

# The Towards a Just Society Fund

A sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation



## About the Towards a Just Society Fund

The Towards a Just Society Fund (TJSF), established by the late Sid Spindler and his family, is a nine-member sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation (ACF). TJSF focuses its support on Aboriginal education and Aboriginal-led organisations, in order to empower self-determination and reduce injustice.

Over more than 15 years the sub-fund has funded projects and activities initiated by the Aboriginal community of Victoria. Since it started TJSF has made over 150 grants, totalling over \$1.5 million. In recent years grants have totalled about \$110,000 per year and grants are generally in the range from \$5,000 to \$15,000. **Below is a copy of the Annual Report for the financial year 2016-17.**

### **Succession Planning – a transition to Aboriginal control of the sub-fund**

At a December 2016 meeting, TJSF members gave consideration to “succession planning” and decided to engage in a process of a transition of the fund over the next few years. The members expressed a strong interest in exploring the engagement of upcoming Aboriginal leaders in a developmental role that might progress to assuming management of a transformed sub-fund. Members agreed to allocate resources, including funding, to support the transition.

TJSF’s exploration of succession coincides with Australian Communities Foundation’s interest in exploring a range of options and documenting examples for other ACF sub-funds as they move to considering succession. Through a collaboration with the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership ([indigenousfellowship.net.au](http://indigenousfellowship.net.au)) and Woor-Dungin ([www.woor-dungin.com.au](http://www.woor-dungin.com.au)) a network of Aboriginal associates has been formed to guide the development of an Aboriginal community led philanthropic fund. [Peter Aldenhoven](#) has been employed to coordinate the research and consultation process. He is located at Woor-Dungin.

## Donations to the Towards a Just Society Fund

The Towards a Just Society Fund welcomes donations and bequests. Donations to TJSF can be made through the Australian Communities Foundation website.

- To make a **tax deductible donation** of over \$2, donate online to ***Towards a Just Society Fund*** at the Australian Communities Foundation website’s Donate page - [donate.communityfoundation.org.au](http://donate.communityfoundation.org.au).
- Or, if you do **not require a tax deduction for your donation**, donate online to ***Towards a Just Society Fund - Extension Fund*** at the Australian Communities Foundation website’s Donate page - [donate.communityfoundation.org.au](http://donate.communityfoundation.org.au).

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## Annual Report for the Financial Year 2016-2017 and Update on Activities to October 2017

Last year's Annual Report foreshadowed changes in the approach of the Fund, in particular seeking to make it more highly dependent on Aboriginal voice and control. The AGM itself strongly endorsed the intention to pursue such possibilities. This Report, therefore, marks a significant watershed in the history of the Fund, as we have found substantial interest within the Aboriginal community in the proposition to transition the Fund to Aboriginal control. Reflecting the watershed, this report is likely to be the last in an Annual Report format. To inform discussion at the AGM, the report also includes outlines of activities up to the end of October 2017.

This transition development has been made possible by the alliances that have been formed with Woor-Dungin and the Fellowship for indigenous leadership (FIL). Woor-Dungin is an independent community organisation that has been functioning since 2006 to support building capacity of Aboriginal organisations, to assist their access to philanthropic funds, and to modify the requirements of philanthropic funds to make this access easier. The Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership has made grants to individual Aboriginal people as Fellows or Emerging Fellows to support them in their activities. Woor-Dungin has six Aboriginal organisations as partners in its endeavours, and is now majority Aboriginal managed. FIL has some 21 leaders it has supported in its network. There are overlaps between these networks and the organisations and individuals TJSF has supported; but taken together with an additional 4 or 5 individuals/organisations associated with TJSF, these groups form an extremely valuable network of 30 or so Aboriginal individuals and organisations.

This network has served as the initial focus for development of the approach to this transition and potentially as the focus for direction of funds in the first instance. With the assistance of Woor-Dungin and FIL, several discussions have occurred with members of these networks, in particular through a forum on 4<sup>th</sup> October at which there were 27 participants, 20 or so of whom being Aboriginal.

This is very recent, so there is need for time for reflection and development. However the mood of the meeting was very positive and a working group was established of Aboriginal participants. TJSF will provide initial support for this working group, through John Clarke who will begin to act as the day facto Executive Officer for this new development.

