



Full Impact Squad members at their Benalla Spring Clean Day.

SHINING BRIGHT

Young people thrive when they're connected to their community, with a sense of purpose.

Our Full Impact Squad, made up of 23 young people aged 11 to 18, is lending its voice to issues that impact locals by organising events that are fun and purposeful. We have engaged youth facilitators from the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) to develop The Squad's leadership, communication, teamwork and problem-solving skills. Now, nothing can stop them!

In November, the Squad held the inaugural Benalla Spring Clean Day where members coordinated a community event to collect rubbish and tidy up the areas around the lake.

In February and March, the Squad held a stall at the Benalla Lakeside Craft and Farmers Market to raise funds for buildings damaged during the February storms. Over \$600 was raised and shared between the Benalla Uniting Church and the Benalla Saints Sports Club.

In April and May, the Squad assisted Benalla Rural City Council in creating, promoting and hosting the Benalla Youth Festival. The festival included the B-Town RAVE and a Live Music concert. Both events were well attended and beautifully run. It has been a privilege to witness how the Squad is growing and responding to local issues and needs.

For more information or to join the Squad email:
alexross@tomorrowtoday.com.au



The Squad assisted at the B-Town Rave in April



MESSAGE FROM OUR EO

Tomorrow Today is built on a conviction that together we can create a brighter tomorrow by challenging ourselves today. We believe wholeheartedly that a generous, connected community paves the way to that bright future.

So it was with a heavy heart that I listened to the Federal Assistant Minister for Charities, The Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh, say recently that the number of Australians who volunteer, donate or play an organised sport has declined.

Minister Leigh urged community foundations to nurture and build a culture of caring and giving in our schools and communities. Your support of Tomorrow Today demonstrates that giving and caring is alive in Benalla. The efforts by locals to fundraise for Tomorrow Today through the Benalla Small Town Sing event (see page 3) in April, is further proof of a caring, connected community.

I am pleased to report that this year we have been overwhelmed by the response to our call for volunteers to support our educational programs. We now have over 60 volunteers supporting literacy development in preschools and schools and mentoring young people in the community.

None of Tomorrow Today's work happens in isolation. The Education Benalla Program is underpinned by vital community partnerships with over 120 local organisations and agencies which create a wonderful, whole-of-community approach to giving our children and young people the best opportunities for a bright and productive future.

We are grateful to all who give. Thank you.

Rosie Koop - Executive Officer



Helping with school costs

Back to School vouchers help to ease the burden for many Benalla families.

2023 marks the 19th consecutive year that Tomorrow Today has been involved in the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) Back to School program. This year we secured 710 vouchers totalling \$35,500 of which \$7,000 came from local donations to Tomorrow Today. The national program provides \$50 vouchers to distribute through local schools to families struggling with education-related costs. The vouchers help students to purchase items such as uniforms, shoes, stationery and school bags.

Thank you to FRRR and all those locals who give to Tomorrow Today to make extra vouchers available to families in need.

"The Back to School vouchers are really fantastic. We can use them throughout the year when we know families or individual students really need them. We're very grateful the program exists."
Renae Hughes, Director of Wellbeing, FCJ College

Volunteer in the spotlight

We've been fortunate to welcome a number of new volunteers to our programs this year.

One of them is Cathy Bridgfoot, who many locals would remember as a long-term staff member at Stolz Furnishings. Cathy volunteers as a Kinder Pal at Gumnuts Resort Childcare Centre in Benalla, assisting with reading for a couple of hours twice a week.



"It's a joy being a Kinder Pal. There is never a dull moment! Seeing things through the children's eyes and hearing their conversations keeps me young at heart."

Our volunteers are an integral part of our program delivery. They share their knowledge, skills and time to help improve the learning outcomes of Benalla's children and young people.

If you would like to learn more about volunteering with us please get in touch with our Volunteer and Literacy Co-ordinator, at janenehumphries@tomorrowtoday.com.au or call 5762 1211.

Meet Abbey

Victoria's School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SBAT) program provides paid on-the-job training to secondary school students.

Each year we welcome a School Based Apprentice to join our staff. This year we're thrilled to have Abbey Richards working with us every Wednesday while she studies Certificate III in Administration. Abbey is well known to Tomorrow Today.

