THE DAYLESFORD FOUNDATION

2026

FOSTERING THE
YOUTH OF HEPBURN SHIRE

ANNUAL REPORT & IMPACT REVIEW



Acknowledgement of Country

The Daylesford Foundation's Acknowledgement of Country honours the Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of Djandak (Country). We pay respect to Elders, communities, and their continuous living culture.



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Message from our Founders, Norma and Jim Foster

It began with a simple hope. When we moved to the Daylesford region in retirement, it felt less like changing our address and more like coming home.

Norma's great, great grandfather opened the first school on Camp Street in 1872. We spent numerous family holidays in the area while our children were growing up. Like many people, we had donated to numerous children's charities over the years, but increasingly felt our giving should be local. We wanted to give to the families and children living alongside us doing it tough. When we moved to the Hepburn Shire, we searched for a local charity with clear goals, strong governance, minimal overheads, and the ability to respond quickly to those in need. When we couldn't find one, we said, 'well then, let's do it ourselves.'

We believe that if you are lucky enough to live in a place you love, you should help strengthen it, in whatever capacity you can. Given the warmth and welcoming community spirit in the region, we knew we wouldn't be the only ones.

We knew that before going out to the community, we needed to demonstrate the viability, and be sure there was a need for a local charity like ours.



Image: Norma and Jim Foster

It was never just about giving money; we had to deliver practical, timely and compassionate assistance to people in times of crisis.

Being part of a small regional community, it's important that the people we help feel seen, respected, and valued. That will never change.

Now our task is to ensure that The Daylesford Foundation continues to thrive, well beyond the day we pack our bags.

Norma and Jim Foster

Our Guiding Principles

Vision

A generous, connected and self-sustaining Hepburn Shire, where every young person has the opportunity to thrive, and in time, give back to the community that shaped them.

Mission

To invest directly in the future of young people across Hepburn Shire, by providing wrap-around support for families, and their children's education and wellbeing.

Values

Transparency

Funding decisions are based on clear and transparent guidelines supported by strong governance principles.

Generosity

A community that gives, and encourages the young people who grow up here, to give back in time.

Kindness

Every person supported is met with warmth and respect, seen for their worth and potential.



Image (L–R): Jane Westney, Sonia Jardine - Clunes School Principal, Michelle O'Brien - Wellbeing Officer, Jesse Parker - Business Manager. Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026

Message from our Chair Jane Westney

When I moved to Hepburn Shire, I expected a quieter chapter. I did not expect to end up chairing a Foundation that has changed thousands of lives across this community.

This is The Daylesford Foundation's first publicly printed Annual Report. We have always preferred to let our work speak for itself, but we are proud enough of where we have landed, and confident enough in where we are headed, that it feels like the right time to share our mission and impact more widely.

Our priorities remain steady:

- Continuing our work with schools and scholarships
- Deepening our response to housing stress across the Shire
- Building our Forever Fund toward the scale where it can support this community in perpetuity
- Looking at how Helping Hepburn (our annual giving fund) might invest more broadly in the shared places and community life that bring this Shire's young people together.



Image: Jane Westney is holding just one of the well being sloths at Clunes Primary School. This one is called *The Big Guy*. Kids can drop by 'Shell's' office and wear him when they need extra comfort. Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026

On behalf of the board, thank you: to Jim and Norma, for the foundation they built and continue to fund; to our partners and schools, for trusting us with their students and families; and to every donor — no matter how much you give — thank you for choosing to invest in The Daylesford Foundation. It is a privilege to steward this work on your behalf.

Jane Westney

Our Community

What most visitors never see is a community under pressure, and a generation of young people being left behind. Hepburn Shire is perceived as a part of Victoria comprising historic townships with natural beauty, gourmet food and artisanal offerings, galleries and wineries. That is true, but there is another side, and it isn't visible to most. More than 300 households in the Shire have an unmet need for Affordable Housing, while over 2,000 homes sit unoccupied on any given night (Hepburn Shire Council, A Home in Hepburn Shire: Strategy and Action Plan, 2023). More than one in three rental households across the Shire are experiencing rental stress, and rents have risen 51% in the past decade (Hepburn Shire Council, 2023).

The Daylesford Foundation exists for the community that does not appear in the tourism brochure.

The story of two disparate Daylesfords, may be more prominent than in other townships like Trentham, Clunes and Creswick, because of its strong tourism market shining a light on its affluence.

But inequality doesn't just represent wealth versus disadvantage. It represents two groups of residents who live side by side but barely intersect.

