

IMPACT REPORT '24



Community
FOUNDATION



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation acknowledges the Traditional Owners upon whose ancestral lands we live, work, and play. We pay our respect to their Elders, past and present, and recognise their continued connection to Country and Community.

OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION & BELONGING

The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation is dedicated to ensuring all people feel like they belong in the places they learn, gather and play. We strive to foster environments where all people in our community know they are welcome no matter their age, culture, ability, sex, gender identity, language, race, religious beliefs, and/or sexual orientation. We are committed to continuous learning through storytelling, representation, amplifying all peoples' voices, and celebrating diversity.

LEADING THE WAY IN CHILD SAFETY

The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation is dedicated to creating a safe and supportive environment for all children and young people. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to fostering a culture where young people feel respected, empowered, and connected.

Aligned with our purpose of creating memories that connect and inspire, we actively engage with children and young people through sport, education, and community programs. We are committed to upholding the Victorian Child Safety Standards, preventing harm, and reducing risks to child safety.

Our responsibility extends across our Board, players, staff, contractors, and volunteers. We embed child safety in our policies, training, recruitment, and reporting procedures while advocating for inclusivity and the diverse needs of young people.

AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

The Western Bulldogs Community Foundation is a nation-leading organisation that harnesses the power of sport to transform lives and create lasting impact.

Our innovative, life-changing programs are designed to empower individuals and strengthen communities, ensuring that people of all ages have the opportunity to thrive. With a focus on health and wellbeing, safe and connected communities, and an equal and inclusive society, we proudly support thousands of people across Victoria's west.

Supported by local, state, and federal government funding, including Major Partner WorkSafe Victoria, our initiatives are designed in close collaboration with the community. Each program undergoes rigorous independent evaluation by Victoria University to ensure they remain at the cutting edge of best practices, driving meaningful and lasting change.



A YEAR OF IMPACT & GROWTH

2024 was a year of milestones and transformative achievements for the Foundation. Driven by our unwavering passion for empowering individuals and fostering vibrant communities, the WB Community Foundation has continued to impact Victoria's West.



Engaging More People Than Ever

In 2024, our programs welcomed more than 5,000 participants, marking a 38% increase from 2023. We facilitated 15,947 in-person engagements and connected with more than 18,600 people through social media.



Celebrating 10 Years of Sons of the West

For 10 years, Sons of the West has empowered men to take charge of their health and wellbeing. More than a program, it's a movement built on mateship, confidence, and life-changing stories of strength and transformation.



Empowering Young Leaders

More than 1,000 young people took part in our leadership programs, growing in confidence and cultural pride. An incredible 98% would recommend our programs to others in their community.



New Spaces, New Opportunities

The redeveloped Mission Whitten Oval is now a vibrant community hub, welcoming over 1,000 participants to access world-class facilities for health, education, and connection.



Growing Our Impact

In 2024, the WB Community Foundation proudly achieved Social Enterprise Accreditation through Social Traders, underscoring our dedication to harnessing the power of sport for good. We look forward to using our experience and expertise to influence even greater numbers in the future.

Thank you
TO OUR COMMUNITY

To all who joined our programs, along with our dedicated team, partners, and leaders – your passion, commitment, and collaboration are the driving forces behind our work. As we look ahead, we are more excited than ever about making a difference in Victoria's West.

Thank you for being part of this incredible journey.

5,000

Participants. A 38% increase from 2023.

98%

Of participants would refer a friend or family member to a WBCF program.

15,947

In-person engagements through events and community activations.

40%

Male Participants.

58%

Female Participants.

2%

Non-binary Participants.

73%

Of participants across WBCF programs come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

10 YEARS

Of Health and Wellbeing Program Sons of the West.

18,600

Interactions on social media.

40

Schools engaged.

10

LGA parties.

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS



A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

Jenny Taing

I'm so proud to share with you this year's Impact Report for the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation. As Chair of the Foundation, I'm privileged to witness the transformative power of our programs up-close. The difference we're making to the lives of individuals, families, and communities across Victoria's West is truly profound.

