

# CONNECTION

Unlocking community potential





# UNLOCKING COMMUNITY POTENTIAL



As the newly appointed Chairperson for the Grant Thornton Foundation, I am delighted to share this year's report and celebrate our firm's community support and charitable initiatives.

The Grant Thornton Foundation's vision is to deliver tangible benefit to our community partners and unlock the potential for growth in our community.

#### Acknowledging our contribution

In the past 12 months, Grant Thornton has proudly supported a number of charities – both big and small.

Our national partnerships with Wan SmolBag, Big Brothers Big Sisters and The Streets Movement resonate with our focus, as these organisations support young people experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation for a range of social, political and economic reasons.

Our people have contributed to these organisations in a number of ways – including through donations, organised fundraising days and events.

While we can never guarantee attributing our financial support to the entire improved outcomes and choices for these young people, we can be certain that without our involvement, these people would feel less acknowledged, and more marginalised within their respective communities.

#### Looking at the year ahead

In the words of Hugh Mackay, Australia's foremost social researcher:

'Australia's unprecedented run of economic growth has failed to deliver a more stable and harmonious society. Individualism is rampant. Income inequality is growing. Public education is under-resourced. The gender revolution is stalling. We no longer trust our major institutions or our political leaders...

When it comes to our future, misplaced optimism is as dangerous as blind faith. What is needed is the courage to face the way things are, and the wisdom and imagination to work out how to make things better.'

Looking ahead, I hope Grant Thornton and the Foundation continue to have the "wisdom and imagination to work out how to make things better". This means working together, sharing ideas and continually exploring ways in which we can support our community.

#### Thank you

Finally I would like to acknowledge the retiring founding Directors, Gail Curtis, Eric Passaris, and founding Chairperson, Paul Billingham, and thank them for their efforts to ensure the Foundation's impact and success.

Paul's contribution as founding Chair leading the Grant Thornton Foundation has been critical to its growth and momentum. Additionally, thank you to Maria Vu, Samantha Francis and Rachel Hughes for their efforts and support in the establishment of the Foundation. A sincere thank you to each of you, to our retiring Directors, and to our committed supporters.

**John Picot**  
Chairperson – Grant Thornton Foundation



## SPOTLIGHT ON OUR KEY COMMUNITY PARTNERS





# THE STREETS MOVEMENT

The Streets Movement is a community development organisation that provides programs, pathways and opportunities for the disconnected, forgotten and wayward, helping them re-engage with family, education and community.

In 2014, the Grant Thornton Foundation joined forces with The Streets Movement and, last year, commenced its support to their Mulumulung International Scholarship Initiative, which allows academically gifted indigenous students from Cairns to undertake an exchange to Oxford and Cambridge University, along with other opportunities.

The initial trip to the UK proved to be a wonderful success with all five students doing well in year 12 and becoming ambassadors amongst their peers.

Applications are presently being assessed from students in Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland to send the next round of students to universities in the UK and China.

In the last 12 months, The Streets Movement has opened a new purpose-built community centre in the heart of the city which houses a boxing ring, a gym with state of the art equipment and fitness classes, boxing training and tournaments, dance classes. It will soon incorporate a computer room with computers donated by Grant Thornton to teach computer skills. The centre is largely funded by Education Queensland and local charity partner contributions. The centre has proven to be a resounding success in terms of community development and engagement with over 10,000 individuals utilising the centre.



For more information on The Streets Movement, visit their website: [thestreetsmovement.org](http://thestreetsmovement.org)



Growing together in the community video: [youtu.be/rBr5K6kPcpM](https://youtu.be/rBr5K6kPcpM)



“The support from Grant Thornton has been absolutely monumental for The Streets Movement organisation. It’s not only allowed us to financially grow and prosper, it’s provided a network – both internationally and locally – which allowed our local base to expand significantly.”

Jesse Martin, CEO for The Streets Movement





# WHITELION

Whitelion is a not-for-profit organisation that supports at-risk youth by delivering prevention programs, mentoring troubled individuals, and providing housing, education and employment opportunities to help young adults integrate back into society. Whitelion also provides mobile outreach services through Chatterbox, an after-hours program providing intervention services as well as food, clothing and health supplies to homeless and disengaged individuals across Melbourne.

Every year Whitelion hosts an annual Whitelion Bailout to give everyday people, who don't spend much time considering the lives of Australia's most disadvantaged members of society, the chance to step into their shoes – or lack thereof – for just a few hours.

