



Over 100 local families attended the graduation of 21 bright young PEEP children in December 2021. These children started their first year of school ready to learn.



MESSAGE FROM OUR EO

Even as Covid case numbers rise, a great energy and goodwill exists in Benalla. In May, we awarded our largest ever round of annual grants totalling over \$40,000. The ten community projects and initiatives supported will help create a stronger and more resilient community. The grants were possible due to your generous donations.

Our Education Benalla Program celebrated its 10 year anniversary earlier this year. While the program has operated since 2010, Covid-19 prevented a community celebration. Instead, we marked the occasion with a publication capturing 'the story so far'. Wonderful media attention has followed, including an ABC 774 Conversation Hour interview. The podcast and publication are available on our website.

With Covid restrictions easing, our home in Nunn Street is buzzing with children, young people, parents, carers and volunteers taking part in our many programs. Tomorrow Today brings community together to tackle issues and achieve a stronger 'tomorrow' by our actions today. Thank you for supporting our work by giving your time, money and skills.

Rosie Koop - Executive Officer

Our work continues...

In 2007 Professor Tony Vinson's Dropping Off the Edge report identified Benalla as one of the most disadvantaged postcodes in Victoria.

Whilst bleak, this research pointed to the vital role that education plays in reducing the impact of disadvantage. Professor Vinson's recommendations served as a call to action for Benalla and fuelled the establishment of our Education Benalla Program in 2010. We have come a long way since then. There has been a significant increase in rates of healthy child development and a significant increase in transition from school to

work. These improvements have happened because our community has worked together, strategically and intentionally.

It was reassuring to see in the most recent Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) that, even with a pandemic raging, there has been no increase in levels of child vulnerability in Benalla. Benalla has maintained the very large improvements made in 2018. These findings do not suggest we should slow down. On the contrary we need to continue working together to reengage our children and young people in learning and community.



Come and Try Day

The Come and Try Day in March provided an exciting opportunity for our community to reconnect and our children to have fun. The excitement and energy at the Benalla Indoor Recreation Centre and adjacent reserve were palpable, with over 200 children and their families trying a range of fun interactive local activities. Volunteers from 21 local sport and recreation clubs showcased some

of the sport and activities on offer in our area.

A shuttle bus to transport families was sponsored by Benalla Rural City Council, which also funded hiring of the recreation centre. A free sausage sizzle was provided by the Rotary Club of Benalla.

Six local clubs say the Come and Try Day has led to an increase in membership



Tomorrow Today acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.

Pre-school screening



Every year Tomorrow Today collaborates with Benalla's kindergartens to offer a unique screening program which helps to ensure all our children start school ready to learn. This important work relies on the strong partnerships we have with local early years' service providers. It examines the pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, story retell and comprehension of around 130 four-year-old preschoolers enrolled at six sites around Benalla. During the screening sessions, children have the chance to show what they know about letters and numbers, how to read a story book, and how to answer questions about a story that has been read to them. The children's results are shared with preschool staff and are used to plan fun and interactive activities to help develop children's skills within the preschool setting. Ideas for improving children's school readiness can be found at <https://tomorrowtoday.com.au/additional-parent-resources>



Celebrating cultural diversity

Food, songs and the traditions of Benalla's different cultures were celebrated by our PEEP families during Harmony Week in March.

Fifteen sessions of Tomorrow Today's Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) program are held each week from our Nunn Street facilities. All families with preschool aged children living in Benalla Rural City are welcome to attend. Harmony Week provided an opportunity for PEEP to continue our collaboration with the North

East Multicultural Association (NEMA). Each week a representative from NEMA attends PEEP to support our multicultural families and help them engage in activities. Outside PEEP, NEMA connects local families to services and supports them in other ways, like applying for a driver's licence or residency visa. NEMA is one of many local community organisations with whom we partner to provide 'wrap-around' services to local families.

Under the elms

A highlight of the past year has been the creation of an Outdoor Learning Space at Tomorrow Today.

Many families and children have spent long periods indoors during the pandemic, disconnected from nature. To counter this, we've transformed our back yard into a wonderful new Outdoor Learning Space. It has been a big hit with PEEP families.