At the heart of our work is our steadfast commitment to social inclusion, improving health and wellbeing, and providing pathways for individuals to be their best. Through our core programs—including Daughters of the West, Sons of the West, GOAL, Nallei Jerring, CALDplay, Leaders of the Pack, and the Youth Leadership Project we've continued to break down barriers and create opportunities for those who need it most.

For me, this work is deeply personal. I'm the daughter of first-generation refugees, so I understand the challenges of navigating new environments with limited resources and support. My family's journey has shaped my passion for advocacy and community empowerment, and I see reflections of my own experiences in the participants we serve. Programs like Daughters of the West, which provides culturally tailored health and wellbeing support, and Sons of the West, which fosters critical conversations around men's mental health, are vital to creating lasting change in these communities.

The impact of our work is only possible thanks to the incredible support of our partners. Your belief in our vision and unwavering commitment enables us to continue delivering these life-changing programs. To our major partner, WorkSafe Victoria, and all our funding and community partners—thank-you for standing with us.

In 2025 and beyond, we're excited and ready to build on our impact and continue addressing the evolving needs of our community. The challenges of the moment are significant. But this just means we have to be even more innovative and inclusive in what we do.

With the continued support of our partners and the passion of our incredible team, we'll keep giving our very best to meet these challenges head-on. On behalf of the Foundation, thank-you!

We're so proud to work with you to create opportunities, uplift communities, and make an impact in the Mighty West.

JENNY TAING

Chair,

Western Bulldogs Community Foundation

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR GENERAL MANGER

Louise Perry



It was a conversation with Deputy Chair Jill Hennessy that for me really captures the power and the potential of the foundation. She said if in our lives we wanted to contribute to strengthening communities and driving systemic change there was nothing that wielded as much influence as sport.

If I really wanted to be involved in something that had the power to change individual lives, strengthen communities, while also having enough influence to change systems, there was "no power greater in this country than sport" and in Victoria, "few parts of our society with more influence than footy".

And that is what we do. We use the commitment of the Western Bulldogs - a club deeply connected to community - and the power of sport to make change happen. It's what sets us apart from other similar organisations. It gives us an opportunity to speak to men who might not otherwise come out for an evening to attend a session on the role they can play as advocates for gender equality. It gives us an opportunity to speak to young men about what healthy masculinity looks like. An opportunity to work with youth at risk and support them on to different pathways. Or the great privilege of connecting newly arrived migrants and refugees to critical services and to their new community. It's this power, coupled with our commitment to strong co-design, monitoring and evaluation, that equals impact.

And we see that impact every day.

The 14-year-old boy who hasn't been to school for weeks but decides to return because he hears his class is visiting Whitten Oval for a session facilitated by Tom Liberatore as part of our Youth Leadership Program.

Or the men in Ballarat, grappling with the impact of gender-based violence in their community, engaging in critical conversations through our Sons of the West program.

Women like Helen, who, through our Daughters of the West program, saw a GP, discovered she had breast cancer, and is now in remission.

The 2,000 newly arrived refugees who get connected to community and essential services through CALDplay, ensuring they feel welcome in their new home.

These moments, powered by sport, change lives. And they're only possible with your support.

Stories of transformation also come from our team. People like Quang, a refugee from Vietnam who now works in the Foundation, helping newly arrived communities through CALDplay. Or Luna, who fled war in Togo and now works in the Foundation, mentoring young people from African cultural backgrounds in our GOAL program. Their lived experience, their resilience, and their passion fuel the work we do every day.

I couldn't be prouder to lead this Foundation, which is already a leader in its field, pioneering innovative programs that respond to real community needs. As demand grows, so does our determination to meet it.

To all our partners and supporters - thank you. Your investment is not just in individuals but in the strength and future of our entire community. Together, we will continue to harness the power of sport to create meaningful, lasting change.

LOUISE PERRY

**General Manager,
Western Bulldogs Community Foundation**



A MESSAGE FROM WORKSAFE VICTORIA CEO

Ash West

At WorkSafe, our job is to reduce workplace harm and support injured workers to return to health and safe work, but we can't do this alone.

