work done by Tomorrow Today through the Education Benalla Program. This milestone marks 10 years of hard work and unwavering resolve, and it should be celebrated.”**

Steph Ryan, Member for Euroa and Deputy Leader of The Nationals.

# EDUCATION = FAMILIES + SCHOOLS + COMMUNITY

All working together to improve healthy child development and educational outcomes.

**“Benalla is close to my heart and I’m a big supporter of Tomorrow Today. Over the past 10 years Tomorrow Today have brought the community together to tackle challenges and support so many people, in particular looking after our littlest people and providing pathways for Benalla’s teenagers. I commend Tomorrow Today on ten years of the Education Benalla Program. We are proud to support your work now and into the future.”**

Jaclyn Symes,  
Member for Northern Victoria



Jaclyn Symes MP at our home in Nunn Street, announcing State government funding for the Education Benalla Program accompanied by Tomorrow Today staff and PEEP families.



## Tomorrow Today works with over 120 local partners to run activities that give every Benalla child the chance to thrive in life. In 2020/21 we ran the following programs:

### Early Years

**Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP)** - 16 facilitated weekly playgroups that recognise parents as their child's first and most important educator, building parenting skills to support healthy child development.

**PEEP Home Visits** - Offered to families who experience difficulties attending PEEP group sessions, to assist with parenting skills and child development and learning.

**Preschool Screening** - Pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, and oral language screening for 4-year old children attending local preschools to guide collaborative planning and action.

**Kinder Immersion** - A play-based program designed to build pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills and oral competence in preschool children identified as not being 'ready' for school.

**Kinder Pals** - Trained volunteers converse through play with children at preschool to expand language skills.

**Great Start to School** - A program to improve parents' confidence in supporting their child's transition from kinder to school.

**Prep Immersion** - A literacy program for children who are identified by their teacher as being developmentally vulnerable on school entry, to switch them on to learning.

**Reading Buddies** - Trained volunteers are matched with a child in Years 1 or 2 of schooling to help improve their reading and literacy levels.

### Future Work

**Full Impact Project** - A community approach co-designed and co-delivered with young people and local organisations/government to increase the power, agency and aspiration of Benalla's young people.

**Hands On Learning** - Designed to re-engage identified students in learning, the practical projects develop skills and aspiration under the guidance of artisan teachers.

**Digital Storytelling** - A 10-week school-based program to build digital literacy and prevent school disengagement in students in Years 5/6 and 9/10.

**Live4Life** - A youth suicide prevention program partnership run in schools.

**Connect9** - A ten-week Year 9 mentoring program that builds community connection, fosters new skills and hobbies, explores careers, and helps set life goals.

**Great Start to Work** - Connects students with local employers to learn about careers, employee roles, employer expectations and the interpersonal skills required to obtain work.

**Heads Up For Careers** - Parents are provided with the latest careers advice to increase their confidence in discussing careers with their children.

**Year 10 Career Action Plans** - A motivational coach works with students to identify their interests, skills and talents. Students are guided to explore suitable careers.

**Year 12 scholarships** - \$1,000 scholarships to students at Benalla P-12 College and FCJ College to assist with transition to tertiary education.

**Careers Day** - Year 10 and 11 students learn about careers and career pathways by visiting local work places, participating in hands-on university workshops, and interacting with a range of local professionals.

**Increasing work placement opportunities** - A community partnership that formed to build the aspirations of Benalla's young people and actively support career development, work experience and school-based apprenticeships.

**University Bus Trips** - Annual bus trips to four Melbourne Universities to observe a typical university day and to learn about accommodation, scholarship and study pathways.

### Across both age groups

**Individual assistance** - Funding assistance to support children and young people's educational needs.

**Hobby and Sports Club membership initiative** - Financial assistance for young people to participate in their chosen hobby or sport.

**Come and Try Day** - An opportunity to try different sports and hobby activities at the one location, free of charge.

**FRRR Back To School vouchers** - Vouchers to help families purchase school essentials.

**Grants** - Tomorrow Today grants support to local groups and organisations to bring their child development and educational projects and ideas to life.