The strong sense of energy and intention to take up this opportunity to develop an Aboriginal controlled philanthropic fund means that we in TJSF now need to begin the shift to a support role rather than being in an active decision-making role. In this vein, we have essentially stopped making any grants to individuals or organisations ourselves, intending to preserve the balance of funds for this new entity. A major priority for us in future will be to see that additional funds flow into this sub-fund so it is able to maintain and expand over the years.

This significant transition has begun with the considerable support of TJSF members, of Trudy Wyse from the Australian Communities Foundation and Woor-Dungin, Christa Momot from Woor-Dungin, Maree Davidson and Glenda Morrison from FIL, and John Clarke within TJSF supporting this engagement. I want to acknowledge and thank all these people, and look forward to our discussion at the AGM of the implications of these developments for the Fund.

John Burke  
Chair

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## Grants made between July 2016 to June 2017

In the financial year 2016-17 TJSF distributed ten grants. The total value of the grants was \$129,200, a 4% decrease on the 11-grants total of the previous year. Seven of the 2015-16 grants were valued at \$10,000 or more.

Recipient	Value	Purpose
Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria	\$15,000	A one-off grant to support part-time employment of a fund-raiser for FVPLS.
Disability Resource Centre	\$15,000	A fifth grant used by the Disability Resource Centre, based on advice from the Advisory Committee of the Australian Disability and Indigenous Peoples' Education Fund to provide small education grants to Indigenous people with disabilities over two funding rounds.
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)	\$10,000	The grant of \$10,000 contributed through the ACF Indigenous Giving Circle supported direct advocacy in Canberra and development of an integrated funding model for government.
Geelong One Fire	\$9,500	A grant to support the development of DVD to capture cultural knowledge in the Geelong region.
Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA)	\$15,000	A grant to develop a funding submission to Victorian Government.
Songlines Music Aboriginal Corp	\$20,000	A third grant to support the consolidation and development of Songlines.
The Storyteller (GRLEN)	\$15,000	A grant to fund a pilot program using The Storyteller with a group of Aboriginal children in care.
The Storyteller (GRLEN)	\$15,500	A grant to enable Glenn Shea to follow up on the Victorian Government's expressed interest in using The Storyteller approach in a wider range of programs.
Stephanie Armstrong & Denise Shillinglaw	\$9,200	A grant to support expenses associated with completing a book on nurturing cross-cultural relationships.
Weenthunga Health Network	\$5,000	A grant to support a Health Day in the northern metropolitan region of Melbourne.
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$129,200</b>	

### Funding strategies

The distribution of grants in 2016-17 was guided by TJSF's current agreed funding strategy (see Attachment 2).

Agreed funding strategy	2014-15 activities
Primarily focus on Aboriginal education	77% of the total value of grants focused on support for Aboriginal education. The other 23% supported activities in the family violence area and community services.
Primarily focus on projects in Victoria	All grants focused on Victoria. However the grant to Disability Resource Centre had a Victorian and national focus.