That's why we've been a proud Major Partner of the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation for the past five years. It's a partnership we're passionate about because it helps spread our safety message and reach some of Victoria's most vulnerable workers; our young and our multicultural workforce.

Together, we can ensure workplace safety is at the forefront of everyone's minds so our family, friends and neighbours return home from work safely each and every day - and can continue to do the things they love, like going to the footy and cheering on the Doggies.

Football clubs are like families; they're places to connect, to share experiences, camaraderie and provide a sense of safety and belonging. That's why the programs we run along with the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation are so important.

They help us connect with the West's diverse multicultural community and let them know they are not alone. They encourage people to speak up about unsafe work practices and know we have the resources and services to assist, regardless of any language barriers.

They enable us to share our knowledge and advice with young workers through initiatives like Youth Leadership Programs and Pathways to Work Expos and equip them with the confidence to safely navigate their first jobs. We can also engage with hundreds of women through the hugely successful Daughters of the West program, to bridge the gap on gender equality and to stamp out workplace gendered violence.

It's a partnership that helps ensure workers are safe, physically and mentally, regardless of their job, their gender or their background.

We know workplace incidents can happen at any time, to anyone, in any workplace, but they are all preventable.

That's why it's up to all of us to remain alert and to speak up about safety concerns all year long - there is no season on safety.

On behalf of WorkSafe, thank you for your commitment to workplace safety again this year and for being health and safety advocates for workers in the West.

Ash West
Acting CEO
WorkSafe Victoria



A group of people in a meeting, with a man in the foreground smiling and clapping. The image is overlaid with a blue semi-transparent filter. A red L-shaped bracket is positioned around the text.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Work Safe
VICTORIA
MAJOR PARTNER



Sons of the West is a transformative, free 10-week Health and Wellbeing Program that empowers men across Melbourne's West to take charge of their health and wellbeing. Through expert-led education and guided physical activity, men of all ages build lifelong habits in a fun and supportive environment.

More than just a program – Sons helps men stay active, improve mental wellbeing, while forging meaningful connections. By bringing men together and making them feel seen and valued, Sons creates healthier, more resilient, and inclusive communities.

OUR AIMS

- 1 Sustained Participation in Physical Activity.
- 2 Good Mental Wellbeing.
- 3 Connection to Community.
- 4 Sustained Positive Health Behaviours.
- 5 Men Challenging Behaviours that contribute to Gender Inequity.

TOPICS

- ✓ **Let's Talk Food** – Food, Mood, Fuel.
- ✓ **Mental Fitness** – Five Ways of Wellbeing.
- ✓ **Cooking** – Mission Foods.
- ✓ **Gender Equity** – Healthy Masculinities & the Man Box.
- ✓ **Welcome Round** – Social Inclusion.
- ✓ **What's in Your Backyard** – Local Community Services and Activities.
- ✓ **Time to Test** – Prostate Cancer Awareness.
- ✓ **Financial Wellness**
- ✓ **Exercise for Health**

OUR IMPACT

308 participants | 61% first-time participants

98% Would recommend the program to family and friends.

94% Of participants agreed they learned something new in the Gender Equity session, helping to break down gender stereotypes.

93% Found the program provided valuable tools and resources to improve their health and wellbeing.

93% Agreed the program gave clear guidance on how to get involved in local activities such as sports, recreation and volunteering.

70% Reported that their levels of physical activity increased since participating in the program.

“Sons of the West helped me adopt regular exercise and mindful eating habits. It also improved my mental wellbeing through stress management techniques and connecting with a supportive community”

...

“Mental health is a big issue in the community. Hearing other participants' stories helped break down the stigma and highlight the support and resources available.”

...

“This program has brought us closer. We continue to meet, talk, and support each other—some of us even catch up regularly at the Aquatic Centre.”

...

“I've seen notable improvements in my wellbeing. Trusted friends, simple actionable steps, and a supportive, loving family have all played crucial roles.”