# THE EARLY YEARS - OUR CHILDREN LEARNING



**Tomorrow Today supports local children and their families throughout their lives to ensure they have equal access to education and supportive learning environments, and are connected to their community.**

Our Early Years activities, delivered with many local partners, ensure Benalla's children are ready to learn when they start school, and that any children who have 'fallen through the cracks' are given extra assistance to catch up at school.

Our flagship Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) program recognises parents as a child's first and most important educator. It has become part of daily life for many local families with preschool aged children, empowering them to support learning in many ways, every day.

PEEP is the 'first' of many Early Years activities that we offer in partnership with local preschools, schools, Council and community groups in Benalla. Other activities include Kinder Immersion, Kinder Pals, Preschool Screening, Great Start to School, Prep Immersion, Reading Buddies and Come and Try Days.

**OVER 80%  
OF BENALLA  
FAMILIES  
ATTEND PEEP**

Includes families with preschool aged children who attended at least 10 weeks of PEEP between 2015-2019.



“I’ve broken the cycle. I grew up in a split family so I was raised by my mum until I was twelve and then I lived with my dad until I moved out of home. So it was quite difficult growing up. My mum is intellectually disabled so she was a single mum and she struggled raising us kids - that’s why I went and lived with my dad. And he was kind of a rough Aussie who liked the drink and didn’t know what to do with a daughter. Connecting with the PEEP program and just being around parents that looked like they’ve got it together and they’re handling it well, it kind of drives you to be like that and so you just lean on those supports and take the best out of what you’ve got, which was PEEP. I’d just moved to Benalla and PEEP was the only thing I could lean on and gain support from.”

**Cassie, PEEP participant**

“I have learnt so much and it has helped both S and I in areas I didn’t know how to deal with.”

**PEEP participant**

“Our new preps were well prepared for their transition to school and we are attributing this to the hard work of their preschool teachers, but also, their involvement in the PEEP program (some of them since infancy) as well as their participation in the Great Start to School program – also in partnership with the Tomorrow Today Foundation.”

**Benalla P-12 College Waller St  
Campus Principal, 2018**



“I think there was still quite a huge divide of people who were the have and have-nots. I think Tomorrow Today strives to narrow that gap. It’s not about what that person doesn’t have, it’s more about what can we do for that person. PEEP is a perfect example of that - the bringing together of people from diverse backgrounds and having them share experiences and having them have a sense of being valued as a parent or carer.”

**Sue, retired teacher**



“We have one gentlemen who comes in and for some children he might be the only positive male role model they’ve encountered that week. And they flock around him, because as you know early education is mostly women. So Tomorrow Today Foundation provides those volunteers to help build those relationships and also encourage that positive disposition towards the world, towards learning.”

**Michelle, early childhood educator**

“The strategies for hearing my child read were really helpful, particularly the 3Ps of Pause, Prompt, and Praise.”

**Parents as Partners in Learning participant**

# FUTURE WORK - OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ACHIEVING



Feeling good about yourself and your future has a profound impact on your success at school and in life.

Our Future Work activities build student aspiration, digital literacy, engagement in learning, confidence, and the employability skills needed to embrace future work opportunities, through a range of community and school-based activities.

Our Connect9 mentoring program increases connection to the community and boosts wellbeing. Hands on Learning creates opportunities for students who do not cope well in traditional classroom settings to develop the skills they need to succeed in life. Great Start to Work and Year 10 Careers Day introduce students to the world of work and the pathways and options available to them.

**254** YOUNG PEOPLE MENTORED<sup>(2)</sup>

**350%** INCREASE IN WORK EXPERIENCE PLACEMENTS<sup>(3)</sup>

**10%** INCREASE IN TRANSITION TO WORK OR STUDY POST-SCHOOL<sup>(4)</sup>

**Footnotes:** 2. Through our Connect9 program, 2011-2021 3. Benalla P-12 College data, increase in work experience placements in 2019 compared to previous four years (2015-2018)  
4. Benalla P-12 College and FCJ College, dandolo analysis of Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) data, 2014 to 2018



“If I needed someone to talk to other than mum or the rest of our family, I would talk to my mentor. I just felt like I needed her, and I still text her now when I need someone to talk to and we go out for a hot chocolate.”