Grant Thornton Foundation has supported the Bailout for three years and contributes to their wider community projects such as the Wheelly Good Coffee and If It Wasn't For This Coffee – which have created opportunities for young people who deserve a second chance in the community.



To learn more about the Whitelion Bailout, visit their website: [bailout.org.au](http://bailout.org.au)

To learn more about Wheelly Good Coffee initiative, visit their website: [wheellygoodcoffee.com.au](http://wheellygoodcoffee.com.au)

To learn more about If It Wasn't For This Coffee, visit their website: [ifitwasntforthiscoffee.com.au](http://ifitwasntforthiscoffee.com.au)

Most of us have not had much exposure to the inside of a prison, if any at all. Perhaps our minds drift to snippets from *Orange is the New Black* or *The Shawshank Redemption*, scenes of orange jumpsuits and grey food. But how much do we know about what it feels like to live and breathe those prison walls 24 hours a day? The answer, unsurprisingly, is not much.

The bailout began as we were stripped of our belongings and dressed in jumpsuits. We copped insulting comments from prison guards, had mugshots taken and felt our noses press up against cold brick walls. Gruel was slopped onto plastic plates and cell doors slammed behind us as we were locked up. It was a prison experience in every sense of the word and certainly exceeded expectations. My everyday dramas with slow walkers and a lack of Netflix options suddenly seemed incredibly trivial.

However the most sobering moments occurred in between all of the prison mayhem. We listened to true stories from ex-prisoners who had been shunned from society, estranged from their friends and family members and consistently refused employment upon release. People who had made one or two mistakes as vulnerable and disadvantaged children and continued to pay the consequences throughout adulthood. One man, who was repeatedly assaulted and humiliated by prison guards and had spent endless nights in a cold, dark cell with nothing but the concrete floor beneath him. Another who shivered and starved on the streets for years after his release because of the lack of opportunities available to him. A family lawyer who had seen so many children fail to escape the vicious cycle of crime that she had lost count.

The fact is that our prison experience was enjoyable. Unlike many prisoners across Australia, we retained our basic human rights. At the end of the experience, we received food and drinks and the luxury of becoming respected members of society again. It is impossible for most of us to comprehend what young prisoners endure on a day-to-day basis, and how these experiences shape the rest of their lives.

Events such as the bailout help to bring awareness and raise funds for Whitelion to continue to engage and support vulnerable youth.

Sophie Wallis, personal account of Whitelion Bailout





# WAN SMOLBAG THEATRE

When we think of Vanuatu, we typically see only a tropical paradise, but many of the Islanders face many social issues including unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse and domestic violence. For many families, education is a luxury they cannot afford. The literacy rate of the entire population is low, at 64%. Due to low minimum wages and schools not being free, most Ni Vanuatu children do not continue their education beyond primary school and many local children do not attend school at all. The cost of school uniforms, text books, travel, lunches and other costs are all obstacles.

Wan SmolBag is primarily a development theatre company which was founded almost 30 years ago with the aim of creating awareness and engagement with issues surrounding education, health, governance, the environment, youth and gender. Today it continues doing valuable work with youth and the broader community at the grass-roots level in Vanuatu.

The Grant Thornton Foundation has been able to provide in-kind support to Wan SmolBag with laptops and books to enhance the organisation's internal capacity and resources.

Seven of our people visited Vanuatu and met the team at Wan SmolBag. Each member conducted their own fundraising, with the funds raised covering their costs and the rest going to the charity. Today, Wan SmolBag is much bigger than a theatre company. It now incorporates a nutrition centre, literacy program, environmental sustainability program, health clinic, youth centre and sports centre.

Matt Traynor from our IT team and Bhavesh Narsey have since re-visited the charity to see how we can move forward with our support. They reported back with a very positive outlook. All of the laptops we had previously sent out to the charity were in use and there was a thirst for more. Having these resources means they are able to run IT education classes at the centre, with one laptop between two students, rather than one between 12.

WAN SMOLBAG THEATRE



To learn more about Wan SmolBag,  
visit their website:  
[wansmolbag.org](http://wansmolbag.org)



"When the team from Grant Thornton first visited WSB, they worked with a group of young individuals in the kitchen of the WSB nutrition centre. It transpired that these individuals were also the key performers of a fire dancing show held in the evenings, a couple of nights a week at a local hotel. When Bhavesh and Matt returned they attended one of the fire dancing shows. At the end of the show the performers told the audience about their story and background and thanked WSB for the support it had given them. These young individuals no longer work in the WSB nutrition centre or need help from the charity – they run their own company and perform these shows almost every night at a number of hotels and are now self-sustaining individuals. This just shows how a little support can go a long way. If you happen to go to Vanuatu on holiday, help support the local businesses and keep an eye out for these talented kids!"