DAUGHTERS OF THE WEST

Daughters of the West is a dynamic, free 10-week health promotion program that empowers women of all ages. This program offers expert-led health education, guided physical activity, and a supportive community space where women feel safe to share their experiences, challenges, and hopes.

With a focus on building healthy habits, Daughters encourages regular physical activity, enhances mental wellbeing, and strengthens social connections. It also provides a safe space for women to discuss and challenge traditional gender roles while prioritising their wellbeing.

OUR AIMS

- 1 Sustained Participation in Physical
- 2 Connection to Community
- 3 Good Mental Wellbeing
- 4 Sustained Positive Health Behaviours
- 5 Challenging Behaviours that Contribute to Gender Inequity

TOPICS

- ✓ **Let's Talk Food -**
Food, Mood, Fuel
- ✓ **Mental Fitness -**
Five Ways of Wellbeing
- ✓ **Gender Equity**
- ✓ **Welcome Round -**
Social Inclusion
- ✓ **What's in Your Backyard -**
Local Community Services and Activities
- ✓ **Inspirational Women**
- ✓ **Women's Health -**
Menopause, Ageing and Osteoporosis
- ✓ **Financial Wellness**
- ✓ **Cost of Living**
- ✓ **Sleep Health**

OUR IMPACT

463 participants | 74% first-time participants

93%

Found the program provided valuable tools and resources to enhance their health and wellbeing.

84%

Agreed or strongly agreed the program strengthened their sense of belonging to the West and pride in participating in physical activity in their community.

79%

Agreed or strongly agreed the program helped establish trust and safety among new connections in the local area.

79%

Agreed or strongly agreed the program helped them build meaningful social connections within their community.

71%

Agreed or strongly agreed the program helped break down gender stereotypes.



"I have signed up to Pilates classes 1-2 times per week, I try and add more protein etc into my meals and see what can add to each thing I cook. I practice mindfulness at home more and try and do it with my son too."

...

"Some topics are confronting and thought provoking. Having accessible guidance available made for a comforting experience"



...



"Understanding of women's health, that I am not alone with weight struggles. New friendships, learning new things/topics found interesting and helpful. The interactions with fellow daughters and bonds forged will leave a lasting impact."

...

Learning more about what groups are out there in our local community. Connecting with myself and the people around me in new ways, opening up to new experiences



**DAUGHTERS...
WEST**

Impact story

VIETNAMESE DAUGHTERS OF THE



The Vietnamese Daughters of the West program, now in its fifth year, is an essential initiative within the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation's efforts to empower diverse communities through health education and wellbeing.

Since launching in 2020, the program has grown steadily, with over 200 Vietnamese women graduating—a stark contrast to the two participants who joined the mainstream program in 2019.

Quyen, who facilitated the Vietnamese program this year, emphasized the sense of community that has grown around the sessions.

"Every year, the number of registrations for the program increases, and that is a great encouragement for me personally, and for the program in general," she said.

Beyond the physical and educational benefits, the program has fostered strong friendships, as women lingered after each session to chat and offer support to one another.

Daughters of the West is a 10-week program designed to improve the physical and mental health of women in the community through education

and exercise. Each session covers vital health topics—such as mental fitness, nutrition and health screenings delivered in a way that is accessible and engaging with a focus on culturally safe environments for our culturally and linguistically diverse cohorts.

Participants also engage in fitness activities like Zumba and Tai Chi, fostering a sense of fun and connection.

For Kim Chi Le, a participant in this year's Vietnamese program, the health education sessions were invaluable.

"I feel like I am mentally and physically better. I now know how to pay attention to eating healthier, love myself more, and especially know how to listen when someone needs me to," she said.

Bich Hong, attending her first-ever Western Bulldogs football match as part of the program was an

unforgettable immersion into a key aspect of Australian culture.

"We shouted and applauded with joy... it was so exciting, we had so much fun," she said, illustrating how the program helps bridge cultural experiences in addition to its focus on health and fitness.

The Vietnamese Daughters of the West is helping break down barriers and create lasting change. The program's success not only lies in the health outcomes of its participants but also in the strong sense of community it fosters—proving that with the right support, everyone has the chance to thrive.