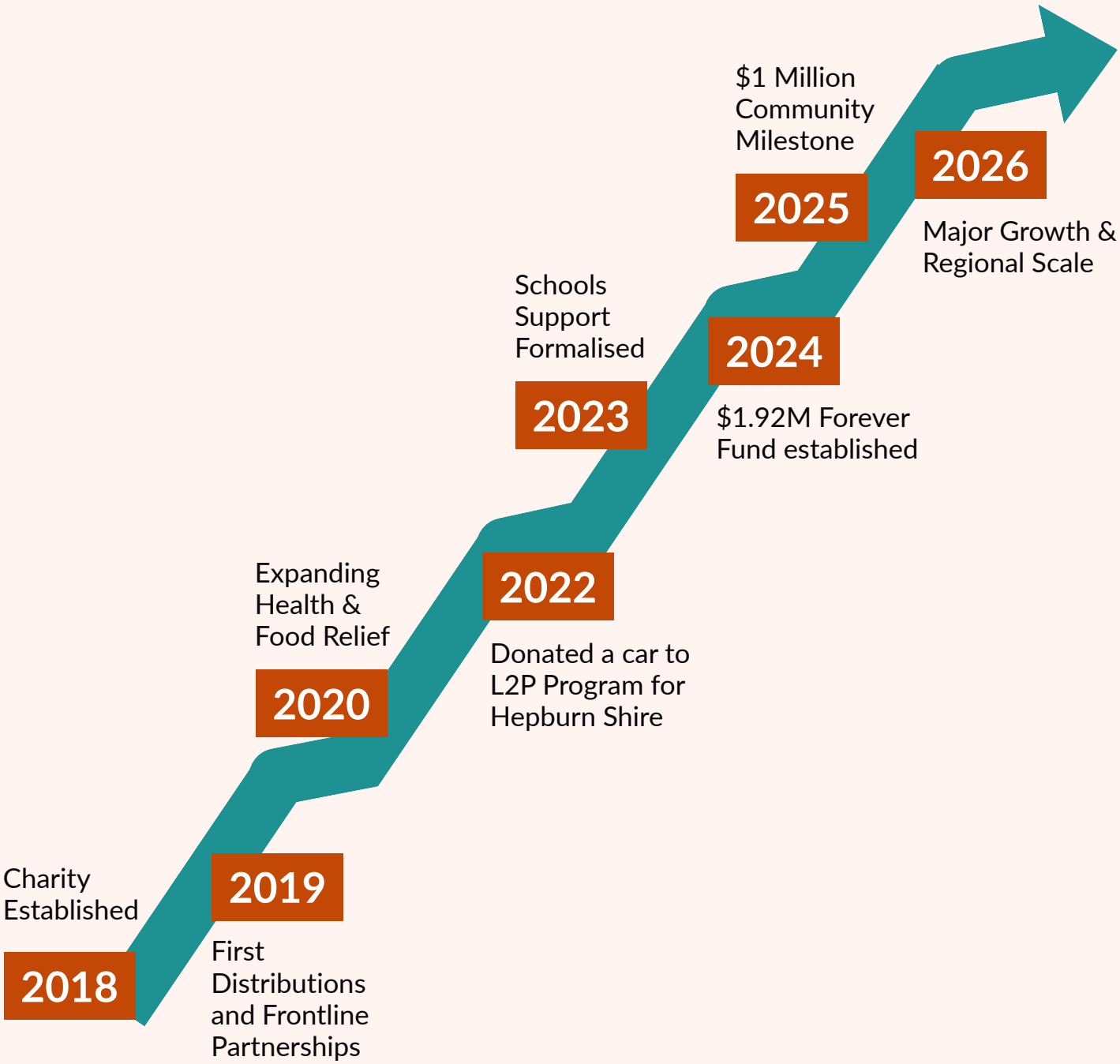
Many in our town may not be aware of the deep need that exists within their community, because they move in different circles.

The hardship of many in the community may not be on display, not because it's hidden, but because these two communities have little interaction with one another.



Our Journey

The Daylesford Foundation Key Milestones



Our Methodology

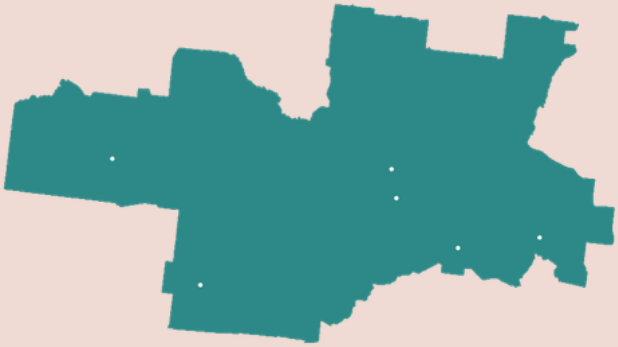
We report instances of support rather than unique people, because we don't limit how many times someone can come to us for help. If families need support again, whether through a different program or the same one, we're glad to be able to say yes again.

Our Impact

2019–2026

17,000

Hepburn Shire population



Since 2018, The Daylesford Foundation has grown from a small community initiative into a trusted presence across Hepburn Shire, one built on relationships, strong governance and a spirit of generosity.

In 2026 the Foundation surpassed $1M milestone of funds distributed across our community.