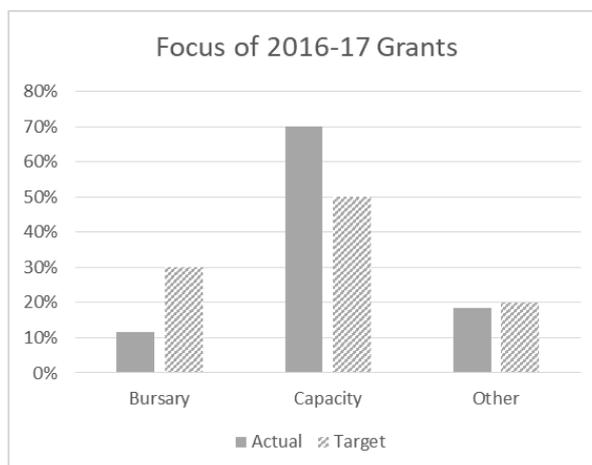


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Agreed funding strategy	2014-15 activities
Support projects developed in partnerships, with vision and direction from the funded organisations, supported by TJSF	100% of grants funding went to Aboriginal organisations. All of them were also initiated by the Aboriginal community.
Support innovation, with intended continuity (generally up to 3 years) to enable the funded organisation to establish the worth of the project, collect evidence, and seek ongoing sources of support.	In keeping with the intent of this strategy, support continued for: Songlines Aboriginal Music Disability Resource Centre Weenthunga Health Network Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA).
Cap grants at a level which it is anticipated can be sustained from existing funds and anticipated regular donations.	Total grant distributions were within this cap.
Support existing partnerships with some additional funding available for new initiatives, to be largely derived from TJSF's strategic considerations.	Partnership arrangements with Songlines and Weenthunga have led to further grants from philanthropy and government.
Seek co-funding opportunities with other philanthropic trusts to support larger projects and to extend the period of some existing projects.	TJSF continued its work in co-funding arrangements with ACF's Indigenous Giving Circle.

The chart below compares the actual focus of grants in 2016-16 against TJSF's current targeted focus. It clearly reflects a move from bursary arrangement grants to capacity building grants.



### TJSF Financial Summary for 2016-17

The amounts in the table below combine the TJSF and TJSF Extension Fund.

	\$
Opening balance - 1 July 2016:	441,729
Donations received:	70,275
Distributions as grants:	-129,800
Executive Officer:	-4,940
ACF administration & management fees:	-9,633



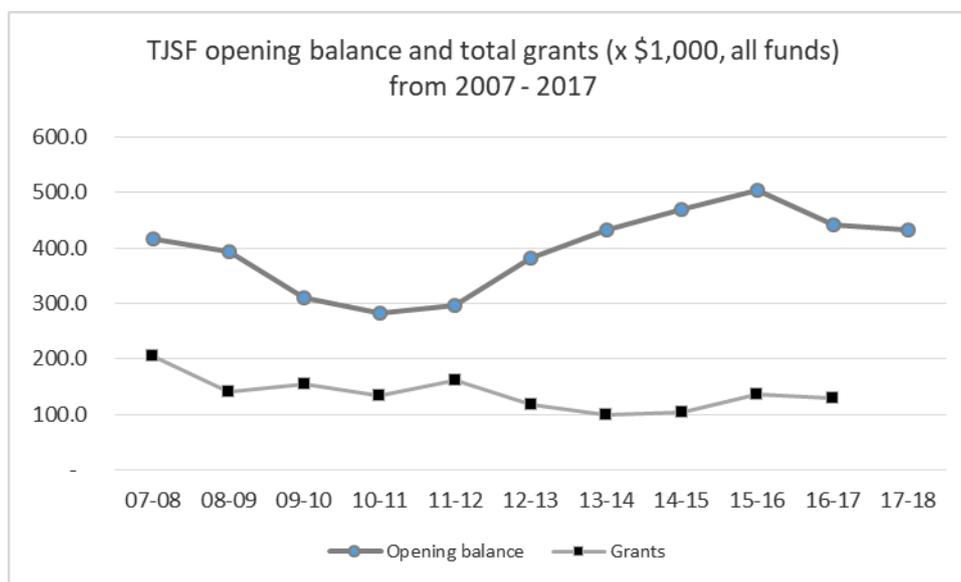
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Change in capital value:	65,738
Total of closing balances - 30 June 2017:	433,368
Donations since 1 July 2017:	42,000
Total of balances at 31 October 2017:	467,474

### TJSF Opening Balances and Grant Totals between 2007 and 2017

The table below shows TJSF's combined sub-fund annual balance and annual grants total between 2007 and 2017. For the last five years the balance has remained above \$400,000 and total grants have been between \$98,000 and \$135,000.



### Activities from July 2016 to present

As outlined in the Chair's introduction, TJSF's review and development of its strategic perspective during the 2016-17 year led to an intention to seek to make the fund more highly dependent on Aboriginal voice and control. From March 2017, TJSF grant-making paused as its exploration of possibilities to transition the sub-fund to Aboriginal control became clearer and more focused (see Transition below).