As the demand for these culturally tailored programs continues to grow, the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation has run health and wellbeing programs for African diaspora, Iraqi Syriac and Indian cohorts across Melbourne's inner west and beyond.



This groundbreaking sports program creates transformative social participation opportunities for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Melbourne's West.

Through structured sports, employment preparation, and physical wellbeing sessions, participants forge strong social connections, practice English in real-world settings, and develop vital employability skills like teamwork and communication.

By fostering a deep sense of belonging, CALDplay not only promotes healthy living but also empowers individuals to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

OUR IMPACT

Total Participants: 1,993

Participants mostly migrants from: Myanmar | Vietnam | Afghanistan

800

Adults

1193

Juniors

42

Average Age

12

Average Age

18-65

Age Range

8-17

Age Range

OUR AIMS

- ✓ Trust, resilience, and community ties, helping participants navigate their new environments with confidence.
- ✓ Participants not only gain new skills but also develop a strong foundation for social and personal growth.
- ✓ Creating a sense of community and belonging through sport.
- ✓ Improve levels of physical and mental health and wellbeing amongst participants.



Impact story **ABBAS & ALI**

From Barriers to Boundaries: Abbas and Ali's Inspiring Journey.

Abbas and Ali, best friends and participants in the CALDPlay program, are in their third year of studying English at Victoria University. Their journey shows how sport can break down barriers and create new opportunities.

During the CALDPlay Cricket Gala Day at the MCG, they had a once-in-a-lifetime moment meeting Alex Keith, former cricketer and AFL player for the Western Bulldogs. They got exclusive access to the inner sanctum of the MCG, stepping onto the hallowed turf and exploring behind the scenes at Australia's largest sporting ground. Inspired by Australia's rich sporting history, they joined their local cricket club, Sunshine Grand United. Both have found a true passion for the game, as well as a sense of belonging.

For Ali, this journey represents resilience and transformation. Arriving in Australia in 2018 with little English, he faced the challenge of adapting to a new country. In 2022, he picked up a cricket bat for the first time, knowing little about the game. Through CALDPlay and the support of dedicated coaches, Ali's skills flourished. Now an all-rounder, he opens the bowling and bats second or third drop for Sunshine United.

Abbas and Ali's stories embody the spirit of CALDPlay—how sport transcends language, fosters community, and unlocks pathways to settlement, employment, and belonging.



A photograph of three young women standing behind a table outdoors, grilling corn on the cob. The woman on the left is wearing a white t-shirt, the woman in the middle is wearing a black hoodie with 'Community Foundation' and 'WestSal' logos, and the woman on the right is wearing a dark jacket over a plaid shirt. They are all smiling and looking at the camera. On the table, there is a large metal grill with corn on the cob, a bottle of 'Canola Oil', and a bottle of 'Heinz' ketchup. The background shows a parking lot with cars and trees. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter.

YOUTH



YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Youth Leadership Project is more than just skill-building—it's about igniting the potential within young people to become future community leaders. Through activities that foster leadership, teamwork, and resilience, participants gain the confidence to step up and make a real difference.

As they progress through the program, these young leaders are empowered to lead with purpose, create lasting change, and inspire others to follow in their footsteps.

OUR AIMS

- ✓ Empowered and engaged young leaders.
- ✓ Strengthened sense of community ownership.
- ✓ Empowering young people to take part in sports and connect with local clubs.
- ✓ Long-term sustainable impacts on youth leadership development and community resilience.

“Some of the things I've learned, like managing money and the impact of gambling aren't really taught in school. Every topic we covered has taught me something valuable.”

“What I have learned about myself and what my key skills are, this is going to help me so much.”

OUR IMPACT

167 REGISTRATIONS

55% FEMALE, 45% MALE

100%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that after participating, they feel more capable of handling setbacks and challenges.

96%

Of participants reported heightened awareness of local issues and available opportunities for involvement in their local council area.

90%

Of participants agreed that the program strengthened their sense of belonging and community connection.