**Molly, Connect9 mentee**

“One student, even through primary school, just didn’t go to school. The principal at primary school would organise a deal with him: an hour in the classroom, an hour in the garden, just to get him there. At high school the Vice Principal would go round to his house and try and get him to school. It was a hard road for them and it wasn’t until we started the Hands on Learning program that he wanted to come to school. And he ended up coming to us, doing an apprenticeship at a local business and completing that and he now works in his chosen trade.”

**Ed, former Hands On Learning artisan**

“I learnt that there are so many opportunities for jobs around Benalla.”

**Great Start to Work participant**

“I think it’s a very inspirational project. It really shows what young people can do when given the chance.”

**Local business owner, re Digital Project 2019**



“It has had a remarkable strike rate of keeping kids engaged and going through until year 12. I think back on the kids that I’ve mentored, a number were what I’d classify as being high-risk. One young man’s family life was pretty dysfunctional and he had low literacy levels. In 2018 his mother rang me and invited me to his year 12 graduation which just blew me away. I still see him about Benalla, he’s now 21 and he has a job. Life’s pretty good for him.”

**Vince, Connect9 mentor**

“The Education Benalla Program has had a massive impact on both students who complete the programs and Benalla Health. Since the VETiS and Traineeship programs have begun at Benalla Health, we have been able to support multiple students to complete the School Based Programs. From these programs we have then seen various students attend clinical placement for their degree, and then return to the Hospital for employment. We have employed previous students in roles such as Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, and Nursing. The program allows us to ‘grow our own’ and support regional health care shortages.”

**Stephanie Johnson, Benalla Health**

“I got to see some of the accommodation and pricing as well as some other options if I don’t get the right ATAR.”

**Uni Bus Trip participant**

## STUDENT TESTIMONIAL



TAHLIA ALLEN

Tahlia didn't enjoy school and had no idea what she would do when she finished, until she started work experience at Tomorrow Today.

Tahlia took part in Tomorrow Today's Connect9 program as a 15 year old, the Great Start to Work program when she was 16, then undertook work experience in the PEEP program. She went on to complete Year 12, becoming the first person in her family to do so.

“Honestly I don't think I would have done it without the Tomorrow Today Foundation,” she says.

“I started doing a few days a week work experience in their PEEP program and after talking to them they decided to try and give me an apprenticeship to start getting my certificate. That got me into TAFE and started me doing my course, it got the ball rolling.”

Tahlia is studying a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and working at a childcare centre, which she loves. She is considering going on to study a Diploma. “I'm feeling really good about the future, I know what I'm going to do now and I really didn't know that until I was doing my work experience. That really showed me that I can go into this path and do it. I'm good at this thing, I can do this thing, I just have to stick to it which is what I'm doing now.”

A Tomorrow Today grant for 'Scoot Skate, Activate' allowed an alliance of young skaters to realise their plan to attend coaching training in Melbourne, to help develop the sport in Benalla.



# COLLABORATION - STRONGER TOGETHER



**Organisations often work hardest within their own 'system', be it public sector, private enterprise, or community groups. Our commitment has been to help develop functioning across systems.**

Tomorrow Today's Education Benalla Program partners include Local and State Government departments and agencies, all Benalla schools, preschools and childcare centres, Benalla service groups, clubs and societies, other not-for-profits and local businesses. We have over 120 local organisational partners supporting the program in multiple ways, including referral to and delivery of program activities. Likewise, Tomorrow Today supports the initiatives and actions of our partners that help improve child development and student outcomes.

Tomorrow Today chairs the Benalla Early Years Network and the Benalla Future Work Steering Committee and hosts a range of workshops and forums. Working with schools and other organisations, we provide financial assistance to ensure all children have equal access to educational and community activities.

