

Lachlan, Dubbo, Bourke and TACSI – investing in regional innovation



VFFF works closely with communities in Lachlan Shire, Dubbo and Bourke – who are combatting complex issues in their communities with new approaches.

Each with unique circumstances, their work shares many common threads – it is driven by locals, it listens and responds to the community, it acknowledges the multiple and intersecting causes of social issues and cuts through the silos by being cross sector and valuing coordination. All three sites are at a similar junction. Research has been done, community priorities are clear, desired outcomes are shared. It is now time for ‘doing it differently.’

But why do it differently?

Simply put, if we continue to do more of the same we will produce more of the same.

The social services system is not shifting the dial in places where disadvantage has persisted for decades.

Despite the best efforts of dedicated people, progress is hampered by ‘the system’ that consists of short term programs often conceived by people who have never been to that place or met the people who will deliver or use the service. With little flexibility or responsiveness to local context, people’s needs are rarely met, they are often let down and end up staying away from services.

Especially detrimental is competitive contracting to deliver programs - this discourages collaboration and the coordinated responses required to combat complicated social issues.

In Lachlan, Dubbo and Bourke, locals have decided that’s not good enough and are bringing people together in their communities to try new ways of doing business.

Why an investment in capacity building?

Their work is new and challenging and there is no roadmap. There is growing evidence that a critical piece to achieving outcomes in our vexing social issues is ensuring the people and organisations tasked with it are well equipped.

New techniques and skills are required to envisage and implement new approaches – not to mention courage to try something different.

VFFF saw an opportunity to support Lachlan, Dubbo and Bourke build these new skills locally and approached The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) about how to provide ‘sticky’ professional development that would build capacity for innovation while advancing the work underway in the regions.

TACSI believes the best innovations come from working alongside people facing the challenges they’re trying to solve and proposed an ambitious program. TACSI, with expertise in innovation and co-design, together with those in Lachlan, Dubbo and Bourke with their local know-how and contextual expertise, will pioneer an approach to regional capability building that can be adapted and applied in other areas.

The ultimate aim is to sustain the efforts of these and other regional innovators to advance their work in addressing the complex social issues affecting their communities.

We hope that ‘knitting’ together these initiatives will benefit those working on the ground through mutual support, and bring weight to VFFF’s efforts to support communities create the futures they envisage.

tacsi
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