85%

Of participants indicated improvements in their leadership skills.





YOUTH

Impact story

Noah, a young leader from the Melton region, enrolled in the Youth Leadership Project unsure of his role in the community. Like many, he struggled to see how to use his strengths for meaningful impact. This program became the foundation he needed to grow and connect.

"The program really helped widen my experiences. I felt like I hadn't done as much as I wanted, and this program became a stepping stone for me," he reflected.

One of the most impactful moments was attending camp, where he forged lasting friendships. "It was so much fun, and those connections have stayed with me," he shared. These friendships have evolved into a supportive network of young leaders committed to creating positive change.

The Youth Leadership Project has ignited Noah's ambitions. "I want to take on a leadership role at school and apply for the Youth Advisory Committee with the Melton Council," he said.

A key milestone was public speaking. Noah confidently spoke in front of 70 people at a youth event. "I've learned so much about public speaking, and I even found out I'm pretty funny!" he laughed.

As part of the Youth Leadership Project, Noah worked on a social impact project. His idea transformed from fundraising for a local sports

association into a BBQ fundraiser, where every dollar raised also supported community clean-up efforts.

"This project made a tangible difference, showing that we can contribute positively to our community," he explained. Through the Youth Leadership Project, Noah has also embraced his unique identity.

"I feel more comfortable in myself. I can accept my weirdness; it's okay to be me," he said.



LEADERS OF THE PACK

The Leaders of the Pack program is a transformative journey, offering young people from specific groups the chance to grow, connect, and thrive. This dynamic 10-week youth leadership experience is designed specifically for multicultural young women and gender-diverse individuals aged 13 to 17.

In a supportive and inclusive environment, participants develop essential leadership skills, build self-confidence, and experience profound personal growth. Leaders of the Pack goes beyond skill-building—it creates a powerful sense of belonging, fostering a positive outlook that inspires these young leaders to envision and shape their futures.

OUR AIMS

- ✓ Empowering Young Leaders
- ✓ Developing Leadership Skills
- ✓ Building Self-Confidence
- ✓ Enhancing Social Connections
- ✓ Empower young people to engage in sports and connect with local sporting clubs;



I found this program very helpful and I've never felt this happy to be here.



We learned how to build up our leadership skills and what it takes to become a good leader. This program taught us the importance of setting goals, working hard and leading by example. It was inspiring to see how much we can achieve when we work together and support each other.

OUR IMPACT

100%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they had built connections with other participants.

100%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they feel more confident in identifying their own strengths in leadership and how they can use this to benefit others.

94%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have learnt more about other cultures within the group.

94%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they know more about the health benefits of keeping active.

83%

Come from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.





NALLEI JERRING PROGRAM

The Nallei Jerring Program (meaning Join and Unite) is a beacon of inspiration for the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in Victoria's West.

Open to 13-17 year-olds, this empowering program offers an exciting blend of cultural, leadership, and community-building activities. Participants learn directly from community Elders, take part in enriching cultural workshops, and gain confidence through communication and teamwork. They walk away with a deeper connection to their culture, with essential skills to thrive as future leaders.

OUR AIMS

- ✓ Enhanced Cultural Knowledge
- ✓ Improved Leadership Skills: Development of critical skills such as teamwork, resilience, and effective communication.
- ✓ Increased Confidence: Growth in self-esteem & personal development
- ✓ Stronger Support Networks: Creation of reliable and culturally safe connections with their peers, mentors and community

“These sessions made me feel more confident in sharing my ideas and meeting new people, it was great to meet other young mob.

“As a school with a few severely disengaged students - it was absolutely amazing to see a couple of the students come to school (even for the first time in weeks) to be able to come along to the program. They would tell their parents and peers all about the program.



OUR IMPACT

117 PARTICIPANTS

55% FEMALE, 45% MALE

96%

Identified as Aboriginal, 1.7% identified as Torres Strait Islander, and 2.6% identified as both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

96%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history had improved after the program.

92%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more connected to people in their community since participating in the program.

