



**AUSTRALIAN  
COMMUNITIES**  
FOUNDATION

# IMPACT FUND 2018 PROSPECTUS



# FROM THE CEO



The issues facing Australia today seem ever more complex to resolve. It is becoming increasingly clear that we must come together to find and invest in the nation's most strategic and innovative responses to the issues we face. Investing in inspirational leadership, bold ideas and innovative solutions is fundamental to Australia's continued health and prosperity.

At Australian Communities Foundation, we are committed to social justice, equity and a healthy democratic society. This is the ground on which the Impact Fund foundations were laid, and twelve months on, we are already seeing change as recipients shift debate, improve policy and make substantial progress towards a more equitable Australia.

Owing to the hard work of all those involved in the projects currently being supported through last year's inaugural grant round, the Impact Fund is:

- ◆ Empowering Indigenous rangers to protect and manage our land and sea
- ◆ Building a strong local movement in Cairns to help save the Reef
- ◆ Encouraging gambling reform and assisting AFL Clubs in removing poker machines
- ◆ Developing new ways to measure national well-being and progress
- ◆ Ensuring the preservation of our country's strong gun laws
- ◆ Shifting the national debate towards action on climate change.

For the Fund's 2018 round, we were delighted to partner with ACF donors, sector experts and other Trusts and Foundations to refine an initial list of 48 organisations to the seven exceptional projects presented here. It has been a wonderful process of discussion and collaborative analysis.

I am very proud of our contribution in providing this platform for these ideas to be heard. By harnessing the power of collective giving, we are accelerating progress on systemic issues and tipping the scales towards positive social change.

Maree Sidey  
CEO | Australian Communities Foundation

# IMPACT AREAS

We have chosen to focus on the following impact areas due to growing concern and a shared sense of urgency within our donor community and the broader public. In each of these spaces there is evidence of need and identifiable points for innovation and collaboration.

## Tackling Inequality

Poverty and inequality policy reform agendas

## Empowering Indigenous Communities

Empowerment and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

## Safeguarding the Environment

Environmental safeguarding projects and climate change

## Strengthening Democracy

Strengthening and enhancing Australian democracy

We believe that investment in advocacy, campaigns, research, pilot projects or helping organisation scale proven projects, can help tip the scales towards a more inclusive and equitable Australia.

The projects in this prospectus have been shortlisted because they rated highly against the following key selection criteria:

- ✦ Alignment with impact area
- ✦ Timeliness/urgency of opportunity
- ✦ Potential for systemic impact
- ✦ Evidence-informed
- ✦ Potential to influence and act as a changemaker

## TYPES OF GRANTS

In 2018, the ACF Impact Fund has \$200,000 to allocate towards **Large Impact Grants**. This will be combined with funding commitments from ACF donors and sector partners.

Additional **Small Agile Grants** of \$5,000 – \$20,000 will be awarded throughout the year.

### LARGE IMPACT GRANTS \$50,000 - \$150,000

- ✦ Multi-year grants - up to \$150,000 over three years
- ✦ Responding to high impact, solutions-based projects with evaluation and capacity development

You can make a tax deductible donation to the Impact Fund through the ACF website or by contacting us on (03) 9412 0412 or [admin@communityfoundation.org.au](mailto:admin@communityfoundation.org.au)

Contact our Grants Team on (03) 9412 0412 or [grants@communityfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@communityfoundation.org.au) to discuss any of the projects in greater detail or to make a pledge towards a particular project.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

Through consultation with ACF donors and the wider sector, forty-eight organisations across the four impact areas were invited to submit an expression of interest for the Impact Fund this year. These applications were assessed by a group consisting of ACF donors, independent experts, and representatives from other Trusts and Foundations, who refined this list to twelve and invited those shortlisted to submit a full application. Through further analysis and discussion, the group selected the final seven exceptional projects presented here in this prospectus. These organisations were chosen because we believe they have the ability, networks, skills and partnerships to achieve real long-lasting change in their specific area of expertise.