She's been a Connect9 participant, a member of our Full Impact Squad, and the Benalla Live4Life Crew. She brings her unique sense of humour and can-do attitude to everything she does.

"I wanted to start my traineeship young so I could have a head start. I think the skills I'm learning at Tomorrow Today will help me in whatever I choose to do when I finish school."



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ConnectParent

In December we received the wonderful news that our application for funding from the Paul Ramsay Foundation, as part of their Strengthening Early Years initiative, was successful.

This funding is for the design and roll-out of a new parenting support program for the next five years. ConnectParent aims to increase the capability and confidence of parents and caregivers of children during the critical first 1000 days, from conception to age two.

Parents-to-be will be paired with a trained volunteer community 'connector' who will act as a sounding board and help them to connect with all the services available in Benalla.



Our new ConnectParent Coordinator, Kaye O'Kane, talks about the program: "I received some wonderful support when I became a mother, from many people and multiple support services in my community. I want to ensure all parents get great local support."

We're in the midst of bringing together all the local services for antenatal and postnatal care and building a framework for the program. Soon we'll be looking to recruit local volunteers to engage in training so we can launch the ConnectParent program in the second half of the year."

If you're interested in becoming a ConnectParent volunteer call us on 5762 1211 or email kayeokane@tomorrowtoday.com.au



Small Town Sing

In April we joined many other Benalla locals to sing our hearts out to Dave Dobbin's classic tune "Slice of Heaven".

Small Town Sing, an immersive choir experience, is the brain-child of talented locals Catherine Burton and Adam Toms.

All proceeds from the night were donated to Tomorrow Today.

Thank you to Catherine and Adam who both worked incredibly hard to make the event such a success. Thanks also to Benalla Saints Sports Club who managed the ticketing, and to all those who came along on the night.

Connect9 update

The first round of our much-loved Year 9 mentoring program, Connect9, has commenced.

So far, the twelve Year 9 participants and their volunteer mentors have joined the YMCA gym, prepared a meal to share, learned about Benalla's hidden history and explored future career possibilities.

The next few weeks have more activities and opportunities in store!

If you or a young person you know would like to be involved in Connect9, please contact our Youth Engagement Co-ordinator: alexross@tomorrowtoday.com.au or call 5762 1211.



A Connect9 mentor admiring the workmanship and concentration of his mentee.



Tomorrow Today acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government.



Grants for local projects

Our Annual Grants program provides funding for community groups and organisations to deliver projects that will build skills, strength and resilience in Benalla. Over two decades we've provided over \$360,000 to 162 local projects.

We're pleased to announce that in 2023 nine local groups will share over \$40,500 in funding for projects that will strengthen our local community.

Tomorrow Today can continue to provide grants because local people generously donate to our Community Fund. Donations are pooled and invested for local benefit, so that each donation keeps giving, year after year.

Locals who give

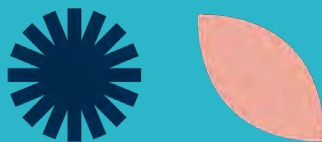
Paula Hales has been supporting Tomorrow Today for the last two years through the Workplace Giving program at the pharmacy where she works.

"I knew about Tomorrow Today from its support of the junior sport that my family is involved in. But I didn't realise the extent of what Tomorrow Today does until we looked into a Workplace Giving program.

people I talk to everyday - from kids playing sport, teenagers, new parents at PEEP or new people who arrive in Benalla not knowing anyone. At my workplace every person has chosen to donate something from each paycheck. It's really simple to do and it's not a huge amount but it all adds up."

To find out more about Workplace Giving, call Rosie Koop on 5762 1211.

Working in a pharmacy you get to meet people from all walks of life. What I like about Tomorrow Today is that it is for the entire community. It's local, so it is supporting the



Wednesdays @ Waminda was funded through our Grants program in 2022 and 2023. This successful program provides a safe, inclusive place for children and their families to gather and learn.



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)

My details:

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Please select your payment option:

- 1** **DONATE ONLINE** by credit card.
Visit tomorrowtoday.com.au and click on **DONATE NOW**
- 2** Or, you can donate by one of the options below (return form to: Tomorrow Today Foundation, Shop 10, 66 Nunn Street, Benalla 3672)

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