

# **HOMEWORK CLUB PARTNERSHIP FUND**

## **FIVE YEARS ON: A SUMMARY AND CASE FOR SUPPORT**

### **1. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT**

#### **WHAT ARE HOMEWORK CLUBS AND WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?**

Homework clubs fill a crucial gap for many students who are unable to access learning support from parents or carers, or through other extra-curricular options such as private tutoring. Homework clubs, or Out-of-School-Hours Learning Support Programs (OHLSPs), often become important spaces in local communities, offering a sense of belonging, support and connection to young people, their families, and volunteers. This has been particularly evident in 2020, as many programs have adapted to provide a wide range of support during COVID-19.

A key and consistent challenge in the OSHLSP sector is the limited access to targeted funding opportunities. Despite strong evidence of their positive impact, OSHLSPs often struggle to secure the resources needed to run at their fullest capacity, or run at all. The stress and time-consuming nature of frequently sourcing funding causes disruption and prevents long-term planning, program development and innovation.

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*“Homework clubs are vital to low socio-economic communities... To provide homework tutoring on an almost 1 to 1 basis with dedicated volunteers provides the support that our families would otherwise have to forgo.” -  
Coordinator*

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#### **CMY & LEARNING BEYOND THE BELL**

The Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY) has been delivering the Learning Beyond the Bell (LBB) program for over 10 years. This program recognises the critical role of OSHLSPs in the education journeys of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds including refugees and people seeking asylum, First Nations students, and children from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The LBB program aims to build capacity and sustainability in the sector, one that is largely staffed by volunteers. In 2020, LBB is supporting more than 350 programs across Victoria with tailored advice, training, resources, and networking opportunities.

## 2. THE HOMEWORK CLUB PARTNERSHIP FUND

In response to the challenge of insecure funding, CMY and the Australian Communities Foundation (ACF) forged a partnership to create the **Homework Club Partnership Fund**. Through this fund, targeted grants have been offered to new and existing homework clubs, intentionally focussing on growth corridors and regional areas of Victoria. In total, since 2016, the fund has provided grants to 58 learning support programs.

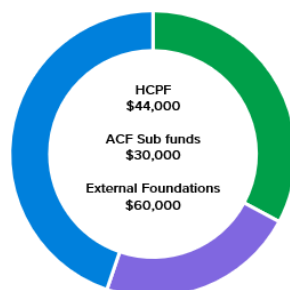
Annual grant rounds are run by ACF in conjunction with CMY to ensure that quality standards are met. Together CMY and ACF prioritise the applications based on need in the community in which the clubs are based and quality of the programs being provided.

### LEVERAGED CO-FUNDING MODEL

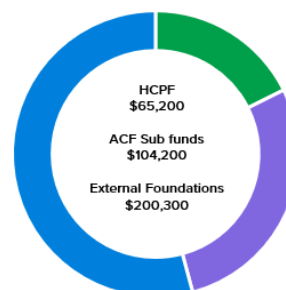
Created to facilitate a more co-ordinated funding approach for homework clubs the Homework Club Partnership Fund, a sub fund of ACF, was initially established with a \$100,000 donation from CMY. A further donation brought CMY's total contribution to \$148,000. The fund is used to match and leverage funding from ACF sub funds and other trusts and foundations.

**Since its establishment in 2016, a total of \$1,113,765 has been distributed to Homework Clubs across Victoria.** Along with 11 ACF sub funds, funders have included Myer Foundation, Ross Trust, Stan Willis Trust, Reid Malley Foundation and Collier Charitable Fund.

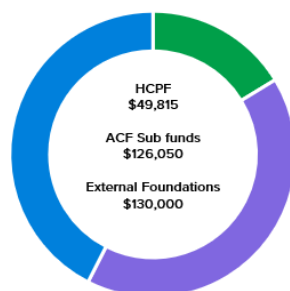
**2016/2017**  
**\$134,000 - 8 clubs**



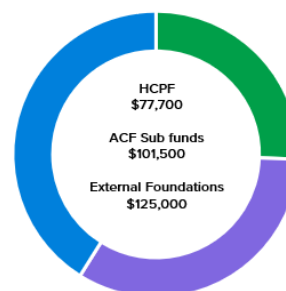
**2018**  
**\$369,700 - 28 clubs**



**2019**  
**\$305,865 - 21 clubs**



**2020**  
**\$304,200 - 23 clubs**



## IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

The benefits to organisations and groups as a result of receiving a HCPF grant have been numerous, including:

- Supporting employment of dedicated coordinators and project officers
- Enabling projects in areas of high need to commence
- Enabling organisations to branch out and pilot new and innovative projects, or grow and develop existing ones
- Providing coordinators with structured support, training and guidance from LBB Project Officers. This includes monitoring and evaluation reporting frameworks to encourage continuous improvement.

Importantly, there have been many positive outcomes for students (and families) participating in HCPF projects since 2016. An analysis of reporting from 2018 and 2019 indicates the following outcomes have been observed in almost all programs:

- Increased participation and engagement in learning
- Increased social skills, confidence and communication skills
- Increased concentration and homework completion, and to a higher standard
- Improved English language skills
- Improved student behaviour and self-regulation
- Greater willingness to attempt new or challenging tasks
- Development of positive role model relationships with tutors/mentors

Many coordinators also report on group rapport and a sense of community and belonging growing over time. They note that providing a consistent, safe and comfortable space is critical to gaining trust from young people, and in turn, their engagement in learning activities.