Our Annual Grants provide funding for groups and organisations working to strengthen the Benalla and district community, which is made possible by the growth of our Community Fund. Donations to this Fund are invested to generate income for local distribution – benefitting Benalla and district year after year. With the collective capacity and goodwill of so many people and organisations, this collaborative approach breaks down barriers and makes change possible.

Together, we are creating a bright future for our great rural community.

**GOVERNMENT,  
BUSINESS AND  
COMMUNITY  
WORKING  
TOGETHER**

**124 LOCAL  
ORGANISATIONAL  
PARTNERS**

**WHOLE OF  
COMMUNITY:  
CHILD BY CHILD**





A supportive partnership with Hume Regional Office of the (now) Department of Education and Training (DET) and local schools was essential to early development of the Program. Liz Chapman OAM (right) is pictured with the DET representative and Benalla's school principals and senior teachers in 2009.



"We are incredibly grateful to have an organisation such as Tomorrow Today in our town."

**Tony Clark, Executive Principal,  
Benalla P-12 College**



Many organisations and agencies partner in the delivery of our early years program. Benalla Health staff members helped to facilitate PEEP sessions for many years. Deb Smith (left), a community health nurse with a background in maternal child health, advised on women's health issues and child development.



"If there was a Tomorrow Today in every town, the positive contribution to community, education, and engagement with young people would solve most of the common problems we face. I have enormous respect for the work they do."

**Danny O'Donoghue, Executive Officer  
of the NE Tracks Local Learning  
& Employment Network**

# COVID SIDE-STEP

In early 2020 we found ourselves in uncharted territory. While we developed new operational guidelines and learnt how to use Zoom and Teams, Program Convenor Liz Chapman OAM got to work researching pandemics to see what we could learn from history. Her review of the impact of pandemics on disadvantaged communities informed our response and enabled a quick side-step in both strategic focus and program delivery.

## OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE INCLUDED:

- Staff training in effective listening and welfare support. Benalla Rural City Council's front-line staff joined us for the training.
- Welfare phone calls to every young family participating in our programs, offering support and connecting vulnerable families to essential services. For some families these phone calls were the only outside contact they had during lockdowns. We found these calls gave us a deeper understanding of people's lives and the challenges they face.
- Drawing attention across agencies and organisations to the likely long-term impacts of Covid-19, such as reduced child immunisation rates. Partnering to track impacts and find solutions.
- We began online delivery of programs during the first week of the first lockdown. Staff created content for PEEP families and Connect9 mentees and mentors. The online PEEP program included song and story times, plus visits from national childhood experts.
- As screen fatigue set in, we offered one on one 'walk and talks' for PEEP families. These were so well received that we've continued to run them alongside our regular PEEP program.
- We produced and delivered home activity packs with fun literacy and numeracy activities. We were able to check on the welfare of families when distributing the packs.
- Several of our wonderful Reading Buddy volunteers read with students by phone and FaceTime during the lockdowns.
- Our Great Start to Work program was delivered one on one or via small group tuition while walking around the Benalla lake.
- Our Connect9 mentoring program was delivered online and via 'walk and talks'.
- In response to student disengagement and poor attendance rates at Benalla P-12 College after the second lockdown, we ran Digital Storytelling Workshops. These workshops gave selected students something to look forward to at school.

**“We were so grateful that the program continued during this time when not much else did.”**

PEEP parent

**“The activity packs were awesome. The girls at PEEP delivered them to us as I was working. This was so appreciated.”**

PEEP parent

**“We appreciate the many ways you offered support during the Covid-19 lockdowns. A massive thank you from all our family!”**

PEEP parent

**“Love the packs. They gave structure to weeks, an excursion and fun crafts at home.”**

PEEP parent



During Covid-19 lockdowns our Early Years team maintained connection with children and families, including providing children's activity packs.

# OUR HOME

Tomorrow Today is exceptionally fortunate to own our own home. We are truly grateful for the wonderful community and philanthropic support that has made this possible.

The Tomorrow Today Foundation purchased the whole Nunn St property in September 2017 at a cost of just over \$1m.