TJSF's grant-making up to March 2017 was guided by the underpinning principle of the self-determination of Aboriginal people and by the guidelines presented in Attachment 2 below. For that reason, TJSF has largely sought to fund proposals that have come from, and in which the decisions are made by, Aboriginal people. Over the past five or more years, TJSF had been funding a number of proposals from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that have been building or re-building their capacity to deliver a service to their community. TJSF support has often been for the organisations' core operations. The organisations have been:

- Weenthunga Health Network
- Songlines Aboriginal Music
- Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA)
- Woor-Dungin
- Bubup Wilam for Early Learning.



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In 2016-17, TJSF grants were made to HICSA, Songlines and Weenthunga.

### **Capacity building of Aboriginal organisations**

Of the support for Aboriginal community-controlled organisation, the success of TJSF's experience with Weenthunga Health Network has been particularly interesting. TJSF was able to provide support to Weenthunga at a relatively (but not exceptionally) early stage of its development. TJSF then assisted Weenthunga in seeking expanded funding from the ACF Indigenous Giving Circle. This led to further support in engaging with other philanthropic funds and with government. In October this year, Weenthunga was very pleased to be able to report that they have received operational funding from the Victorian Government, initially for one year.

TJSF's support for Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association (HICSA) has also contributed to the building of organisational capacity. HICSA is now an Associate Member of Victorian Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (VACCHO) and is negotiating with the Victorian Government for funding.

### **Bursary arrangements**

The fifth grant to the Disability Resource Centre (DRC) was made on receiving a report on the distribution of 2016 grant for bursaries. Sixteen bursaries were provided across Australia. The bursaries were used to purchase equipment, software, training, course fees, textbooks and support work experience and travel costs for research.

The DRC grant was TJSF's only grant in 2016-17 involving a bursary arrangement. This seemed to reflect an ongoing decline of interest from Aboriginal organisations in the arrangement. The Aboriginal Students Bursary Fund sub-fund had been initially established to support anticipated growing interest in bursary arrangement activities. However, with the decline of interest and with a corpus below the Australian Communities Foundation minimum requirement of \$20,000, TJSF felt it was appropriate that the sub-fund be dissolved and the funds transferred to the main Towards a Just Society Fund sub-fund.

### **Support for ACF strategic priority**

TJSF continued to support Australian Communities Foundation in ACF's strategic priority area of *Indigenous Education and Capacity Building*. Activities included participating in the ACF Indigenous Giving Circle with several other ACF sub-funds focusing on Indigenous education and development. TJSF's grants for Giving Circle initiatives supported:

- Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS)
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

The one-off grant to support part-time employment of a fund-raiser for FVPLS produced a huge increase in funding for the organisation. Based on these outcomes FVPLS has continued to employ a fund-raiser (without further funding from TJSF).

The one-off grant to support SNAICC's targeted engagement of government, opposition and the sector to raise awareness and secure amendments to increase rather than decrease access to critical early childhood development services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children was also successful. SNAICC has reported that through representations to the Nick Xenophon Team Party and other cross benchers in the Senate, they secured \$61million funding for former Budget Based Funded early years services, 80% of which are for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

SNAICC continues to seek a better early years system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services through representation to the Federal Opposition with the intention of influencing their election platform.



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### **The Storyteller**

Another encouraging outcome from ongoing support has been with *The Storyteller* game and its use in a variety of ways to promote cultural understandings. TJSF has supported these activities at various points over the last eight years, from the development of the initial prototype of the game.

In the last year support has been provided for a project to assist young Aboriginal people in out-of-home and residential care to build their cultural understanding and cultural links. A considerable amount of work went into the planning and development of this approach, but it was unable to be executed because of the many issues in having agreement and support within the system. Subsequently, closer engagement with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in the Barwon Region has resulted in DHHS actively supporting and assisting to implement a trial of *The Meerbrook Learning Program* - "It takes a Community to Care for Our Kids" - intended to build a more positive and culturally safe environment for young Aboriginal people in care to thrive and be more connected to their community, using *The Storyteller* as a catalyst.