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*"[The HCPF] has allowed us to provide a specific support that is so crucially needed. It is a unique funding opportunity that provides a bridge between our community and the school system and enables the students to be supported in the ways they need to be supported." – Coordinator*

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## 3. CASE STUDIES

### (OSHS LPS FUNDED FOR 2+ YEARS THROUGH HCPF)

#### **Meadow Heights Learning Shop**

In response to a large funding cut to their existing homework club in 2016, Meadow Heights Learning Shop (MHLS) first applied for a HCPF grant in 2017 and was awarded funding for the following year. Working in an area of high socio-economic disadvantage and humanitarian settlement, MHLS identified that the need for learning support programs was actually increasing. The program coordinators were keen to develop long term plans around financial sustainability, and further enhance collaboration with local schools.

Since that first round in 2018, Meadow Heights Learning Shop has been refunded under the HCPF twice more in 2019 and 2020. Not only has this enabled the program to continue to meet the needs of vulnerable young people at risk of disengaging from school, it has allowed

the program to expand and offer support to more students, including senior and post-secondary students, as well as deliver a range of family engagement sessions.

### **Whittlesea Community Connections**

In 2017, Whittlesea Community Connections applied for funding to establish a new homework club for primary school children, in partnership with local schools in Thomastown; one of the most culturally diverse areas in Victoria. After a successful first year, HCPF grants in the following two years have allowed the program to improve and develop in many ways. Having time to invest in volunteer support, training and development, has resulted in the homework club now having a number of long-standing volunteers. This consistency and relationship building with young people has had a clear impact on engagement and learning outcomes. The ability to pay a facilitator over a number of years has also greatly assisted with sustainability.

### **Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services**

Tarneit is a suburb in one of Melbourne's fastest growing municipalities, with more than 40% of residents born overseas. Edmund Rice Community and Refugee Services (ERCRC) identified a lack of learning support options in this location and developed a proposal to start a homework club in at the local community centre. However, until their first grant through HCPF in 2018, ERCRC were unable to access funding to commence the program.

Within a few weeks of opening, the Tarneit Homework Club was completely full and long waiting lists started to form. Due to the success of the club and the high demand, ERCRC was able to secure a second year of funding in 2019 and expand the program from two nights a week to three. It also meant extra elements could be explored, including partnerships with Melbourne Victory and the Australian Ballet to deliver workshops at the homework club sessions. The program is now in its third year of funding and continues to thrive (currently operating online).

## **4. LOOKING AHEAD: A CASE FOR SUPPORT**

Homework club coordinators say that ongoing, secure funding is crucial. For programs that have secured HCPF grants across multiple years, many have been able to move beyond the 'pilot' phase of a project and expand the number of sessions they can offer, the number of enrolments, or the range of age groups that can be included. It also means that meaningful partnerships can be fostered and developed, which further supports program sustainability.

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*"Many grants only offer once off opportunities for support, but the real work and the potential for deeper sustainable change can only happen with long-term continuity that allow time to build relationships with our young people." - Coordinator*

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Similarly, coordinators report that secure funding correlates with volunteer longevity, as homework clubs can invest in training volunteers and providing quality support and acknowledgment. This not only encourages best practice and high-quality tutoring but has resulted in volunteers stepping up into leadership or coordination roles within the program.

The value of long-standing volunteers and the consistency this provides to young people cannot be understated and contributes strongly to the creation of a safe and supportive environment.

## ISSUES

The success of the program has been largely due to the ability to attract funders through the matched funding component. Funders know that their smaller contribution is part of a larger grant that can make a real difference to the club.

The HCPF was initially established to be spent down over a three-year period which has been successfully stretched over an additional year. However, there is now very little left in the overall pool. **CMY have confirmed a further \$80,000 donation into the fund as an incentive to other funders for the upcoming school year.**

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Based on the past 4 years' experience, the partnership fund has demonstrated a commitment to supporting a network of homework clubs in high needs areas that can improve the educational outcomes of the most disadvantaged students.

In addition to running the grants round each year which is undertaken collaboratively by CMY and ACF staff, considerable time is needed to promote the program to other donors and foundations and to achieve the level of additional funding that has been possible to date. In the past, despite gathering verbal commitments of support throughout the year, ACF has needed to wait to receive funding applications each grant round before coordinating matched funding opportunities and fundraising for specific clubs. Whilst this has been successful to date, it has put considerable strain on the organisation and has not provided the security needed to ensure sustainability of the program.

In order to secure sustainability, ACF and CMY are seeking multi-year untied funding into the Homework Club Partnership Fund. These funds will be allocated as part of the now well-established ACF/CMY annual grants process ensuring that the most successful Homework Clubs using best practice principles can succeed. **Based on previous years, the fund is aiming to raise at least \$300,000/year for the next three years (2021-2023).** On average, this would fund 20-25 clubs a year.

**\$100,000 has already been secured (incl. \$80,000 from CMY), therefore the fund is seeking the gap of \$200,000 for 2021.**

## TIMELINE

Grant round opens – 5 October 2020

**Funding commitments finalised – 28 October 2020**

Grant round closes – 2 November 2020

Grant assessment – mid November 2020

Clubs contacted – December 2020

Payments from HCPF – Jan/Feb 2021

Clubs commence – Term 1, 2021

## CONTACT

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