



In December 2024 Katie Breheñy became the first recipient of the Friends of BPACC Performing Arts Scholarship.

The passing of the baton

The legacies of three Benalla institutions will live on

The philanthropic spirit of Benalla has always shone brightly. As evidence, the Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Memorial Committee and Benalla Young Sports Person's Trust (BYSPT) have provided scholarships and other funding to support the dreams and aspirations of Benalla's young people for many years. In recent times both organisations have wound down with the remaining funds passing to us to continue this work.

Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop Memorial Committee established a named fund with us to prolong their legacy for years to come.

"We know this donation will continue to provide opportunities for Benalla secondary school students to explore their desired learning paths."

- Committee member Barry O'Connor

As a keen sporting community, Benalla has produced more than its fair share of sporting stars.

Dr Bill Sykes, BYSPT President, shared; "One of the things trustees are most proud of is the diversity of sports BYSPT has been able to assist with, the diversity of ability of those who were assisted and the diversity of achievements from those we helped."

The donation from BYSPT is helping us to support more children and young people to participate in local sport and potentially also pursue their chosen sport at higher levels.

In 2024, the Friends of Benalla Performing Arts and Convention Centre (BPACC) established a Performing Arts Scholarship with a \$40,000 donation.

The inaugural \$2,000 Friends of BPACC scholarship was awarded to FCJ student and long-time dancer, Katie Breheñy. In March, she commenced further study at Kelly Aykers Full Time Dance in Brunswick.

"Having the Friends of BPACC scholarship has been amazing. It's helped me to relocate to Melbourne and set myself up to be able to get the most out of my course," said Katie.

"I would say, to any young person considering the performing arts, follow your dream, because you have to like what you do."

- Lois Smith Friends of BPACC

We are very grateful to all three organisations for placing their trust in Tomorrow Today to continue their legacies into the future.



MESSAGE FROM OUR EO

The theme for National Volunteer Week 2025 is "Connecting Communities". It's one that feels particularly apt when I reflect on the Benalla community and in particular the large number of volunteers who support Benalla's children, young people and families to thrive.

We are privileged to have more than 80 volunteers who freely give their time, skills and knowledge. They are our Connect9 Mentors, Reading Buddies, Kinder Pals, PEEP Helpers and Community Connectors. They are our Board and committee members. Without them we would not be able to continue the work we do. On behalf of Tomorrow Today, I thank them all for their outstanding contributions.

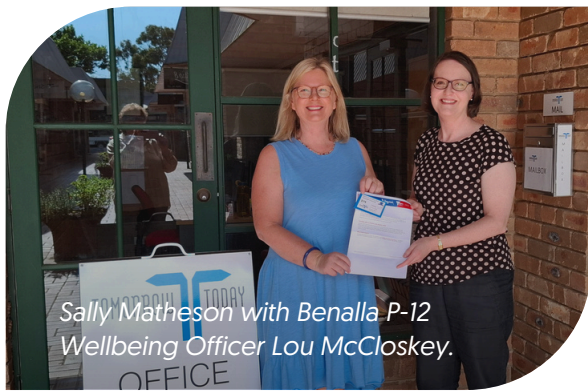
Recently we launched two new programs in response to local data and feedback. Pilot programs for Antenatal PEEP and Motiv8 are now underway - you can learn more about them on page 4.

One of the highlights of our year is when we distribute our annual Community Grants. It is always inspiring to see the diverse range of applications we receive - see over for more details.

Our collaboration with more than 120 partners has been the hallmark of Tomorrow Today's impact in Benalla. Of special note is The Ian Potter Foundation which has supported the Education Benalla Program since it began in 2010. Recently The Ian Potter Foundation announced further multi-year funding to help us sustain and improve our work, share what we've learned with other communities and build our organisational capacity. We are incredibly grateful for this grant which will result in 20-years of support for the Education Benalla Program and Tomorrow Today.

Thank you to all the individuals, organisations and partners whose ongoing commitment to Tomorrow Today ensures we can continue to drive positive change in our community.

Jodie Fleming – Executive Officer



Sally Matheson with Benalla P-12 Wellbeing Officer Lou McCloskey.

Back to School vouchers to continue

When the FRRR Back to School (BTS) Vouchers program came to its scheduled conclusion in 2024, we knew that Benalla's students and their families would feel the loss. The BTS program provided \$50 vouchers for students to use to purchase items like uniforms, lunchboxes and school shoes. We were determined to continue the program somehow.