Children and parents are experiencing the joy of playing and socialising in the sand pit, 'shop' and paved and grassed areas beneath our magnificent elm trees. It is wonderful to see children learning through a variety of fun, daring and messy outdoor activities. Thank you to the June Canavan Foundation, FRRR and Benalla Rural City Council for granting funds to help build this fabulous outdoor environment, and the volunteer and financial support of many locals.



**TOMORROW TODAY
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Full Impact Testimonials

Tomorrow Today's new Full Impact project supports Benalla's young people to find their voice about issues they care about. We talk to one of the participants, Del.

"When I first heard about Full Impact, it sounded really interesting. I decided to join because I thought I could make a difference, and help young people find a voice on things which matter to them," he said. Del says the program provides an important platform for young people to have a real and direct voice in the community.

"I feel like my opinions are valued as part of the Squad (the collective name participants have given the group), and that we are being listened to. It is different than us suggesting ideas to other people, but seeing nothing happen. It is really comforting to hear other people have similar issues as you." One of the issues Del brings to Full Impact is improving awareness and support of LGBTQ+ youth in Benalla. "We need to see some real change and create a safe space for the young LGBTQ+ community in Benalla."

Hands on Trade Expo



After a two-year hiatus, Winton Motor Raceway was buzzing again as host of the Hands On Trade Expo in May.

The event is the largest hands-on careers day in regional Victoria and provided a wonderful opportunity for around 1,300 students to connect with training providers and employers and start to dream big about a trade career.

Over 200 students from Benalla P-12 College, Benalla Flexible Learning Centre, EdSpace and FCJ College mixed with tradies from a range of professions, including welding, plumbing, building, bricklaying, electrical, computer modelling, hair & beauty, hospitality, agriculture, spray painting, panel beating, engineering, and mechanics.

Twenty-three local students helped to make the day a success, providing freshly brewed coffee, coordination support, and great music that brought the event to life.

Locals who give

Ninety-five year old Dot Falkiner has been supporting Tomorrow Today since 2009. She tells us why.

"I've been supporting Tomorrow Today's Education Benalla Program since its first meeting.

Benalla is my community. I believe very strongly in the work Tomorrow Today does here and the way it uses local volunteers to get things done.

Benalla appears prosperous on the surface. It's hard to believe we have such high levels of disadvantage. Tomorrow Today works with kids of different ages and helps them have a better life.

I have watched Tomorrow Today grow. I believe it is incredibly well run and I see evidence of its work all over town. It is really quite inspiring. I hope Tomorrow Today will continue to grow. It is a privilege to have such an organisation in our town."





Annual Grants

Tomorrow Today's Annual Grants program provides funding for community groups and organisations to deliver projects that will build skills, strength and resilience in Benalla.

We're pleased to announce that 2022 will be our largest ever year of grant giving, with ten local groups receiving just over \$40,000 in grant funding.

The photo below relates to 2021 grant recipient Benalla Flexible Learning Centre, whose students learnt new skills through short courses in Work Safety (White Cards), Food Handling, First Aid, Responsible Handling of Alcohol and others. Generous community donations make these grants possible. Thank you!



Why I love PEEP

Our flagship Parents Early Education Partnership Program (PEEP) recognises parents as a child's first and most important educator. PEEP focuses on supporting parents as they prepare their children to learn. Emmalee knows parenting can be tough. She is a mother of three and grew up in a difficult environment wary of welfare services. Emmalee has attended PEEP since 2020 when her youngest son Kai was just 12 weeks old, after a brush with Child Protection. "Before I came to PEEP, my family's life had no structure, no routine, and I didn't know how to parent.

PEEP has given me tips on how to keep life calm and also how to ride with the storm!" she said. PEEP has helped Emmalee "become a better parent" by boosting confidence in her instincts and understanding of how her own behaviour can influence her children. "The most important thing I've learnt is that it's okay not to be the perfect parent, as long as you're doing your best and your kids are being looked after." Emmalee now considers PEEP part of her family. "The staff and other parents have restored my faith that the community truly cares for me and my family," she said.

GIVING MATTERS

YES, I WANT TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF TOMORROW TODAY IN BENALLA.

I wish to support:

- Work of Tomorrow Today, area of greatest need
- Community Fund for local grants
- Other (please contact us)

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