Bhavesh Narsey and Matt Traynor







# HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity Australia is a world leading not-for-profit organisation, working to provide safe housing for people around the world.

This year 150 Grant Thornton Partners worked with Habitat for Humanity to build 13 disaster resilient homes in Duy Xuyên, a district of Quang Nam Province in the South Central Coast region of Vietnam.

This cause directly aligns with our values and signature behaviours, and gave our leaders the opportunity to come together and build 13 new disaster-resistant homes. We are proud of this investment and the role of our leaders in helping break the cycle of poverty for young families and their communities.

"Tam lives in the home here, with her son, her daughter-in-law and their new baby. Their house has been knocked down and we're now building a brand new one. Tam suffers from arthritis so the only person earning an income in her house is her son. He travels about 35 minutes into Da Nang to work.

As I look out onto the horizon across the lush green rice fields, I hope that this house brings them a solid foundation to build the rest of their lives. I hope that our efforts will break their poverty cycle, and that their children will simply have a good long life."

Alex Gelman, Partner - Grant Thornton



For more information on Habitat for Humanity, please visit their website: [habitat.org.au](https://www.habitat.org.au)



Unite to Build: Grant Thornton Australia in Vietnam 2018 video: [youtu.be/nmND4Jt91FA](https://youtu.be/nmND4Jt91FA)





# BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF AUSTRALIA

The Grant Thornton Foundation's support in 2016 and 2017 was instrumental in sustaining the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Queensland program. As a direct result of Grant Thornton's partnership in keeping Queensland going in 2017, BBBS has now been able to secure new longer term funding support for the Queensland program.

With the Queensland program now secure, the final contribution of the three-year partnership with Grant Thornton was utilised to support two Schools in our Big Brothers Big Sisters – Big Futures Program. The \$20,000 donation made in 2018 has supported two schools in Victoria that were at risk of having to close their BBBS programs. The impact is significant: not only do the schools see transformational change in their students, but they experience less disruption in class, allowing teachers to balance their time, knowing vulnerable students are supported.