### **Geelong One Fire**

Despite the sad loss of their community elder, Geelong One Fire reported in July that, with TJSF and Australia Post funding, they were progressing well towards:

- Producing a Djillong DVD for use in Aboriginal and wider community
- Producing supporting Djillong materials connected to Djillong website
- Enabling 50 Aboriginal community members to receive Djillong awareness training
- Building skills in 10 Aboriginal people for local history and cultural leadership
- Sharing information about Djillong culture and heritage with 20 One Fire members
- Providing 10 Djillong information sessions - 5 to Aboriginal groups and 5 to wider community groups (including to combined high school groups)
- Reaching over 300 people through the project during the year.

### **Transition**

In considering succession planning at the 2016 AGM, TJSF members agreed on an explicit intention to transition TJSF to a culturally appropriate, self-managed Aboriginal sub-fund within the ACF umbrella within up to 3 years, the sub-fund being named and structured as then considered appropriate. TJSF's exploration of succession coincided with Australian Communities Foundation's interest in exploring a range of succession options and documenting examples for other ACF sub-funds as they move to considering their own succession.

After the AGM, a Transition Working Group was established to progress the matter. Initially working group members were John Burke, Julia Spindler, John Clarke and Sarah Thompson, Trudy Wyse, and Sophie Waincymmer (ACF). After a series of working group meetings, consultations, research and another meeting with TJSF members, the working group commenced exploration of possible collaboration with the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership (FIL, another ACF sub-fund) and Woor-Dungin.

As outlined in the Chair's introduction to this report, TJSF, FIL and Woor-Dungin are now collaborating to explore transition options. The first forum was held on 4 October. It was attended by 20 Aboriginal people. Stephanie Armstrong and Robyne Latham facilitated the meeting. A working group was formed with the purpose of producing a draft document to inform discussion at the next forum. Issues to be addressed will include a draft vision for the fund, a purpose, a name and underpinning values. Eventually this may then lead to consideration and establishment of an appropriate structure, employment of a part time executive officer for the transitioned fund and a set of operational procedures.

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### ***Changing role for current TJSF Executive Officer***

A large part of the role of the TJSF Executive Officer, John Clarke, has now changed from the support of grant making activities to support for the transition process. His role now includes:

- supporting the interim working group by arranging working group meetings, distributing agendas, taking and distributing minutes, arranging payments of sitting fees and related costs, other related tasks
- supporting the two facilitators
- keeping stakeholders informed.

As the transition process leads to the appointment of an Aboriginal executive officer, located at Woor-Dungin, the current Executive Officer will gradually hand over his role as suits the process.



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### Attachment A: TJSF membership - June 2017

#### **TJSF Members**

Surname	Given name
Burke	John
Dorevitch	Abe
Dorevitch	Vera
Friday	Mary Lou
Friday	Robin
Holmes	Roberta
Ives	Rosslyn
McPhate	Maureen

Surname	Given name
Raysmith	Hayden
Spindler	Christopher
Spindler	Julia
Spindler	Karen
Spindler	Linden
Spindler	Rebecca
Strnad	Halina

#### **Management/Development Committee Members**

John Burke (Chair)	Mary Lou Friday
Julia Spindler	Hayden Raysmith
Halina Strnad	Liz Gillies
Kerry Spindler	Sarah Thompson (Australian Communities Foundation, co-opted)
Maureen McPhate	John Clarke (Executive Officer, co-opted)
Robin Friday	

### Attachment 2: Current TJSF focus and guidelines

The Towards a Just Society Fund directs its funding largely towards:

1. projects and activities initiated by the Aboriginal community of Victoria
2. capacity building of Aboriginal organisations based on the strategic directions determined by the grant recipient organisation.
3. strategic approaches, including supporting Australian Community Foundation's strategic priorities that align with TJSF's focus
4. bursary funds, to be administered by or on advice from Aboriginal people, to support retention of Aboriginal people in education and pathways to employment.

Further guidelines for funding are:

1. Rather than emphasising evaluation, we will encourage a loosely structured process of joint reflection on capacity building outcomes within the grant recipients' strategic directions.
2. Support the gaining of funding from other sources by encouraging the development of strategic and evaluation approaches.
3. Support for longer than 3 years may be considered, but only after a review of the outcomes of the first three years.

Additional indirect support may be considered (For example support with strategic and financial planning, representation to government and advocating with other funding bodies).