The solution came from a number of funding sources including The June Canavan Foundation, Community Underwriting, the Rotary Club of Benalla, Olive Tree Op Shop and from the generous support of local business and individual donors. In January, 400 \$75 vouchers were given to Benalla schools for use throughout the year.

We are absolutely thrilled to be able to continue this program. It is in no small part due to the generosity of those who donate to Tomorrow Today which contributes directly to the wellbeing of Benalla's students.

Record number of grants awarded in 2025

Since 2003, we have awarded close to \$500,000 in grants to local organisations and groups who have applied for funding for projects that promote education or community building. There is always a diverse range of worthy applications and this year is no exception! We're very pleased to announce that in 2025 we will be awarding a record \$52,700 to support 13 local projects. This represents our largest ever grant distribution. We are looking forward to seeing these projects come to fruition over the next 12 months. Congratulations to all the successful applicants.

In 2024, we funded St Joseph's Primary School to create a kitchen garden to support their Cooking to Connect program.

"The garden project is now complete with a timber shed, raised garden beds and a picket fence. It has enhanced our school community by providing a shared space to engage in gardening which fosters connection and cooperation. It also encourages sustainable practices, promotes outdoor activity and beautifies our school grounds."

- Sam Kerlin, Deputy Principal, St Joseph's Primary School

Ongoing grant funding is possible thanks to individuals who generously give to our Community Fund.



St Joseph's Cooking to Connect program expanded into the great outdoors with a grant in 2024.

Volunteer in the spotlight

As an avid reader and a swim coach for many years, Gary Bowman was an excellent candidate for volunteering with Tomorrow Today. He has been a Kinder Pal at Munro Avenue Kindergarten since 2019.

Kinder Pals are volunteers who spend an hour, once a week at one of Benalla's preschools, reading picture books with small groups of children and engaging with them in conversations about the stories. These activities help build children's early literacy and language skills.

Gary shared what inspires him to volunteer; "I'm a passionate reader and I like sharing that. If I can be a part of helping kids getting some of that joy, then that's fantastic. I also like the idea of being involved in helping kids be prepared to go to school."



"Volunteering is a delightful experience for an older person like me and I highly recommend it!"
- Gary Bowman, volunteer Kinder Pal

Connecting to Culture

“Anganya” which means friend in the Yorta Yorta language, is the name of our new program for Benalla’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Based on Ganbina’s successful Jobs4U2 program, Anganya aims to improve the educational outcomes, future job prospects and cultural connection for participants. In 2024, we welcomed Heidi Perry to the Tomorrow Today staff as the Anganya Education Officer.

“I have been very lucky to have the opportunity to work as a teacher both in the primary and secondary sectors in Australia and overseas. I joined Tomorrow Today because I was looking for a new challenge in my working life. I am passionate about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to improve their educational outcomes, engagement and opportunities. I am fortunate to work with students from Prep to Year 12 and I also work with Elders to deepen connections to culture and country and help the young generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Benalla feel proud to be First Nations people.”



Aunty Cheryl Cooper has become an integral part of the Anganya program, guiding students in regular cultural learning sessions and using her artistic talents to help them explore their own creativity.

Aunty Cheryl is a proud Aboriginal woman who lives and works in Benalla as a mixed media textile artist. Her work is inspired by culture, connection and country.

“I have had a great experience with the Anganya program so far. I would love to see more kids coming along and attending consistently. Because this is a great chance for them to connect with and learn about their culture and continuing traditions.”

This year the students will be working on a range of artistic cultural projects that will culminate in an exhibition at the end of the year. The first piece will be unveiled at Benalla’s 2025 NAIDOC week celebrations in July.

Tunes, Tees and Treasures

Full Impact at the Benalla Street Art Festival

One of the key indicators for positive educational outcomes is connection to community. Encouraging engagement is a key tenant in all our programs. The Full Impact Squad is no exception. Since its inception almost four years ago, the Squad has hosted numerous community events to build deeper connections for Benalla’s young people. When the opportunity arose to host an official fringe event at the Benalla Street Art Festival the Squad jumped in feet first.

The Squad collaborated with FreeZA and Benalla Rural City Council for “Tunes, Tees and Treasures”. The event was a combination of a youth market, a chance for people to get creative painting a t-shirt or Sip Squad reusable cup, and a fantastic line-up of young local musicians to keep the whole event pumping.

“Our goal was to get young people out of the house and involved in the Benalla community. We had a lot of stall holders from outside the Squad which was amazing and just seeing so many young people and young families coming along, buying from the market and tuning into the music was a highlight.” – Abbey, Squad member



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