IMPACT AREA	FUNDING ORGANISATION	PROJECT	FUNDING REQUEST
Safeguarding the Environment	Farmers for Climate Action	<b>Campaign for a National Strategy on Agriculture &amp; Climate Change</b>	\$150,000 (3 years)
	ReNew (formerly Alternative Technology Association)	<b>Climate Resilient Homes</b>	\$150,000 (3 years)
Empowering Indigenous Communities	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)	<b>Family Matters Report</b>	\$150,000 (3 years)
Tackling Inequality	Save the Children Australia	<b>Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative</b>	\$140,000 (2 years)
	Human Rights Law Centre	<b>Promoting women's reproductive freedom across Australia</b>	\$90,000 (1 year)
Strengthening Democracy	The Conversation	<b>Public Interest Journalism Initiative</b>	\$150,000 (3 years)
	Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility	<b>Shareholder activism against fracking and the deportation of asylum seekers</b>	\$150,000 (2 years)

We invite you to partner with us in co-funding these important initiatives. The Impact Fund has pledged \$30,000 to each of these projects and we now hope to leverage funding from others to bring these initiatives to life. If you would like further detailed information on any of these projects, please get in touch with the ACF Philanthropy & Impact Team on 9412 0412 or [grants@communityfoundation.org.au](mailto:grants@communityfoundation.org.au)

# FARMERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

## *Developing a national strategy on agriculture and climate change*

Farmers for Climate Action (FCA) is a movement of farmers, agricultural professionals and rural Australians leading the way on climate solutions. They believe that if farmers are organised to lead climate solutions and advocate together, they can influence the sector and the Government to implement climate policies that reduce pollution and benefit rural communities.

They are evidence-based and informed by the best available science. They respect and embrace the diversity and wisdom of farming communities. They empower farmers to be courageous—to change culture and politics to widen the space for rural Australia to act on climate change. Their vision is for Australia to be farming forever.

### THE ISSUE

Australian farmers are on the frontline of climate change. Huge swathes of Australia are currently suffering from a record drought with the entire state of NSW and over 60% of Queensland affected. Australian grain yields are declining each year, and bushfires and droughts are becoming the norm.

Currently, there is a lack of federal planning within Australian agriculture to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This issue cannot be addressed without resolving the lack of support from some conservative rural MPs for action on climate change. There are still many ‘climate blockers’ amongst rural and regional politicians, even though they have traditionally represented farmers—arguably the profession most affected by climate change. Without bipartisan support for climate action, Australia will not make lasting progress on any form of climate policy.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Farmers for Climate Action will run a three-year advocacy campaign with farmers across the country to garner bipartisan support for a fully funded and implemented National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture. This is a constructive, achievable national policy that will ensure state and federal agricultural ministers incorporate climate mitigation and adaptation in agricultural policy.

The strategy will include advocating for a federal funding package to help farmers engage in climate-smart agricultural practices that both reduce emissions on-farm, and build resilience to climate change. In the process, FCA seek to engage conservative rural politicians with a view to turning them into champions for broader climate action. To facilitate this, the project will involve the participation of agricultural representative groups (such as the National Farmers Federation) and mobilise thousands of farmers across Australia in the lead up to the 2022 federal election.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Key activities include:

- ◆ Publicising the need for action on climate change and agriculture through media about the drought
- ◆ Recruiting one-third of the agricultural political representative bodies that make up the National Farmers Federation as campaign partners
- ◆ Organising over 100 meetings between farmers and their local MPs
- ◆ Running workshops to build the advocacy skills of the most involved farmers



- ◆ Initiating a Senate Inquiry into issues related to a National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture
- ◆ Getting the legislation passed to implement and fund the National Strategy.

### OUTCOMES

FCA anticipate that the National Campaign will produce three key outcomes vital for lasting progress on Australian climate policy:

1. Federal policy and funding passed with multi-partisan support that enshrines a National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture and allocates adequate funding to climate-smart agriculture programs.
2. 10% of Australian farmers engaged in the campaign through petitions, open letters, and social media, creating and demonstrating a strong rural constituency for climate action.
3. A political and media environment where conservative regional politicians can safely support climate action solutions.

### IMPACT

This campaign can lead to systemic change in both the political and agricultural realms. The project’s aim of creating and supporting champions for climate action among conservative rural politicians would change the game when it comes Australian climate politics. Such a shift in the national discourse would enable a big transformation in Australian agricultural policy to become ‘climate smart’.

Given that farmers manage almost half of Australia’s land, and agriculture contributes at least 16% of Australia’s emissions, a National Strategy that begins a transformation in this sector would have significant impact.