We are honoured that The William Buckland Foundation awarded their first ever social impact loan – a \$600,000 ten-year fixed rate loan – to Tomorrow Today to enable the purchase.

The Ledger Charitable Trust, managed by Perpetual, provided significant grant support over three years.

Thanks to tremendous community support, our Property Appeal raised \$320,000 between May 2017 and June 2020, well above our seemingly ambitious target of \$250,000!

## A vibrant community space

Around half our offices are used for Tomorrow Today activity. They house our staff, who between them coordinate and deliver more than 20 different activities aimed at improving educational outcomes for Benalla children and young people. In addition, Covid permitting, these offices provide space for:

- Approximately 18 PEEP sessions each week for more than 200 families per year.
- Hosting additional parenting, literacy, mentoring, work skills and community development related activities, along with volunteer training and support.
- Providing help to hundreds of families each year to register their children for financial support to join local sport and recreation clubs.
- Meetings of the Board, staff and a range of community partners.

## For enduring community benefit

Owning our own home ensures that Tomorrow Today can continue our work of helping to build a stronger, more prosperous and resilient rural community. It provides –

- A permanent base for the organisation and the many educational programs we run for Benalla and district children and families.
- Rental income from tenants to cover our core operational costs and basic staffing for the community foundation.
- Security and the ability to plan for the future.

The in-kind support provided by our community is very substantial. From legal support to pro bono property management, through to donated goods, labour and equipment, costs are always kept to a minimum.

## Property Improvements

- **Outdoor learning space** - This wonderful educational play area has just been completed. Designed for use in our PEEP sessions, it also caters for groups of older children, small functions and staff use. As we live with Covid, quality outdoor space is more valuable than ever before.
- **Powering our future** - In 2020, a 10.5kWh solar array was installed and six electricity meters consolidated to dramatically reduce our ongoing power bills.
- **Office upgrades** - Since 2018, we've created extra office space, added a much needed food preparation area, and installed opening windows.



Board members at a weekend working bee, moving mulch to the Outdoor Learning Space at the back of the court.

**“We are very grateful that you allowed us to use your wonderful venue for our recent 6-week Strengthening Family Connections program. We are also so grateful for the warm welcome our participants and staff received every week, and the ongoing support and collaboration that helped us to achieve some wonderful outcomes.”**

The Centre



Children at PEEP delight in the drama and suspense of the story.

# GOVERNANCE

Since 2010, oversight, development and implementation of the Education Benalla Program has been assisted by a dedicated Program Management Committee (PMC), reporting to the Board of Tomorrow Today. Membership includes Tomorrow Today Directors, major funding partners and the Department of Education and Training (DET).



## May 2018 PMC meeting.

Left to right: Pat Claridge (then Executive Officer, Tomorrow Today), Alberto Furlan (Senior Program Manager, The Ian Potter Foundation), Kate Atkin (Service Branch Support Manager, Ovens & Murray Region, DET), Sally Matheson (Education Benalla Program Manager, Tomorrow Today), Sally Gamble (Chair, Tomorrow Today), Liz Chapman OAM (Director, Tomorrow Today and Convenor, Education Benalla Program), Natalie Elliott (then Program Manager, The William Buckland Foundation), Sarah Hardy (CEO, The RE Ross Trust), Bill Dobson (then Director, Tomorrow Today).