90%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more connected to their cultural heritage after participating in the program.

90%

Of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident in demonstrating their leadership skills in a group setting.



NALLEI JERRING PROGRAM: CONNECTION, CONFIDENCE & CULTURAL PRIDE

Impact story

Many young people enter the Nallei Jerring program without a strong connection to their heritage. However, the program provides them with a profound opportunity to engage deeply with their culture. Gathered around a campfire, participants shared reflections that revealed the program's significant impact.

One of the young participants said, "I liked getting connected to the culture, especially if you are around people who get it." For others, it was a chance to fill a gap in their personal history. "I didn't grow up in a household with a lot of culture, so doing these activities made me feel at home," shared another.

The program's emphasis on smaller, intimate settings, like campfires and small group activities, made a world of difference. "When the groups are smaller, you can connect better with others and your culture. You feel more comfortable," one participant said. Another added, "I find it challenging to talk with so many people in a big room—it's better when groups are smaller because it allows you to get your voice out there."

Cultural activities like painting and sitting with Elders were highlights for many. "I liked the opportunity to meet with Elders any chance we got—knowing more about the deeper culture," said one participant. These cultural exchanges were especially meaningful for those who didn't grow up with these traditions. "It's great to learn things I can take away and teach others about my culture, especially not growing up in an Aboriginal household," another reflected. These moments created a space for self-discovery and pride, with many participants agreeing, "We've come out of the program feeling prouder to say we are mob."

Beyond cultural connection, the Nallei Jerring Program helped participants develop their leadership skills and gain confidence. "I saw a lot of silent leadership. People didn't break out of their shells until the final few sessions, but once that happened, I saw people become more open and step up as leaders," shared one participant. Many agreed, noting how the program gave them the confidence to engage with others. "It helped me gain so much more confidence in myself," one said.

For those who may have had doubts initially, the program exceeded expectations. "I didn't think it would be anything fun, but if you told me what we actually got to experience, I wouldn't have believed it. It was really fun," one participant admitted. Another added, "I would definitely keep doing the program each year to meet new young Aboriginal people."

Looking to the future, many participants are excited to continue applying what they've learned. "This program has opened up new opportunities for me," said one participant. "I'm ready to take on more challenges." Another echoed, "We learned more about the other people in the group, and I have actually made friends with other mob. I sometimes feel so alone at school. We will stay friends after this."

For the participants of Nallei Jerring, the program wasn't just an educational experience—it empowered them to embrace their culture and learn more about who they are. As one participant summed up, "The way the program was facilitated felt personal—it allowed us to truly connect, grow, and come out proud of who we are."



GOAL MENTORING

The GOAL Mentoring Program empowers young people from African cultural backgrounds (ages 12-17) to build confidence, develop personal goals, and connect with mentors in a culturally safe, empowering environment.

Supported by AFL/AFLW and community mentors, participants enhance their skills, strengthen social connections, and celebrate cultural pride. Each session unites young people to foster personal growth, inspire purpose, and create a ripple effect of positive change in their communities. Through GOAL, participants are not just building their futures—they're shaping a stronger, more connected community.



OUR IMPACT

79 PARTICIPANTS

89% spoke a language in addition to English
14 Community Leaders signed on as mentors in 2024

97% Of participants reported learning new skills or gaining knowledge that will help them in the future.

97% Of participants felt more confident and positive about their identity.

97% Gained a better understanding of the culture and history relevant to their community.

94% Felt more confident about planning their future education or career path.

94% Agreed or strongly agreed that the mentors were approachable and made them feel comfortable discussing challenges or questions.

“ I loved this program. (It) has helped me socialise and make new friends and also, I learned that socialising is not that hard if you just match people's energies.

“ They were the sessions that were most inspiring, educating or fun. The impact was bigger because guest speakers came in. Everything was amazing and I am so grateful.



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL WORKSHOPS

Building on the strong bond between the Western Bulldogs and Victoria University, these workshops are designed to empower students in years 7 to 12.