13 SCHOOLS

Supported across the Shire

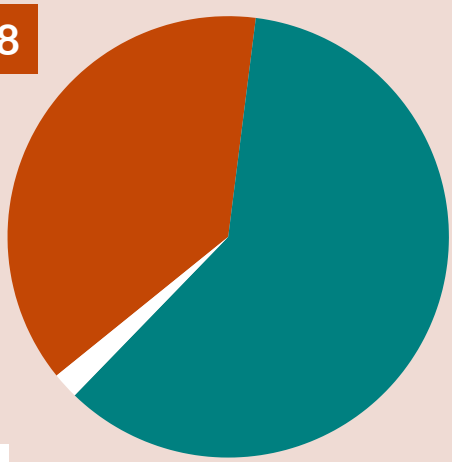
34 SCHOLARSHIPS

Awarded

FUNDRAISING

$586,608

41 Private Donations



$30,000

Grants Received

$934,631

Founders' Contribution

2018

The Daylesford Foundation founded

$1,234,434

Invested into community

10,042

Instances of support provided

$360,000

Invested in supporting 13 schools across the Hepburn Shire





Our Giving Approach

Our approach to giving sets us apart from most charities.

We operate a streamlined, highly efficient model with a volunteer board of directors, targeted contractor support at not-for-profit (NFP) rates, and no paid staff. Because we rely on trusted local service providers to assess and filter client requests before reaching out to us, every dollar goes further.

Over the years, this approach has proven to be efficient, secure, and effective. We recognise that specialised care is best delivered by qualified experts, allowing us to focus on what we do best: providing fast, flexible funding.

Our close relationships with frontline partners ensure assistance reaches those in need without delay.

We maintain strong, ongoing partnerships with core community providers including Child and Family Services (CAFS) and Central Highlands Rural Health (CHRH), alongside direct partnerships supporting all 13 schools across the Shire. We are committed to backing specialised organisations across health, education, and social services, and we are always open to new strategic collaborations.

The Foundation delivers practical, timely, and compassionate assistance to people in times of crisis. We want every person we help to feel seen, respected, and valued.

While we maintain clear guardrails for our funding, we retain the flexibility to consider unique circumstances whenever the need arises, and the board of directors approves.

Helping Hepburn

What we fund: The Three Pillars

1. Schools Support

Support across 13 local schools, helping students access essential resources, health services, activities and literacy programs.

2. Scholarships

Helping young people across Hepburn Shire pursue university, TAFE, training, apprenticeships and employment pathways.

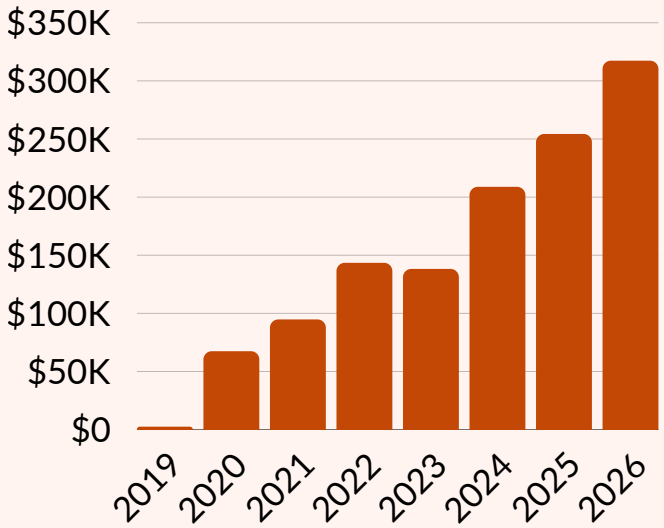
3. Local Impact

Helping local people navigate financial hardship and stay connected to their communities.

$1,234,434

Funds Distributed 2019–2026

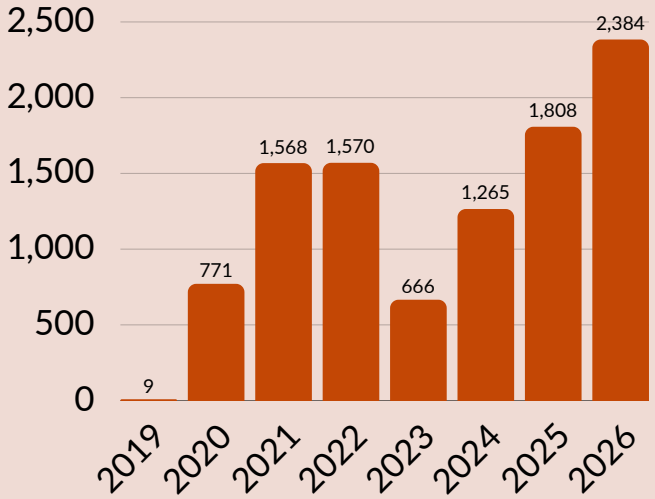
Annual giving exceeded $324,584 in FY2026.



10,042

Instances of Support 2019–2026

2020–2022 excludes two now-discontinued programs (Healthy Lunch Kitchen and Hepburn Regional Community Cheer, wound down by 2023) to show organic growth.



Pillar one: Schools Support

Since 2023, the Foundation has donated more than $360,000 through the Schools Support program.



Each of the 13 schools across the Shire manages their own funding allocation, and when that bucket of money is spent, and an acquittal is received, the funding is replenished.

This simple, trusted process ensures instant solutions for situations that can otherwise be awkward or stressful for students and families, allowing help to be given by the schools directly and without delay.

This program enables a student to access a computer, cover the cost of swimming lessons, have access to diagnostic testing, specialist medical and psychology appointments, and can be used to cover the costs for sport uniforms and equipment.

