

Benalla's young innovators



One of the teams working on coding for the new website.

Twenty-one of Benalla's young people took on a challenge earlier this year – to identify and solve a local issue, using creativity, teamwork and technology.

The students, aged 11 to 16 years old, attended a series of workshops offered by Tomorrow Today to foster skills needed for future work. Participants began by surveying nearly 500 local students, and heard loud and clear that Benalla lacked entertainment options for young people, and that it was a problem.

So, with the assistance of tech experts from Sydney's Seer Data and Analytics,

the group set to work creating an interactive entertainment directory they named 'FIB: Fun in Benalla.' During the workshops they also learned about career pathways and opportunities in coding and software development.

The final step of the project was a 'pitch' for the FIB website, to a panel comprising the mayor of Benalla Rural City and members of the council, police force, sporting clubs and the business community. Despite nerves, the young participants presented their work with confidence and conviction, and received rousing applause.

Danny O'Donohue, of North East Tracks Local Learning and Employment Network, who was present at the pitch, commented:

"I am so excited about the positive attitude, motivation, confidence and innovation of each individual participating in this project, and the group. Skills like working in teams, public speaking, problem solving – these are all things that employers want"

The launch of the FIB website has been postponed due to the coronavirus.

Now more than ever before, as I look at the news coming from around the world, I feel incredibly fortunate to live in rural Australia; and Benalla in particular.

In our community, so many people from all walks of life give to help others. Thousands of volunteer hours are committed through

Tomorrow Today every year to help our community thrive. Thank you to the new 'Friends' group which undertook a huge fundraising effort to support our work. And special thanks to retiring Executive Officer Pat Claridge who constantly went above and beyond to help Benalla's young people achieve their potential.

In these challenging times we have been able to adapt a number of our programs. But we know that COVID-19 is taking a huge toll. Tomorrow Today is all about local giving for local benefit. I hope that, if you can, you will donate generously.

Sally Gamble, Chair

Farewell Pat, and welcome Rosie

In February this year, we bid farewell to retiring Executive Officer Pat Claridge at a gathering of board, staff, partners and supporters, on the deck of the Benalla Art Gallery.



Pat started with us in 2011 in what she described as her 'dream job', allowing her to follow her passion for education, social justice and working with the community.

We thank Pat for her extraordinary contribution to achieving Tomorrow Today's vision; she consistently found ways to work with others across the whole community, so that together we could achieve more for Benalla's children. We wish Pat and her family the very best for the future.

Above: Cath Warnock, Pat Claridge and Sally Gamble.

Later in February, the Board was very pleased to welcome Rosie Koop as our new Executive Officer.



After a career in journalism and publishing, Rosie and her family made the change to farming in Benalla Rural City ten years ago. Rosie has held leadership roles on regional boards, consulted in strategic planning and educational resource development and produced her own annual theatre event.

Rosie shares with her predecessor a 'can do' attitude and passion for the work of Tomorrow Today. She is excited to be part of the team and is looking forward to meeting the many people we work with 'in person' as soon as possible.

Above: Executive Officer, Rosie Koop.

Connecting in isolation

The weekly sessions of our Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) program have become a fixture in the lives of Benalla's young children and their parents, with over 220 families taking part this year. As well as being a place to share songs, stories and parent discussion, PEEP offers an important means of connection and support. So, there was quite a gap to fill when the pandemic shutdown meant that families could no longer come together.

"Our first priority was for the PEEP team to maintain regular contact with our families," says Education Benalla Program Manager Sally Matheson. "Facing isolation and uncertainty while caring for young children can be particularly challenging. We started by using the phone to stay in touch, sometimes texting, but lots of calls. Many families really appreciated the opportunity to speak to someone familiar from the 'outside world'."

Our PEEP team - Cath, Nonie, Karen and Deb - also devoted time to finding ways to continue offering rich parent and child education opportunities. They quickly became masters of Zoom and Vimeo, sharing stories and songs online as well as live conversations with families, and interviews with parenting and education experts. Tomorrow Today's community partners in health, education and community

services willingly jumped on camera to share their expertise, and there were a few extra-special guests, too.

"Singing to our families on a video call with Jay Laga'aia from Playschool will be a career highlight forever!" laughs Nonie.

The PEEP team are now planning for a return to face-to-face programs in line with COVID-safe guidelines from Term 3 onwards.



A video of Nonie reading one of our favourite books.

Tomorrow Today Board Directors

- Sally Gamble: Chair (0428 755 138)
- Georgina Burston
- Louise Pearce
- Liz Chapman OAM
- Nick Taylor
- Patrick Duffy
- Florent Thivillier
- Melinda Lawley
- Marsha Watson

Friends of Tomorrow Today

The Friends of Tomorrow Today formed in 2019 to support the work of the Foundation – and they're off to a brilliant start! In their first year, the Friends raised \$11,000 through a raffle and open garden event.