### WHY NOW?

The current drought is dominating news media, capturing the public’s hearts and minds and leading people to question what the future of agriculture in Australia will be in a changing climate. The broader Australian community is deeply sympathetic to farmers, especially when drought strikes. Now is the time to highlight the link between drought and climate change, so that the rising call for political intervention to support Australian farmers also translates into action on climate change.

### FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$150,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$120,000**

# RENEW

## *National campaigning, advocacy and consumer education for Climate Resilient Homes*

ReNew, formerly known as the Alternative Technology Association, is a not-for-profit organisation that enables, represents and inspires people to live sustainably in their homes and communities. Established in 1980, the association provides expert, independent advice on sustainable solutions for the home to households, government, industry and corporate clients. Their guidance on energy efficiency, solar power, rainwater tanks, materials re-use and waste has helped thousands of households save money and reduce their environmental footprint. ReNew complement their focus on consumer education with advocacy in government and industry arenas. Advocacy efforts are focused on ensuring easy access to sustainable solutions, as well as continual improvement of the technology, information and products needed to change the way we live. The association also provides consultancy services based on its expertise in energy, water and communications.

### THE ISSUE

Australia is falling behind international standards for residential energy efficiency. In Europe, basic quality-control safeguards already exist to protect consumers from poor building performance, including mandatory tests for building air leakage. Despite Australia's National Construction Code (NCC) requiring that new homes (and any adjustments to existing properties) achieve a minimum 6-star energy rating, many homes are not performing to standard. There is an increasing body of evidence to show that the optimal level to which new housing should be designed is above the mandatory minimum. As it stands, residential buildings account for approximately 12% of Australia's total carbon emissions. This current lack of energy efficiency poses a more significant threat to lower socioeconomic homeowners.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Given the limited consumer advocacy and low consumer awareness on these issues in Australia, there is an urgent need to advocate for the improved resilience of both new and old homes to the changing climate. ReNew is planning to take the lead and work with partners to advocate for and educate Australian consumers. In advocating for consumers, ReNew will engage with government and industry to make the case for improving compliance with existing energy performance standards in buildings, as well as the implementation of higher benchmarks. In educating consumers, ReNew will continue to empower consumers with independent information and tools they can use to ensure new homes are built to minimum standards.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Consumer advocacy activities include:

- ◆ Advocating for improved energy efficiency standards for new residential buildings in the National Construction Code Review in 2022, including engaging with the formal process and advocating to state and territory ministers
- ◆ Investigating and advocating on compliance issues in the building industry and policy options for improving compliance
- ◆ Advocating for a suite of complementary measures relating to existing buildings including mandatory disclosure of energy performance at the point of sale or lease and an increasing trajectory of minimum standards for existing homes over the coming two decades.



Consumer education activities include:

- ◆ Developing a Consumer Guide and communications campaign of minimum performance standards for new homes, and how this relates to health, safety, comfort, economic and environmental benefits
- ◆ Providing case studies of new homes and renovations built to, and above, minimum standards and the benefits to residents
- ◆ Distributing education materials through project partners and directly to consumers at key decision-making points of buying or building.

### OUTCOMES

The consumer advocacy and education delivered through the project will provide three key short-term benefits to all Australians:

1. An increase to the minimum energy efficiency standard for residential buildings as part of the 2022 NCC Review.
2. Consumers will be better informed regarding the benefits of energy efficiency and their entitlements under the NCC at key points during the build process.
3. Consumers will better understand the energy performance of existing homes at the point of sale or lease.

### IMPACT

The project's short-term outcomes will lead to a number of long-term benefits, amounting to systemic change both within the housing industry and more broadly. The improved climate resilience of both new and old homes will significantly reduce energy consumption and associated costs of living, as well as the health and safety risks posed by the rise of longer and more frequent heatwaves. Most notably, given the building and housing sectors' significant contributions to carbon emissions, the project is expected to play a crucial role in achieving the country's carbon reduction targets.

### WHY NOW?

Recent estimates suggest that by 2050 over 50% of Australia's buildings will be built after 2019. It is vital that improvements are made to the NCC and that issues of non-compliance are being addressed. With the 2022 review of the NCC only a few years away, and the subsequent review not until 2025, ReNew needs to act now to ensure this opportunity is not missed.

### FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$150,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$120,000**

# SNAICC – NATIONAL VOICE FOR OUR CHILDREN

## *Eliminating the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care*

SNAICC is the Indigenous-led national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

For almost 40 years, SNAICC has been the national peak body for Indigenous children, working with communities to advance children's rights. They provide expert, evidence-based advice on legislation, policy and program frameworks to government and civil society to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up healthy, happy and safe. Using a strengths-based approach, they work across the continuum of child development and wellbeing to ensure every child has the best start in life.

### THE ISSUE

The number of Indigenous children removed from their families has doubled since the 2008 apology to the Stolen Generations. Indigenous children are now ten times more likely than other Australian children to be removed from their families and placed in out-of-home care. A comprehensive, sustainable and long-term approach to the issue is needed to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The main objective of the Family Matters campaign is to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care within a generation (by 2040). The annual Family Matters Report and accompanying lobbying are the lynchpin of the campaign. First developed and released in 2016, the report is SNAICC's central monitoring and

advocacy tool through which the performance of each state and territory is publicly measured against four building blocks for change:

1. Securing access to culturally safe, universal and targeted services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
2. Ensuring Indigenous people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.
3. Ensuring culturally safe and responsive laws, policy and practice in child and family welfare.
4. Holding governments and services accountable to Indigenous people.

Having built momentum over the past two years, the report requires further funding to ensure its continued annual development and accompanying advocacy for policy change.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

For each annual report, the process starts by reviewing the findings of the previous year's and consulting with policy, research and data experts. SNAICC then consults with Family Matters campaign members, expert advisors and Indigenous leaders to seek their feedback and finalise the report. In the lead-up to publication in November, campaign members develop the advocacy, media and communications strategy. After the report is launched in Canberra with the participation of decision-makers across the political spectrum, Indigenous leaders meet with parliamentarians to discuss its implications for policy development.



### OUTCOMES

The short to mid-term outcomes of the project include:

1. The development of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Strategy, including targets to eliminate over-representation and address the causes of child removal.
2. Increased government investment in evidence-informed and culturally supportive prevention and early intervention services for Indigenous families.
3. More Indigenous representation in child protection decision-making, including family-led decision making.
4. Increased investment in family violence response and prevention, especially resourcing Indigenous community-controlled organisations.
5. Increased investment in family reunification and cultural support services to connect Indigenous children in out-of-home care to family, community and culture;
6. Establishment of national and state-based Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

### IMPACT

Eliminating over-representation will impact a range of related child and family wellbeing issues. If successful, the project would see a significantly increased number of Indigenous children with their basic needs fulfilled and improved mental and physical health. Children would be protected from trauma, abuse, violence and neglect.

They would have high early childhood learning outcomes and their families would have adequate income and access to economic opportunities. Governments and services would display high cultural competency and there would be increased respect for culture and understanding of the impact of colonisation by the government and the general public.

### WHY NOW?

*Bringing Them Home*, the landmark report into the Stolen Generations, was released more than 20 years ago. At the time, Australians were shocked to learn that 20% of children living in out-of-home care were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Now, Indigenous children account for approximately 36% of all children in out of home care; a rate that is ten times the rate for non-Indigenous children. If the tide is not turned, it is projected that the population of Indigenous children in out-of-home care will more than triple by 2036.

### FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$150,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$120,000**

# COMMUNITY REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

*Expanding Australia's Refugee response through a bigger and better community sponsorship program*

Since 2017, Save the Children Australia (SCA) has convened a series of forums attended by parliamentarians, private sector businesses, faith groups and other civil society partners to discuss how the Australian community could be more involved in effectively delivering protection to refugees through sponsorship. This has led to the establishment of the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (CRSI), which is comprised of the following founding members: SCA, The Refugee Council of Australia, Rural Australians for Refugees, Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce, Amnesty International Australia and Welcome to Australia.