Through Schools Support Funding, the Foundation is investing in long-term literacy and school completion through programs like MiniLit and Maclit, Macquarie University's Early Literacy Intervention Program.

Image: Creswick North Public School
Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026

Pillar two: Scholarships

The Scholarship initiative is one of the most significant ways the Foundation invests in young people across the Shire. Since 2022, it has awarded 34 scholarships to local Year 12 students moving into university, TAFE or apprenticeships, often at a financial disadvantage to city-based peers, 14 of them delivered through the YouThrive partnership since 2024.







Images (Top–Bottom): Jim Foster presenting Mila Arias-Parker her scholarship, 2026; Jane Westney, Stella Foulds, Mathilda Cassidy, Norma Foster, Jim Foster - 2025 intake; Bella Hardy and Jane Westney, 2025.

With few local course options, limited public transport, and no realistic daily commute, most students have little choice but to relocate, taking on costs a local student wouldn't face.

To be eligible, students must live or study in Hepburn Shire and be aged between 16 and 20.

Since partnering with YouThrive, the Foundation has funded six University Scholarships at $10,000 a year for three years, and eight Rural Chances Scholarships at $5,000 as a one-off payment, with mentoring and leadership development opportunities for both.

The Foundation also directly awards scholarships to students who fall outside YouThrive's eligibility criteria, ensuring no young person misses out on the opportunity for further education.

Pillar three: Local Impact

Since 2020, the Foundation has provided more than 2,000 food and fuel vouchers worth $62,390, through local community organisations such as **Child and Family Services (CAFS)**, **Good Grub Club**, and **Central Highlands Rural Health** (CHRH).

The Foundation's Local Impact Program has prevented people from becoming homeless, enabled them to feed their families and put petrol in their tanks. This has allowed members of the community to manage that little bit better through challenging times.

The Foundation's commitment to collaboration, community wellbeing, and social equity is at the core of this program. As Helping Hepburn funding grows, our focus on youth equity will extend beyond individual support, and into the places, projects, and events that shape and connect our sprawling communities across the Shire.



> **“Whether it is enabling access to essential household items, covering unexpected medical costs, or supporting individuals to maintain stability during challenging times, the LIFT program provides a safety net that would not otherwise exist.**
>
> **We regularly see the difference this makes in people's lives, often preventing crises from escalating and helping individuals regain confidence and independence.”**

— Mary Christodulaki, Manager Mental Wellbeing Team, Central Highlands Rural Health, 2026

Our Impact in 2026

2384

Instances of Support

60

Funding/grants distributed

9

Scholarships awarded

4

People supported to prevent homelessness

7%

Spent on operating costs

100%

External donations reach the community directly



Image: Lotus the dog and children at Trentham Primary School. Photo supplied by Trentham Primary School.

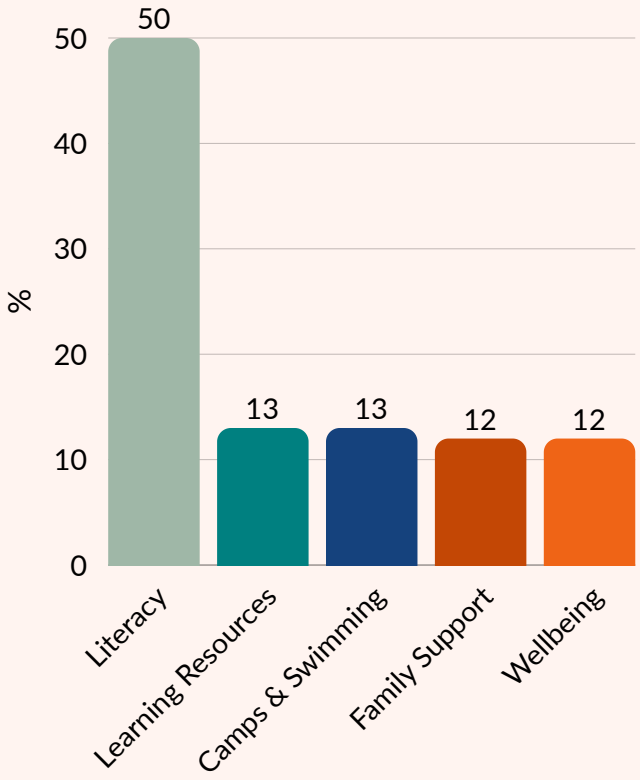
School Support (FY2026)

13 SCHOOLS



1. Bullarto Primary School
2. Trentham Primary School
3. Daylesford Dharma School
4. St Michael's Daylesford
5. Daylesford Primary School
6. Daylesford Secondary College
7. Hepburn Primary School
8. Newlyn Primary School
9. Clunes Primary School
10. Creswick Primary School
11. Creswick North Primary School
12. St Augustine's Creswick
13. Yandoit Primary School

FUNDING BREAKDOWN



Learning resources, school camps & swimming, family support and wellbeing sit within the Foundation's Schools program; Literacy is funded as a distinct program - together making up FY2026 Schools Support spend.