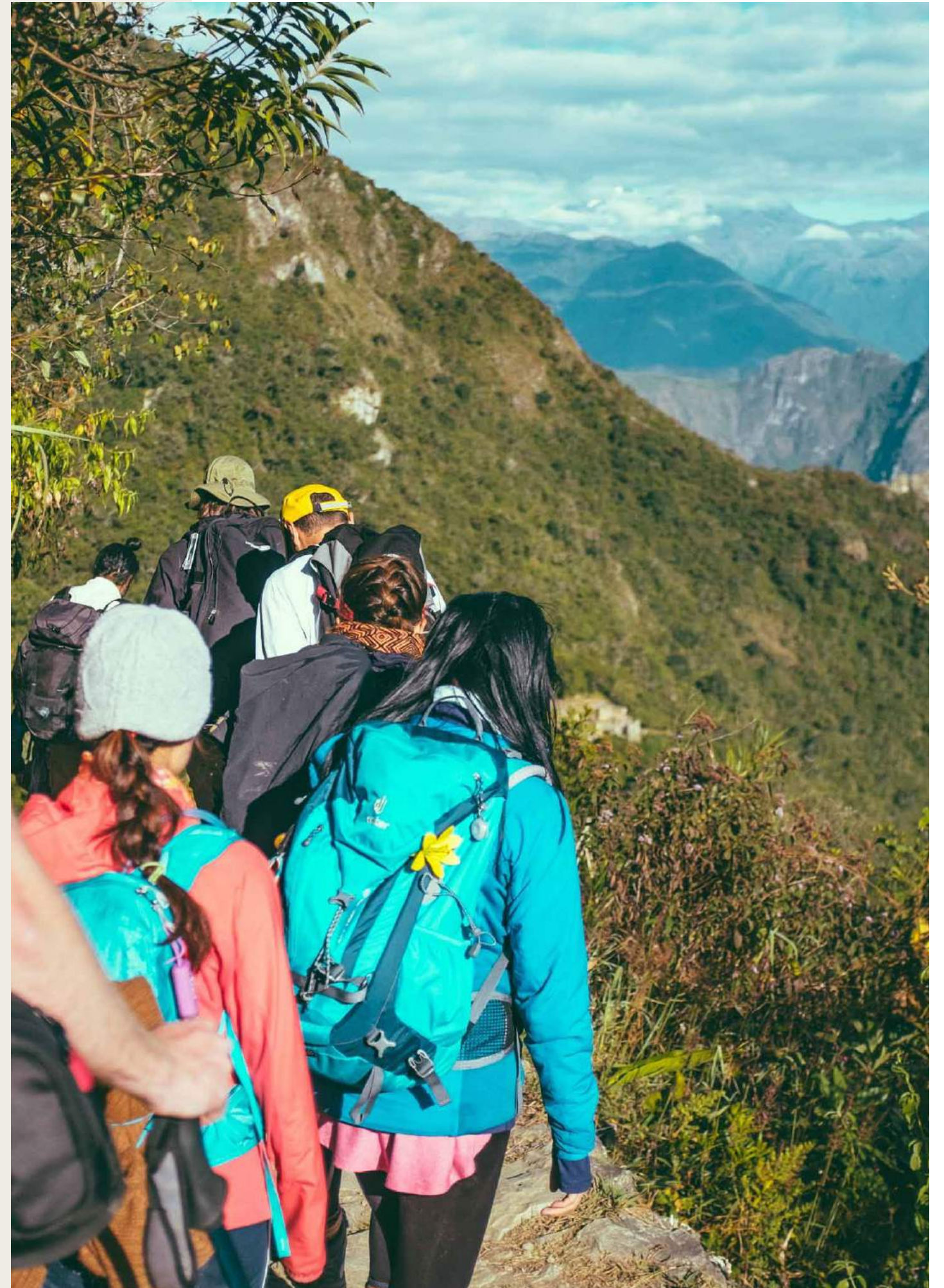
BBBS have presence in cities where four of our offices are based and these offices have been getting involved with many different activities; attending activity events with kids who are currently waiting to be matched with mentors, assisting with games during the matching process, helping to lead workshops assisting the transition from school life to life after school, with more activities in the pipeline.

“It's fair to say without this funding Queensland's program may have needed to close, leaving young people without critical support.”

Sarah Downie, CEO BBBS



For more information on Big Brothers Big Sisters of Australia, visit their website:  
[www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org.au](http://www.bigbrothersbigsisters.org.au)







**Grant Thornton Foundation and staff members proudly support:**

Big Brothers, Big Sisters Australia

Birthing Kit Foundation

Brisbane Youth Service

Cairn's Chinese Associations

Childhood Cancer

Fiver for a Farmer

Foodbank

Governors Aboriginal Employment  
Industry Clusters Student STEAM  
Camp

Habitat for Humanity

HeartKids Australia

Junction Australia

Kids Are Kids!

Make a Difference Charity

Mater Foundation Chicks in Pink  
walk

Movember

OzHarvest

Red Cross

Relay for Life

Send Hope Not Flowers

Wan Smolbag Theatre

Whitelion

Youth Housing Project

YouthCARE Australia



Supporting Guide Dogs Australia - Perth



Reconciliation week celebrations - Perth



Jackson Denereaz donating blood - Melbourne



Jack Praetz donating blood - Melbourne



"Chicks in pink walk" supporting women with breast cancer - Brisbane



Bunnings BBQ at Relay 4 Life - Cairns



Supporting the Governors Aboriginal Employment Industry Clusters Student STEAM Camp 2018 as an industry mentor - Adelaide



Chinese New Year celebrations - Cairns



100k ride to raise funds for MS - Brisbane



On the track at Relay 4 Life - Cairns



Partner, Gail Curtis at Make a Difference High Tea - Perth



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These firms help dynamic organisations unlock their potential for growth by providing meaningful, forward looking advice. Proactive teams, led by approachable partners in these firms, use insights, experience and instinct to understand complex issues for privately owned, publicly listed and public sector clients and help them to find solutions.

Grant Thornton Australia has more than 1,160 people working in offices in Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. We combine service breadth, depth of expertise and industry insight with an approachable "client first" mindset and a broad commercial perspective.

More than 50,000 Grant Thornton people, across over 135 countries, are focused on making a difference to clients, colleagues and the communities in which we live and work. Through this membership, we access global resources and methodologies that enable us to deliver consistently high quality outcomes for our clients.

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