## THE ISSUE

Governments across the world are under sustained pressure to address one of the greatest challenges of our time: providing protection and assistance to the rising number of forcibly displaced people. More than 68 million people are now forcibly displaced, but less than 1% of the world's refugees are resettled in a safe country each year. The number of available places is shrinking rather than growing. While the Government recently launched the Community Support Program (CSP) to help address the issue, there is still enormous potential to leverage the compassion and goodwill of community members to expand Australia's intake of refugees through private sponsorship.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Community sponsorship of refugees involves members of the Australian community (such as faith groups, sporting groups, businesses, philanthropists and other community groups) using their time, money and resources to sponsor refugees to migrate to Australia and help them integrate into the Australian community. Funding is required to scale up the Initiative's advocacy efforts to secure the policy reform necessary for the expansion of the current sponsorship program.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Initiative will be undertaking a range of private and public advocacy activities to secure policy reform and mobilise community support for refugee sponsorship. This includes the development of a policy brief with detailed recommendations to expand and reform the existing sponsorship program. This will be used as a basis for lobbying the current government and parliamentarians across party lines to ensure there is broad-based political support for the Initiative, particularly in the lead up to the federal election.

There are a number of upcoming milestones that present significant opportunities to advocate for policy reform. The ALP National Conference in December 2018 will be a key moment, where the CRSI will hold a Fringe Event and establish a stall to engage and lobby with members to secure changes to the ALP National Platform. Also in December 2018, the CRSI will use the finalisation of the UN's Global Compact on Refugees to galvanise media attention and campaign for increased community sponsorship.



Similarly, the Initiative will use the first anniversary of the current CSP to draw media attention to the need for reforming the existing model. To expand community support for the Initiative, CRSI will also undertake a sustained campaign of public engagement. Activities will focus on building a strong network of supporters and creating persuasive content to influence them, including short videos, powerful images, and insights drawn from qualitative and quantitative research (including polling community attitudes). The Initiative also plans to hold two public forums and a major national event inspired by Australia's Biggest Morning Tea.

## OUTCOMES

CRSI endeavour to achieve four key outcomes through policy reform:

1. The number of places offered under community sponsorship to increase to up to 10,000 individuals per year (in addition to the current humanitarian intake of refugees).
2. More affordable sponsorship for community members by ensuring there are no related government visa charges.
3. Places offered on the basis of non-discriminatory criteria, with the abandonment of any criteria requiring applicants to be immediately 'job ready'.
4. Development of social capital within the Australian community for the benefit of refugees by engaging the broader Australian community as sponsors and not just the refugee diaspora.

## IMPACT

A well-founded and scaled-up community sponsorship program would not only ensure the protection and successful integration of more refugees in Australia each year, but also repair and enhance Australia's international reputation by offering an expanded national response to the global refugee crisis with minimal budgetary impact. Community sponsorship of refugees also has the potential to support the swift and deep integration of refugees into Australian communities and enrich the sense of purpose and connection within host communities through the shared experience of sponsorship.

## WHY NOW?

The Initiative's proposed activities demonstrate the exciting window of opportunity that the next 12-18 months present for important policy reforms. With growing support among community groups, now is the time for CRSI to introduce a positive narrative about the benefits of community sponsorship and to secure political action.

## FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$140,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$110,000**

# HUMAN RIGHTS LAW CENTRE

## *Promoting women's reproductive freedom across Australia*

The Human Rights Law Centre (HRLC) believes in a future where human rights are universally understood, upheld and protected. They work to secure law and policy changes that eliminate inequality and injustice. The Centre is fiercely independent, with the majority of funding coming from philanthropic support. To achieve impact, the Centre works in collaboration with community and health organisations, law firms and barristers, academics, medical experts, and both international and domestic human rights organisations.

### THE ISSUE

Every person should have the freedom to make decisions about their bodies and to access healthcare privately and safely. Yet many abortion laws around Australia perpetuate inequality by restricting women's rights to make important decisions about their bodies and failing to ensure safe access to abortion services.

Abortion is still criminalised in Queensland, NSW, SA and WA – a recognised form of sex discrimination in international human rights law. The laws in Queensland and NSW were written over 100 years ago.

Elsewhere, protections that do exist are under threat – safe access zone laws in Victoria and Tasmania are being challenged in the High Court by anti-abortionists. Safe access zones stop the harmful harassment, abuse and intimidation of patients and staff by anti-abortionists directly outside abortion clinics and are crucial to ensuring that women can access reproductive health care safely, privately and with dignity.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The HRLC will use strategic legal action and advocacy to achieve the following goals:

1. Decriminalise abortion and ensure new laws respect women's rights to make decisions about their bodies.
2. Ensure women can safely and privately access abortion services.