$149,915

Invested into the Foundation's school and literacy program

50%

of every Schools Support dollar went to literacy programs





Image: Daylesford Secondary College, supplied by school

> **“We are grateful to The Daylesford Foundation for supporting our students, families and the broader school community. You are absolutely changing lives and making a difference. We could not do this work without your generosity.”**

– Bridget Franc, Former Head of Wellbeing, Daylesford College, 2025

Carmen's Legacy

Road Safety Education for Our Year 12s



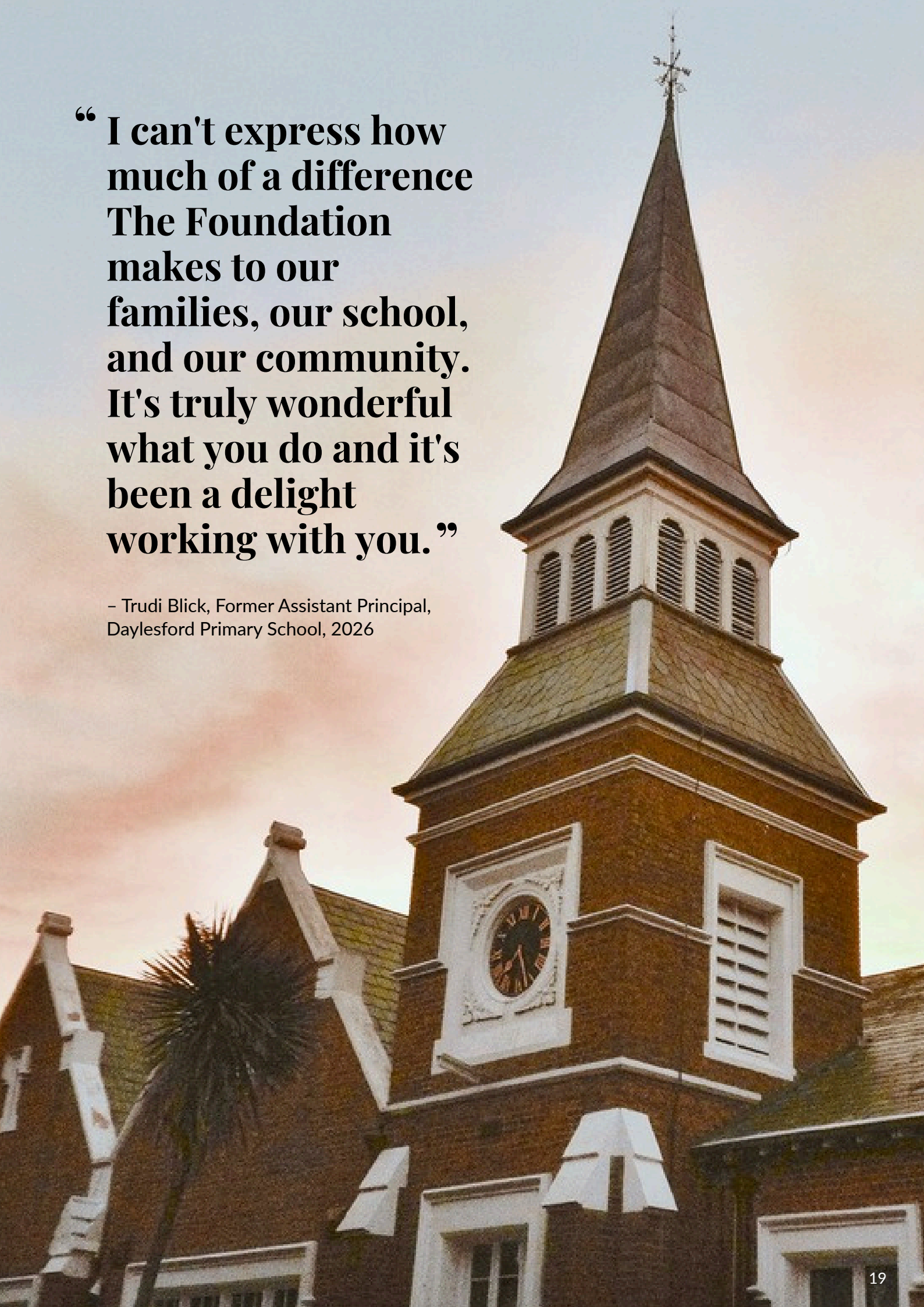
Image: Carmen Maher, supplied by John Maher

Since 2022, The Daylesford Foundation has proudly supported John Maher's presentation of *Carmen's Legacy* to Year 12 students at Daylesford College, a partnership that began when the college's former Head of Wellbeing, Bridget Franc, recognised how much this road safety message could mean to her students, and turned to the Foundation when the school itself couldn't fund it.

John's story is a deeply personal one. In 1993, he lost his daughter Carmen, the youngest of his four daughters, in a car accident when she fell asleep at the wheel. She was eighteen. For over thirty years, John has carried Carmen's memory into classrooms, telling her story so that other families are spared the same loss.

Since the Foundation's support began, *Carmen's Legacy* has reached an estimated 260 Year 12 students.