Focusing on crucial topics like leadership development, mental health, gender equity, and pathways to education and employment the 1-hour workshops help students build confidence, skills and awareness. This program also strengthens ties between local schools and our region's leading university—fostering informed, connected, and empowered future young people.



EVENTS



CULTURAL DIVERSITY WEEK

More than 200 people gathered for our Cultural Diversity Week event, including students, community members, program participants, partners, and schools. This year, for the first time, we introduced a Youth Gala at Errington Reserve, followed by our annual panel discussion at the Bowery Theatre in St Albans.

The Youth Gala was organised in collaboration with our Bark for Youth advisory group, the Hackathon Project, and Youth Junction, with support from the City of Brimbank's Empowering Communities project. The event was a vibrant celebration of our community's diverse cultures, featuring a smoking ceremony, Bollywood dancing, African drumming, and Vietnamese dancing.

MC Maryum Chaudhry from InTouch led the engaging panel discussion on 'Our Shared Stories,' which included inspiring insights from Ameet Bains, Fred Alale AM, Hamed Allahyari, Sama Morad, and Tarni Jarvis.

This event was a beautiful testament to the power of cultural diversity and community spirit, bringing people together to celebrate and learn from each other's unique experience.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY BREAKFAST

Empowering Women: Celebrating Gender Equality and Economic Empowerment

The Footscray Community Arts Centre was filled with inspiration on 4th March 2024 as the Western Bulldogs Community Foundation and Victoria University, in partnership with Maribyrnong City Council, hosted a panel event to celebrate International Women's Day.

The event, themed 'Count Her In: Accelerating gender equality through economic empowerment,' attracted around 120 community members and leaders. Melinda Davis, COO of Empowered Women in Trades, served as the MC, guiding the morning's discussions.

Cr Cuc Lam, Mayor of Maribyrnong City Council, emphasized the role of community and local governance in supporting women's empowerment. Professor Zora Vrcelj of Victoria University highlighted the importance of education and partnerships in advancing gender equality.

The dynamic panel featured WB Community Foundation Board members, Aisha Nicolay, Emma Bamblett, and Julia Truong, who shared their experiences and insights on breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity. They also answered audience questions, offering advice on building resilience and finding mentors.

A highlight of the event was the unveiling of the inaugural WB Community Foundation Women of the West Awards, recognizing individuals and organizations making significant contributions to women's empowerment.



CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SONS OF THE WEST

The defining moment of 2024 was the 10th anniversary of our flagship program, Sons of the West. For a decade, Sons has been changing lives and forging lasting connections. From promoting healthy habits to encouraging men to exercise, Sons has created bonds of mateship across Melbourne's west and beyond, becoming a powerful force for good.

One proud participant shared, "I've opened up more with male friends and shown that being open isn't weakness." Another added, "I've learned to reach out for support, and I'm now there for my mates when they need it."

The year long celebration of this milestone for the WB Community Foundation kicked off in March with a media launch that garnered more than 29,000 online views and extensive TV coverage. It culminated in a grand gala at Mission Whitten Oval in November, attended by 250 Sons participants, their families, and friends of the Foundation.

We could not have been prouder to celebrate a decade of supporting improvements in health and wellbeing. Sons of the West has not only transformed individual lives but also strengthened our community, proving that together, we can achieve incredible things. Here's to many more years of positive impact and empowerment!

YOUTH FEST IN THE WEST

Inspiring Futures: Pathways to Work Expo Empowers Youth

The Pathways to Work Expo, held at Grazeland in Spotswood, was an important opportunity for young people and our local community. This vibrant event aimed to increase awareness around employment and education opportunities across a range of industries in Melbourne's West.

A highlight of the expo was the panel of industry experts who shared invaluable insights, providing young attendees with a deeper understanding of various career paths. The event was a resounding success, drawing 866 attendees, including students from 10 schools and community members.

Organised in partnership with Hobsons Bay and supported by Greater Western Water and Melbourne Water, the expo showcased the power of collaboration in creating brighter futures. By connecting youth with industry leaders, the Pathways to Work Expo inspired and empowered the next generation to explore and pursue their dreams.



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