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The HRLC will hold the Queensland Government accountable for its commitment to modernise abortion laws and push for reforms that respect women's rights to privacy, equality and dignity. The Centre will work to persuade undecided MPs to support the bill by meeting with key MPs and engaging in strategic public advocacy. At the same time, they will work with partners including Children by Choice and Fair Agenda to equip civil society to engage in impactful advocacy.

The momentum generated from the Queensland work will be harnessed to build pressure for reform in other jurisdictions, particularly NSW and SA, and to influence a review of abortion laws in the NT.

To achieve the second goal, the HRLC will ensure that the modernisation of abortion laws in Queensland and elsewhere includes safe access zones. The Centre will defend existing safe access zone laws that are being challenged in the High Court. They will also investigate legal options to ensure that governments that have legalised abortion are taking steps to ensure services are available, particularly in Tasmania.



### OUTCOMES

Guided by these two overarching goals, the project seeks to achieve six key outcomes across Australia:

- ◆ Abortion decriminalised in Queensland
- ◆ Commitment from NSW Government to decriminalise abortion and modernise the state's abortion laws
- ◆ Commitment from SA Government to review the state's abortion laws
- ◆ Abortion law review by the NT Government addresses the unclear application of criminal laws to later-stage abortions
- ◆ Safe access zone laws upheld as constitutionally valid by the High Court and introduced in Queensland
- ◆ Legal options to challenge denial of lawful abortion services investigated.

The HRLC has a proven track record of impact, having played key roles in the reform of abortion laws around Australia, including the recent development of safe access zone laws in NSW.

### IMPACT

Up to one in three women will need an abortion in their lifetime. This work will benefit the tens of thousands of women in Australia who seek an abortion each year by ensuring they have the freedom to make decisions about their own bodies and are not denied access to healthcare because of harassment and abuse or lack of services.

### WHY NOW?

Now is a crucial time for women's reproductive rights in Australia.

- ◆ Queensland is reforming its abortion laws for the first time in over 100 years.
- ◆ Safe access zone laws in Victoria and Tasmania are being challenged in the High Court.
- ◆ Pressure is mounting both in NSW and SA for a review of abortion laws and in Tasmania for funding for affordable abortion services.

### FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$89,727**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$59,727**

# PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

*Securing a strong and viable future for public interest journalism in Australia*

The Public Interest Journalism Initiative (PIJI) is a start-up organization founded by a small group of people committed to a vibrant future for public interest journalism. PIJI is focused on delivering viable solutions. It is a lean organization with a high degree of strategic sophistication. Designed to be a catalyst for change, it gives an absolute priority to working collaboratively across all areas including research and policy development. PIJI is non-partisan and determinedly independent.

## THE ISSUE

Public interest journalism in Australia is in crisis, devastated by the collapse of the business model that has underpinned it. Tough investigative journalism; detailed scrutiny of the courts, corporations and governments; and in-depth coverage of education, justice, science, environment, economic and other issues can no longer be guaranteed. The flight of advertising dollars to cutting-edge digital platforms and the corresponding shrinking of newspapers and broadcasters has led to the retrenchment of over 3,000 journalists in the last six years with the prospect of more losses ahead. Regional and rural Australia is experiencing the most severe effects, with newsrooms being centralised, stories being syndicated, and coverage of local voices and news shrinking. An informed public is crucial to our democracy; if the journalism that sheds light in dark places dies, Australian democracy withers too.

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PIJI seeks to respond to this threat by addressing three aspects critical to securing a sustainable future for public interest journalism in Australia. Firstly, PIJI will mobilise an informed public constituency with compelling evidence and policy options. Secondly, the Initiative will work to convince parliament and key influencers that strategic support (both policy and resourcing) is necessary and urgent. Thirdly, PIJI will promote policy measures and a philanthropic environment that nurtures media innovation and new business models. These are system-wide reforms supporting a plurality of media voices: mainstream media, smaller publishers, local and new niche media. Australian democracy is the primary beneficiary.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

To ensure these three areas are strategically addressed, PIJI's planning covers the next three years. Key activities for the first year include:

- ◆ The official launch
- ◆ High-level meetings with political leaders and media executives to introduce PIJI
- ◆ 'Case Studies' report commissioned to highlight the state of local/regional public interest journalism plus 'briefs' and community resources
- ◆ Advocacy in conjunction with the pre-election policy debates
- ◆ Speaking tours with international media leaders
- ◆ 'Public Interest Journalism: The Way Forward' policy summit in Canberra.