> "These students are the same age as Carmen was, and they immediately connect with her. They understand our family's loss and pain, and how we wish we could give Carmen one more cuddle. They realise they must never inflict this pain on their family, because their family members are the most important people in the world."
>
> — John Maher, founder of *Carmen's Legacy*



> **“I can't express how much of a difference The Foundation makes to our families, our school, and our community. It's truly wonderful what you do and it's been a delight working with you.”**

– Trudi Blick, Former Assistant Principal, Daylesford Primary School, 2026



A word from our major donors

One area that matters particularly to us is early intervention in literacy. Being able to read, write, and understand what you're reading is fundamental to a child's success at school, and beyond.

What starts as a small difficulty can quickly become a much larger gap, affecting not only their learning but also their confidence and enjoyment of school.

One of our generous donors (who would prefer to remain anonymous), was working as a social worker in a Community Health Centre when she was asked to take a young man shopping, to teach him how to budget.

She watched him choose branded products over cheaper home brand alternatives, even on a pension with little to spare. A little embarrassed, he admitted he couldn't read the labels, so he chose the cans with pictures instead. That was the moment she understood, firsthand, the lifelong impact of poor literacy.

– Anonymous Donors, 2026

Case Study

Schools Support, Clunes Primary School

With funding from The Daylesford Foundation, what began as support for a wellbeing space for children has expanded, year by year, into a suite of programs addressing need as it has emerged including:



Stationery Pack

Families received start-of-year packs, part of a broader, quiet layer of support including spare clothes and self-care essentials for vulnerable students.



Peaceful Kids

A mindfulness-based program building resilience in children experiencing anxiety and stress.



Lego Social Skills Program

Supporting children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).



Student Pantry

Gives students and families discreet access to food and toiletries.

Images: Clunes Primary School
Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026

> **“Clunes Primary School is greatly appreciative of the work and support we have received from The Daylesford Foundation, and we strongly urge other organisations to support The Daylesford Foundation in their mission to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people in the Hepburn Shire.”**
>
> – Acting Principal Ash Burke and Business Manager Jesse Parker, Clunes Primary School

Local Partnerships Working with Program Providers

As outlined earlier, most of the support we provide reaches people through trusted partners who understand their clients' needs first-hand.

Our 2026 partners include:

cafs we care

Child and Family Services (CAFS)

Central Highlands Rural Health

GOOD GRUB CLUB DAYLESFORD

mecwacare

Hepburn Shire Schools

Here's a closer look at some of those partnerships in action.

CAFS is one of the region's core family and community support services, working alongside people who are navigating crisis, housing instability and family breakdowns.

The Daylesford Foundation has partnered with CAFS since 2019. Seven years of standing side by side to ensure someone in crisis, whose requirements fall outside CAFS remit, can be supported by the Foundation.



The Good Grub Club (GGC)

Thursday Lunch Club & Community Pantry







Images: Good Grub Club, over the years.
Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026

In the six years the Foundation has partnered with Good Grub Club it has grown to be more than a place to help, or be helped. It has become a community anchor, that place where every person in the community has somewhere to belong. Running regular weekly lunches out of the Daylesford Neighbourhood Centre and offering a healthy pantry each week to anyone across Hepburn Shire experiencing food scarcity, GGC does far more than fill empty plates. They fill pantries, ease burdens, create belonging, and remind people that they matter.

Through every meal shared, every cake baked with care, every volunteer welcomed; they have woven kindness into the fabric of our community.

As part of our ongoing support for Good Grub Club the Foundation donated $5,000 in FY2026.

Ari’s Story

One of many stories of a community member in need.

Ari lives with complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and an autoimmune disorder that affects daily functioning, and with no family to fall back on, Ari's stability rests almost entirely on the connections built here in Daylesford, the local relationships and support networks that make it possible to manage each day. When Ari’s landlord terminated his lease, and he found it difficult to find suitable accommodation nearby, CAFS became involved.

Supported by the Foundation, Ari was able to find alternative accommodation and stay in the community that he was part of and keep his support networks intact.

Names have been changed to protect this person’s identity.

Supplied by Child and Family Services (CAFS).



Mila’s Story

Scholarships: Investing in Hepburn Shire's next generation

The Daylesford Foundation first met Mila in 2023 when she was a successful applicant for one of the Foundation’s scholarships. It was at this time we recognised in Mila, a person of strong character and resolve, someone who would not let obstacles deter her from her goals.

After completing her first year of arts at Melbourne University, with very high marks, and having commuted for 12 months, either catching the early bus to Woodend, or mum driving her to Ballan Mila felt she was ready to move to Melbourne. She found commuting kind of lonely and hadn't made the connections she would have liked.

In 2024 her second year of arts at Melbourne University having demonstrated significant resilience under difficult circumstances, the foundation was keen to support Mila in her move to Melbourne and helped out with accommodation costs.

For Mila 2025 was a year of substantial outcomes, she completed a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Psychology



Image: Mila Arias-Parker at graduation, 2026

and, with the help of the foundation, moved to shared accommodation close by the university.

Scholarships for 2026 confirmed to the Foundation why we had supported this amazing young person.

When it came time to discuss grants for 2026 Mila’s response was, “I believe I can cope and someone else could use the money”.

What else is there to say about this beautiful person?



To our many donors, new and longstanding, thank you. You know who you are and without your trust and generosity we may not have made it this far already. Your generosity fuels a more connected, resilient, and caring community, where every person has the opportunity to thrive and, in time, to give back to the community that shaped them.