The success is due to the generosity of a great many people. Local supporters and businesses generously donated raffle prizes, and the Friends tirelessly sold tickets.

At the Marangy Open Garden, in November, volunteers prepared and served delicious food, sold donated plants, and greeted guests, who enjoyed the beautiful garden and live music.



Many volunteers, including Marg Aldous and Jo Treacy (pictured) gave their time at the Open Garden fundraising event.

Jo Treacy, Avon campus principal at Benalla P-12 College, and one of the volunteers at the event, said, 'I have worked in education in Benalla for many years and have witnessed first-hand the difference the Tomorrow Today Foundation has made to the lives of our young people and their families. I feel privileged that I was able to contribute to that effort in a very small way, by giving my time. Benalla is indeed a fabulous - and very fortunate - community!'



Winners of the Friends of Tomorrow Today raffle, Pamela and Barry O'Connor (centre) are pictured with sponsor Frank Stephens of Benalla Travel and Tomorrow Today Director, Louise Pearce.

Volunteer profile

Jenny Raeburn has been volunteering with Tomorrow Today as a Reading Buddy since 2014.

Trained Reading Buddies are matched with a Benalla P-12 College student in Year 1 or 2, visiting the classroom twice a week for the year. They read quality picture books to their buddy, listen to their reading, and help with spelling and other literacy activities.

"I love being involved in the children's learning," say Jenny – "it's making a difference in someone's life. I know reading is a key skill for their future."

"Over the year you build trust with your buddy. They know they can rely on you for help, that they can experiment and make mistakes with you. It's a special relationship."

"Volunteering in this role gives me a purpose and responsibility. Watching the children throughout the year, I feel so proud of their efforts, and their achievements."

To find out more about volunteering with Tomorrow Today, visit our website or call (03) 5762 1211.



Reading Buddy Jenny Raeburn

Building connections

The young people and mentors in this term's Connect9, met face-to-face for the first time in Week 7 of the program.

After the easing of restrictions, the group enjoyed a very happy time together in Benalla's Botanic Gardens. Activities including the Jenga building block game, football and skittles, followed by a lunch of fish and chips.

Participant Molly Ward says of the relationship developed with her mentor, Georgina Burston, "George and I talk all the time on Zoom, maybe an hour or two each time. But face-to-face is so different – it's really important!"



Productive garden grant

Benalla Uniting Church received a grant from Tomorrow Today's Community Fund in 2018. We visited the garden to check on their progress.


"Prior to lockdown," explains Tanya Walker, Presbytery Secretary at Benalla Uniting Church, "we had been enjoying weekly working bees in the garden, with up to 20 volunteers helping out. The produce from the garden was used in a community lunch once a week – an opportunity for community to access a good cooked meal using fresh veggies, as well as make social connections."

Lockdown has not slowed the progress of this community project, however. During this period, a small committee has been ensuring that the garden remains productive for the community, removing the last of the summer vegetables and planting new ones. "We want to ensure there are veggies there when people want or need them," says Tanya; "whether it saves you a few dollars or saves you buying more than you need. It gives us great joy to see the garden being used by the community."

Donations to Tomorrow Today's community fund are invested, with the income providing a source of funding for local community projects each year. It truly is a case of 'from little things, big things grow'!



Please help spread the word about the work of Tomorrow Today by liking us on facebook.

Find us on 
@TomorrowTodayAU



Tomorrow Today Foundation

Shop 10, 66 Nunn Street
Benalla 3672

Phone: (03) 5762 1211
www.tomorrowtoday.com.au
admin@tomorrowtoday.com.au

Yes, I want to support the work of Tomorrow Today in Benalla.

GivingMatters

I wish to support:

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

Please select your payment option:

- 1 **DONATE ONLINE** by credit card
www.tomorrowtoday.com.au
and click on **DONATE NOW**

My Details

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Thank you for your donation. A receipt will be posted to you.

- Please send me information about becoming a Regular Donor
- Please send me information about leaving a Gift in my Will

- 2 Or, you can donate by one of the options below
(return form to Tomorrow Today)

Please accept my donation of \$ _____

- EFT to Tomorrow Today Foundation
BSB: 083-541 Account No: 78-993-7916
- Cheque payable to Tomorrow Today Foundation
- Credit Card by mail - Visa and Master Card accepted

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____ Expiry Date: ____ / ____

All donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

If your business would like to provide sponsorship, please contact our office and a tax invoice will be issued.