## OUTCOMES

As a result of these key activities, PIJI anticipates the following short-term outcomes:

1. A well-informed, active constituency of 'influencers' backing reforms to support public interest journalism as a prominent national issue.
2. Explicit recognition of the threat with a commitment to act from the Australian Government and Opposition.
3. Specific policy commitments (e.g. removing barriers to philanthropic support and developing local and regional measures) from the major parties.

## IMPACT

PIJI's efforts will deliver a stronger, more sustainable public interest journalism ecosystem through better funding, policy reform and innovation. This ecosystem will ensure sustainable business models for investigative journalism and a plurality of voices in the public sphere. In this reformed ecosystem, public broadcasters will be able to maintain editorial independence and integrity.

## WHY NOW?

The urgency is real. With over 3,000 Australian public journalism jobs lost in the past six years, the industry is now at a tipping point. Nine Entertainment's recent takeover offer for Fairfax Media highlights the immediate vulnerability of major media companies and public interest journalism at large. The hard work, research, public engagement and policy development at the heart of PIJI is needed more than ever.

## FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$150,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$120,000**

# AUSTRALASIAN CENTRE FOR CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

## *Using shareholder activism to build civil power in capital*

The Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ACCR) enables regular Australians to have a say about what large, Australian-listed companies do on social and environmental issues. They use the tools of 'responsible investment' combined with research, high impact media, corporations law and advocacy with companies and their investors, to seek improvements to companies' behaviour. Their technique is to organise shareholders around an issue to put a resolution to a company board. This method is widely used in the US but under-used in Australia. It is complementary to divestment and impact investment.

### THE ISSUE

Strategic shareholder activism is an area of untapped community power in Australia. Without the pressure of such activism, Australian companies continue to lag behind their international peers in understanding and managing their human rights responsibilities. The aim of this project is therefore to demonstrate and build civic power through corporate and investor engagement programs on human rights issues.

Key features of the Australian economy that make it suited to shareholder activism include:

- ◆ Listed Australian companies are in a sense participatory democracies;
- ◆ Any Australian with modest savings can obtain direct shareholdings;

- ◆ Shareholders have formal powers to seek to influence the way that corporations behave, through shareholder resolutions; and
- ◆ Regular people's retirement savings are held in superannuation, much of which is invested in Australian listed equities.

Many people, however, remain unaware of their financial relationship with large, listed Australian companies through their superannuation, and the power available to them through that relationship.

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project will build community literacy about corporations and activist investment. ACCR will mobilise and equip civil society organisations and community groups to access this power, and increase their appetite for activist shareholding by demonstrating how it can be harnessed to achieve tangible change.

Two sectors with acute risk of undermining fundamental human rights in Australia have been chosen for this project: petroleum companies with inadequate consents for fracking on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory (NT), and the participation of listed airlines in forcible transfer and deportation of asylum seekers on behalf of the Australian Government. For each issue, ACCR will undertake a series of activities designed to exert shareholder pressure to improve outcomes for communities negatively affected by corporate activity.



### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- ◆ ACCR will undertake research, prepare briefing materials and engage with companies and their investors.
- ◆ Shareholder resolutions will be undertaken where this strategy can apply effective pressure to targeted companies.
- ◆ This escalates the issues so that they receive attention from company boards and institutional investors, as well as national and international media.
- ◆ Currently, shareholder resolutions with Origin Energy and Qantas are underway. These will be replicated with Santos and Virgin Australia.

### OUTCOMES

Both of these programs are already underway, and each has received more investor, media and corporate attention than expected:

- ◆ The fracking program aims to ensure that Aboriginal communities in NT are able to exercise their right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) in negotiations over fracking projects on their traditional lands. ACCR is working with communities in NT to achieve this outcome.
- ◆ The airlines program aims to end airlines' complicity in human rights abuses perpetrated through the Australian government's immigration regime by exposing the business risks involved in providing forcible transfer and deportation services to the Australian Government.

### IMPACT

Over time, ACCR hopes to increase the capacity of civil society organisations and communities to effectively leverage power through strategic corporate engagements. The project is also designed to promote an increased understanding in corporate Australia of the material risks involved in business activities which facilitate human rights abuses.