It is your support that has inspired us to keep giving and expand our work in the community.

Thanking Our Donors

Meet the Team

Board of Directors



Jane Westney, Chair

Joined the Board in 2024. Brings extensive experience in marketing and innovation spanning corporate multinationals and Australian-owned businesses.



Norma Foster, Co-Founder & Deputy Chair

Co-founded the Foundation in 2018. Brings decades of commercial experience as a former business owner across the hospitality, food, and travel sectors.



Jim Foster, Co-Founder & Secretary

Co-founded the Foundation in 2018. Holds a 50-year career in logistics and the recycling industry, where he founded, built, and sold multiple successful businesses.



Camille Jasson, Treasurer

Joined the Board in 2025. A qualified architect with 13 years of experience managing major health infrastructure projects, who now owns and operates a global trade and technology company.



Cheryl De Zilwa, Board Member

Joined the Board in 2019. Former CEO and National Director across community, health, aged care, and disability sectors, with extensive governance experience on community boards.



Natalie Delaney-John, Board Member

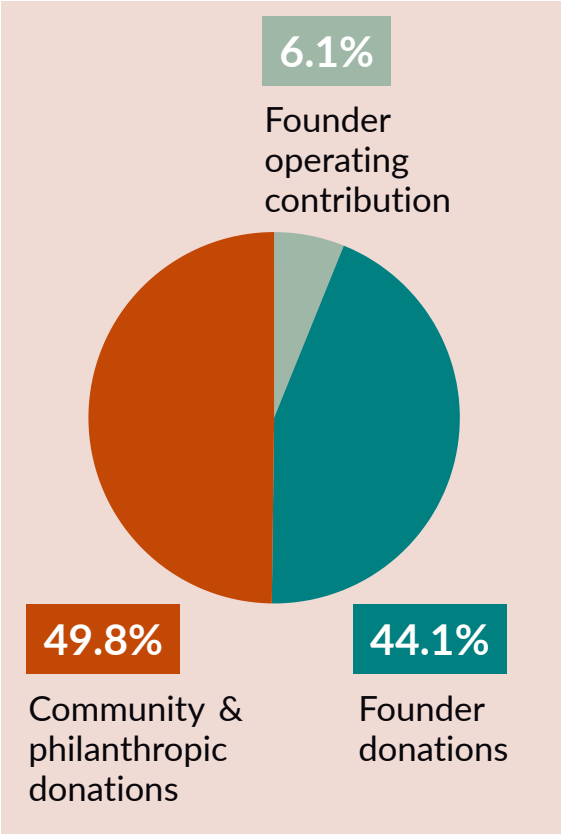
Joined the Board in 2024. An entrepreneur and business leader specialising in strategy, innovation, and community-led venture execution across regional Victoria.

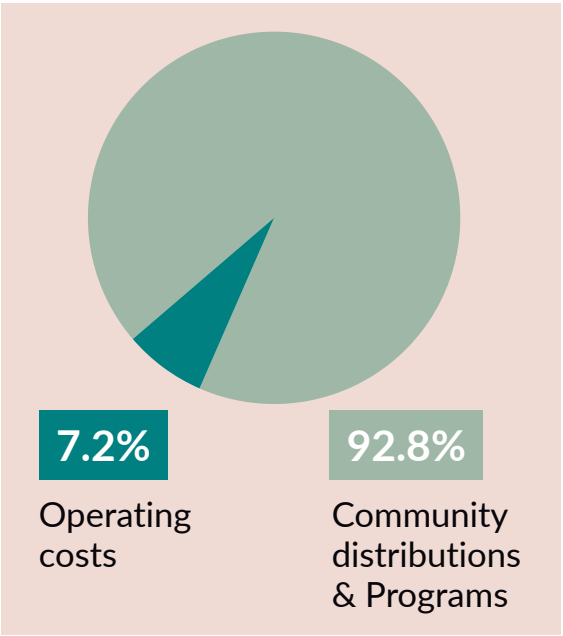
Financial Summary

FY2026 was a strong year of growth, with total revenue reaching $408,425 (a 47% increase year-on-year) and direct community distributions rising to $324,584. The net operating surplus of $58,820 reflects timing variances in grant allocations, which will be fully deployed into expanded community support in FY2027. Operating Costs ($25,021) represented just 7.2% of total expenditure and were 100% underwritten by our founders, ensuring every dollar donated went directly to local families and programs.