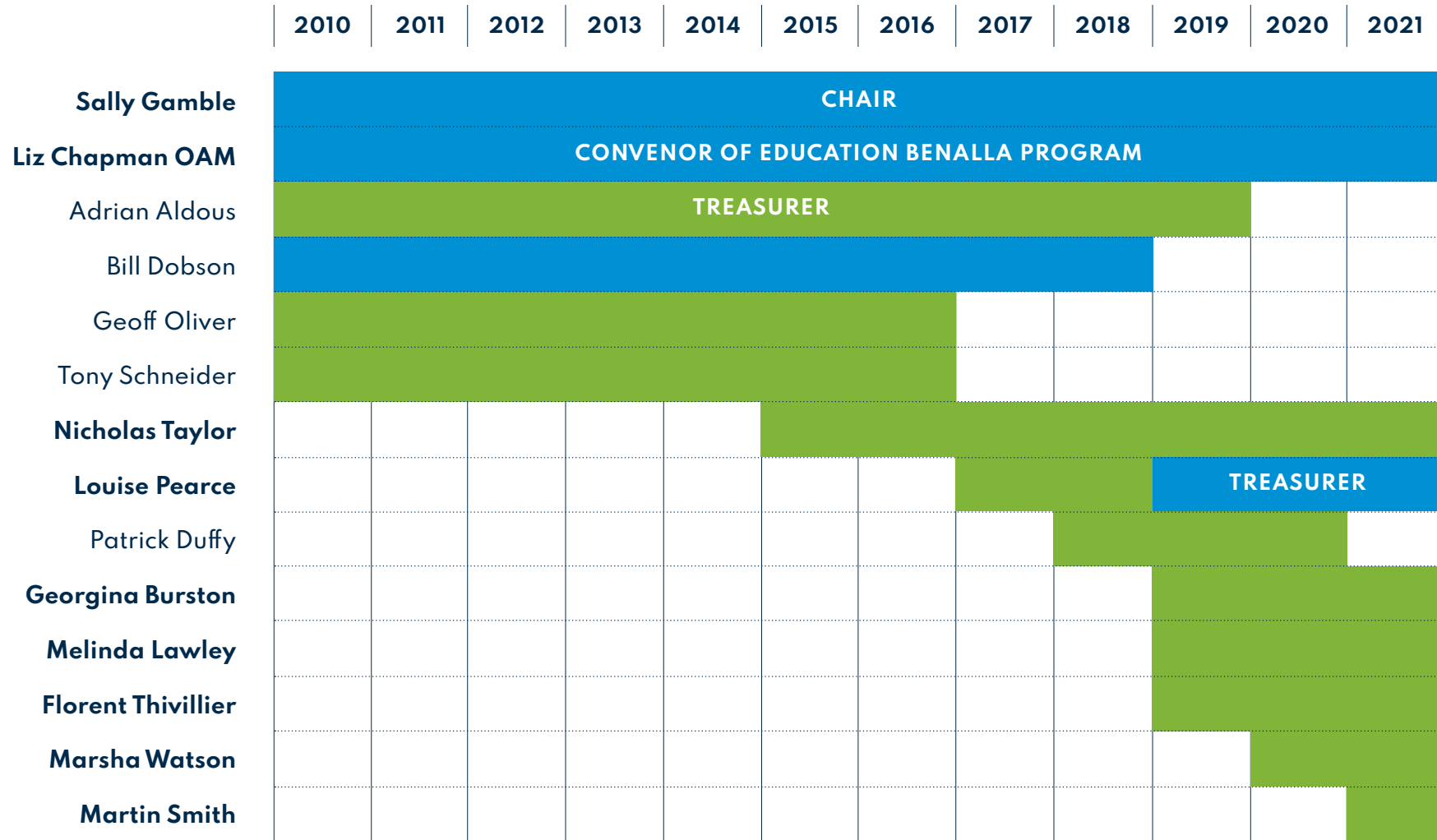


## Our 2018 Annual Celebration.

Left to right: Tomorrow Today Executive Officer, Pat Claridge and Directors; Louise Pearce, Florent Thivillier, Nick Taylor, Liz Chapman OAM, Sally Gamble, Bill Dobson (retired), Melinda Lawley and Adrian Aldous (retired) are joined by Alberto Furlan (Senior Program Manager, The Ian Potter Foundation) and Winsome McCaughey (Trustee, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust).