### WHY NOW?

The two engagement programs are both urgent:

- ◆ A moratorium on fracking in the NT has recently been lifted, leading to serious concerns over extractive companies' abuse of the consent process, which can only be stopped at exploration stage.
- ◆ By dissociating reputable Australian airlines with government policies which are incompatible with human rights standards, ACCR's work will make it more difficult for those policies to be carried out in the immediate term.

### FUNDING REQUEST

**Total ask: \$150,000**

**Pledged: \$30,000**

**Remaining funds required: \$120,000**

# THE IMPACT SO FAR

Last year's inaugural grant round funded six projects dedicated to building momentum for lasting positive change. Through the support of our donor community, these projects have started to effect change across the country. Below is a list of some of the key achievements these projects have made in the past year.

<p><b>The Climate Council of Australia</b> <b>'Winning the National Energy Debate'</b></p> <p><b>\$148,500 across 2 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Safeguarding the Environment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Reports, extensive briefings with key stakeholders, an expert's forum, and media coverage have helped drive a dramatic shift in public discussion around energy policy towards a focus on climate change. Several state governments, including Queensland, NSW and ACT, have expressed concerns about the NEG in its current form as a result.</li> <li>◆ The Climate Council's state comparison report is also ensuring transparency on state and territory progress on climate action. As a result, all states and territories (except WA) now have strong renewable energy targets and/or net zero emissions targets in place.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pew Charitable Trusts</b> <b>'Country Needs People'</b></p> <p><b>\$150,000 across 3 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Empowering Indigenous Communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Indigenous Rangers from Olkola Land Management, Yintjingga Aboriginal Corporation, and Ngadju Conservation Western Australia have been supported through the project to travel and meet with key state and federal decision makers and Ministers.</li> <li>◆ The launch of the Strong Women on Country report received coverage across Fairfax media and from SBS TV including interviews with Indigenous women rangers from Borroloola, NT, and Guanaba IPA on the Gold Coast.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Australian National Development Index</b> <b>'Measuring the Australia we want'</b></p> <p><b>\$150,000 across 2 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Strengthening Democracy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ During their initial development stage, ANDI have been conducting research on the overall index framework, appointing postdoctoral researchers, setting up expert advisory groups, identifying goals and measures from similar international systems, and starting a program of focus groups and surveys to determine community priorities.</li> </ul>



<p><b>Australian Marine Conservation Society</b> <b>'Saving the reef by choosing coral over coal'</b></p> <p><b>\$60,000 across 3 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Safeguarding the Environment</b></p>	<p>As a direct result of Impact Fund support, AMCS has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Co-hosted a Reef Tourism Climate Summit</li> <li>◆ Co-hosted a Reef Tourism Climate Summit with peak industry body, Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators</li> <li>◆ Signed up 50 Far North Queensland businesses to a Reef Climate Declaration, calling for strong action by the federal government to move away from coal and embrace renewable energy</li> <li>◆ Conducted Reef Leaders Training Days to cultivate capacity building for 60 volunteers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Alliance for Gambling Reform 'Down, down, bets are down—Coles &amp; \$1 bets'</b></p> <p><b>\$60,000 across 3 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Tackling Inequality</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ The Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR) has seen some significant changes with AFL football clubs Greater Western Sydney and Melbourne turning away from pokies because of the impact they have on communities.</li> <li>◆ After pressure from AGR, Woolworths initiated an internal, independent review of their operations in this area and at the same time, Coles is negotiating the sale of their pokies pubs. AGR is continuing pressure and conversations with both companies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Alannah &amp; Madeline Foundation</b> <b>'Gun control and community safety'</b></p> <p><b>\$60,000 across 2 years</b></p> <p><b>Impact: Strengthening Democracy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ After being able to conduct consultations with community safety organisations and a detailed literature review, the Alannah &amp; Madeline Foundation has completed a position paper on gun safety.</li> <li>◆ The Foundation has played a key role in forming the Australian Gun Safety Alliance to support Australia's strong gun safety framework.</li> </ul>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## 2018 CO-FUNDERS

### Sub Funds:

Alf & Meg Steel Fund  
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Fairer Futures Fund  
Hart Line Fund  
Johnstone Gumption Fund  
Juno Fund  
Meliiodora Fund  
Ngaruk Fund  
Pomegranate Fund  
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### Individuals:

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David Imber  
Ewan Ogilvy  
Lina Caneva

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