Income Statement (FY2026)

INCOME & EXPENDITURE	FY2026
Revenue	
Community & philanthropic donations	$203,404
Founder donations to programs	$180,000
Founder operating contribution (covers all operating costs)	$25,021
Total Revenue	**$408,425**
Expenditure & Distributions	
Direct community distributions & programs	$324,584
Operating costs: software, consulting, website, marketing & photography (Fully funded by founder's contribution)	$25,021
Total Expenditure	**$349,605**
Net Surplus (Timing variance prior to distribution)	**$58,820**

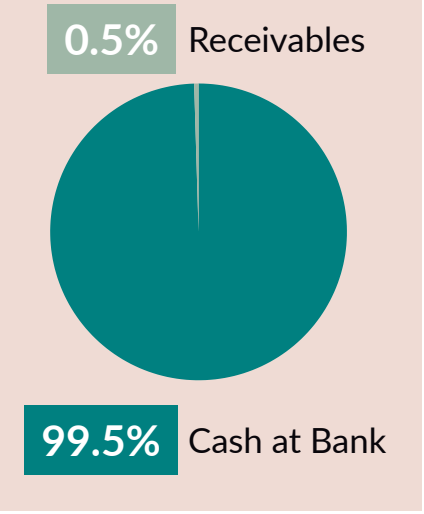


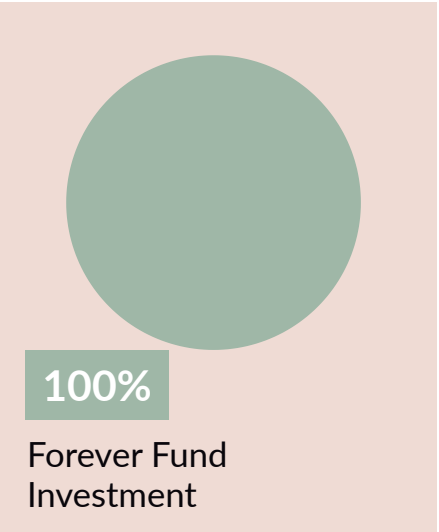


Financial Summary

Statement of Financial Position (As at 30 June 2026)

ASSETS & LIABILITIES	FY2026
Current Assets	
Cash at Bank	$293,670
Receivables	$1,407
Total Current Assets	**$295,077**
Non-Current Assets	
Forever Fund Investment (Managed by ACF)	$1,920,236
Total Assets	**$2,215,313**
Liabilities	
Total Liabilities	$0
Net Assets	**$2,215,313**







Since 2018, The Daylesford Foundation has been a Registered Charity with the following certifications:

- Registered Charity with the ACNC
- A Public Benevolent Institution (PBI)
- A Tax-Deductible Charity with DGR1 status
- Led by a volunteer Board of Directors
- The Daylesford Foundation Fund is a Named Fund of Australian Communities Foundation, which is the Trustee.

Image (L–R): Gary Carter, Acting Secretary of the Good Grub Club with Jim Foster, holding fresh pumpkins for the Thursday Lunch, 2026.

Building Our Future

The Forever Fund – Building Toward $5M by 2030

Meeting Tomorrow's Needs

Over the past eight years, the Foundation has invested $1.2M into Hepburn Shire, delivering more than 10,000 instances of support to local students, families, and schools. While this impact has transformed thousands of lives, the need across our region continues to grow.

To meet this moment, we are setting a bold course for the future. Through our Forever Fund - established through the generosity of our founders, we are building a $5 million perpetual endowment by 2030. Reaching this goal will generate $300,000 in annual distributions. Combined with our annual active giving through the Helping Hepburn Fund, we can provide over $600,000 every year to support the young people of Hepburn Shire, indefinitely.



Image: The Daylesford Foundation food & fuel vouchers. Photographer: Jodie Parker, 2026



Image: Daylesford Dharma School, Chinese Class. Photographer: Victor Tadashi Suarez, 2024

With local needs rising, our focus for FY27 is scaling our impact so no family or student falls through the cracks. We're building toward that through the Forever Fund, already well on its way to our $5 million goal, and through the everyday generosity of people who call Hepburn Shire home. If you'd like to help us close the gap, whether through a gift, a partnership, or a conversation about leaving a legacy, we'd love to hear from you.

Connect with Us

Connect

Stay Informed — Sign up for our new monthly community newsletter via our website to see the direct difference your support makes across our Shire communities.

Donate

Every donation directly empowers local young people and families across Hepburn Shire. Because 100% of our administrative costs are covered by our founders, every dollar of your gift reaches the community directly.

- **Become a Monthly Donor**
  Provide steady, predictable support that allows us to plan ahead and respond rapidly to urgent needs across our schools and programs through The Helping Hepburn Fund.

- **Make a One-Off Gift**
  Support immediate crises, literacy initiatives, or essential school supplies for vulnerable students.

- **Major Gifts**
  Make a transformational investment in our core programs or help build The Forever Fund to secure community support indefinitely.



Image: Daylesford Dharma School
Photographer: Victor Tadashi Suarez, 2024

Leave a Legacy

A gift in your will ensures that future generations of young people in Hepburn Shire have the support they need to thrive. To have a confidential discussion about leaving a bequest, please contact us at enquiries@thedaylesfordfoundation.org.au

Partner with us

We are always looking to build strategic partnerships with community organisations, schools, and program providers across Hepburn Shire. If you share our vision, we would be pleased to explore how we can work together.



“Breaking the cycle of disadvantage isn’t easy. But with your help, The Daylesford Foundation can provide the support families need to move forward and build a more secure future.”

– Norma and Jim Foster,
The Daylesford Foundation Co-Founders

Contact

The Daylesford Foundation
PO Box 639 Daylesford 3460

www.thedaylesfordfoundation.org.au
enquiries@thedaylesfordfoundation.org.au
@thedaylesfordfoundation

Image: Daylesford Primary School

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