## Directors of Tomorrow Today - 2010 onwards



■ Board Director and Member of Program Management Committee    
 ■ Board Director

\*Current directors are listed in bold

# FAREWELL TO LIZ CHAPMAN OAM

**It is with immense gratitude that we farewell Liz Chapman OAM as Convenor of the Education Benalla Program and member of the Board of Tomorrow Today, recognising her extraordinary contribution over the past 21 years.**

Liz led the Foundation's initial establishment, was inaugural Chair and has been a key member of the Board since it formed. In 2007 the 'Vinson Report' identified Benalla as highly disadvantaged and shone a light on the fact that kids in poorer areas generally have worse outcomes in life. Determined that something must be done about this injustice, Liz saw that the report also pointed to the solution - education was the key to breaking the cycle of disadvantage. The Tomorrow Today Board backed this judgement and accepted Liz's offer of deeper investigation and discussion with the (now) Department of Education and Training about possible responses. As a result of the work that followed, the Education Benalla Program began in early 2010.

Many people have contributed to the success of the Education Benalla Program, yet without Liz's strong and steady leadership none of this would have been possible. Her skills in research and rural development, combined with experience working with business, community and government organisations, from the local to the national level, set the scene for a unique response. Liz seems to instinctively know: who to involve; how to think big; how to stay true to the reality of our community and the lives of our young people; and the vital importance of working across sectors to create a program that could bring about lasting change. She has also led the hard work of securing the necessary funding for this ambitious program and ensured funds received are always carefully and respectfully applied for maximum community benefit. Soon after the Education Benalla Program began, the term 'Collective Impact' started appearing in literature from the USA. The premise of Collective Impact is that large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, rather than the isolated

interventions by individual organisations that are so common. It was amazing to realise that the elements described as essential to collective success were all features of Tomorrow Today's approach. This 'coincidence' speaks volumes about the intellectual rigour brought to the program design. For most of Liz's time with Tomorrow Today, she has fitted her very significant volunteer contribution around paid work and her commitments as a carer. In addition to her local leadership role, Liz has represented Tomorrow Today at many conferences and events around the country as well as assisting other communities. She has given untold hours to see the Foundation lead the way nationally in 'place-based' philanthropy as it changes the life opportunities of Benalla's young people.

What an amazing journey, from the earliest discussions about forming a community foundation to the present level of coordinated activity that is improving educational outcomes. Thank you Liz, for dreaming big and contributing so generously to a stronger future for Benalla.





“I wanted to say a big congratulations to Liz on all that she has achieved during her time with Tomorrow Today and the Education Benalla Program. I think beyond the clear impact that you have had on the Benalla community is the mark that you have left on philanthropy in this country. I know that the work of Tomorrow Today was catalytic in changing the way I think philanthropists started to think about place-based initiatives. And your commitment to the rigor and the approach, the skills and the passion that exist in community, that just need to be tapped into. It stopped a process of ‘doing to’ and really brought philanthropy to being about standing behind and with communities.”

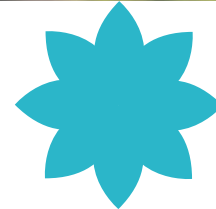
Caitriona Fay,  
Managing Partner, Perpetual Private



Founding directors  
of Tomorrow Today  
Sally Gamble and  
Liz Chapman OAM.



**SHEER DETERMINATION, DEEP THINKING  
AND TRUE PASSION FOR THEIR COMMUNITY.  
SALLY AND LIZ'S "NO ONE GETS LEFT BEHIND"  
ATTITUDE IS A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH.  
I HAVE LEARNT A GREAT DEAL FROM THEM ABOUT  
WHAT A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP IS AND  
WHAT GROUND-UP PHILANTHROPY CAN DO.**



Dr Alberto Furlan, Senior Program Manager, The Ian Potter Foundation

## THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS & PARTNERS

The Ian Potter Foundation • The William Buckland Foundation • The RE Ross Trust • The Ledger Charitable Trust managed by Perpetual • The Victorian Government • The Dick and Vera Bertalli Educational Program • Commonwealth Department of Social Services • Helen Macpherson Smith Trust • Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal • The Yulgilbar Foundation • Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation • George Hicks Foundation • Newsboys Foundation • The Kimberley Foundation • Drakensberg Trust • Jack Brockhoff Foundation • Rural Education Program • The Very Good Foundation managed by Perpetual • June Canavan Foundation • Aesop Foundation • Bennelong Foundation • John William Fleming Trust managed by Perpetual • Dennoch Fund, Australian Communities Foundation

Gliding Club of Victoria • Saunders Automotive • Ride Ave Preschool • Benalla Soccer Club • Rose City Vets • Greta Valley Primary School • Mel-O-Drama • Apprenticeship Support Australia • Tatong Anglers • Upper Murray Family Care • Australian Business Community Network • Mind Body Space Benalla • Australian Defence Force • Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing • Beacon Foundation • Women's Health Goulburn North East • Benalla Aquatic Centre • Thales • Benalla Basketball Club • Valley Sport • Benalla Bowls Club • V-Line Benalla Station • Country Fire Authority Benalla Brigade • Scope Benalla • Benalla Ensign • Winton Primary School • Benalla Flexible Learning Centre • North East Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service • Benalla Gardens Tennis Club • Benalla Health and Wellbeing Action Group • Royal Children's Hospital • Benalla Hockey Club • The Centre Wangaratta • Benalla Lawn Tennis Club • Peranbin College • Benalla Little Athletics • Benalla Netball Club • Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre (BPACC) • Waminda Community House • Benalla Pony Club • Benalla Rose City Band • Benalla Scout Group • Benalla Sportspower • Benalla Taxis • Benalla Vet Clinic • Benalla Youth Service Providers Network • Bendigo Bank Benalla • TDA Performing Arts • Bernard Briggs Preschool • Broken River Potters • Brotherhood of St Laurence • Victorian Department of Transport • Benalla Badminton Club • State Emergency Service • Charles Sturt University • Coles Benalla • D & R Henderson • Victorian Department of Education and Training • Deakin University • Devenish Primary School • Dosser Panels • Ella Goose • Estia Health Benalla • FCJ College • Friends of Benalla Library • Galen College VEX Robotic • Benalla Library • Vinnies Benalla • Gateway Health • Benalla P-12 College • Global Sisters North East Victoria • Good Shepherd Microfinance • Benalla Health • GOTAFE • Gumnuts Resort • Hands On Learning Victoria • Benalla Future Work Steering Committee • Jobs Australia • Kestrel Recruitment • Benalla Baseball Club • Kids in Philanthropy • Benalla Business Network • The Reject Shop Benalla • LaTrobe University • LG Boxing • Lions Club of Benalla • Benalla Bushwalking Club • Little Footprints Playgroup • Broken Creek Primary School • Live4Life • Benalla Auskick • Victoria Police • Marsha Watson Pharmacy • MAS Experience • Benalla Bus Lines • Woolworths Benalla • Monash University • Benalla Gymnastics • NETracks Local Learning and Employment Network • Benalla Cricket Club • North East Archers • North East Health • Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning • North East Multicultural Association • Benalla Golf Club • North East Regional Preschools Association • Beyond Housing • North East Support and Action for Youth (NESAY) • Benalla Guides • North East Vic Home Education Group • Ovens Murray Regional Partnership • PEEPLE UK • Playgroup Victoria • Benalla Junior Football • Ray White Benalla • RMIT • Room at the Table • Rose City Rock and Roll • Winton Wetlands • Rotary Club of Benalla • Sarina Russo Apprenticeships • Benalla Kids Cottage • Schneider Electric • Benalla Joey Scout Mob • St Joseph's Primary School • The Personnel Group Benalla • Benalla and Mansfield Toyota • University of Melbourne • Victoria University • Wangaratta Digital Hub • Benalla Art Gallery • Gibb's Taekwondo • Central Victorian Group Training (CVGT) • Benalla Racing Club • Melbourne Recital Centre • North East Podiatry • Benalla Rural City Council • North East Artisans • Berry Street • EdSpace • Benalla Venturers • Save the Children • Australian Christian College Hume • Munro Ave Preschool • Benalla Baptist Church • Friends of BPACC • Astronomy Benalla • Benalla Early Years Network • Primal Health Club • Geared 4 Careers.



Shop 10, 66 Nunn Street, Benalla VIC 3672  
P (03) 5762 1211 | [tomorrowtoday.com.au](http://tomorrowtoday.com.au)