



# GIVING TOGETHER OUR WAY

## MICRO-GRANTS REPORT



PREPARED BY

Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong  
& Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership  
March 2024

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

## OF COUNTRY & FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES

The Boards of Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong and the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership acknowledges the Wurundjeri Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we do our work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge their continued connection to land and water, and for sharing their country with us.

We also acknowledge Traditional Custodians of other Kulin Nations, we pay respects to their Elders past and present, and acknowledge their continued connection to land and water. We acknowledge also the wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Victoria, we pay our respects to their Elders and ancestors.

## PARTNERSHIP ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong acknowledges the ongoing partnerships and support of the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership, and the Paul Ramsay Foundation. This project was made possible with the support and allyship from these organisations.

## ABOUT KOONDEE WOONGA-GAT TOOR-RONG (KWT)

Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong (KWT) is a First Nations led philanthropic community fund based in Narm (Melbourne), Victoria.

KWT is committed to delivering philanthropy services that align to and progress the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members residing in Victoria.

We walk in this world by providing our allies in the philanthropy community with an opportunity to work with us in deconstructing grantmaking processes and support a more grassroots grants process that is accessible to First Nations communities in Victoria.

## OUR VISION

Empowering Victorian First Nations' Communities Together through philanthropy.



## KWT PURPOSE

- Engage communities and philanthropic organisations through empowerment.
- Diversify the funding resources available to communities.
- Extend the impact of philanthropic organisations in Australia.
- Celebrate being a precedent-setting First Nations grantmaking organisation.
- Facilitate self-determination through philanthropy, gifting, learning and reciprocity.
- Communicate our successes and lessons learnt through First Nations led philanthropic giving.





# PROJECT

## FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITY WELLNESS MICRO-GRANTS

Grant provided by	The Paul Ramsay Foundation.
Grant Amount	\$50,000 for Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong Distribution, \$5,000 for Management and Administration by the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership.
Project Title	Wellness Micro-Grants Supporting First Nations Families in Victoria.
Funds Received	The Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership received the funds from the Australian Communities Foundation on behalf of Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong on 31 May 2023.

## OVERVIEW

Following on from the successful partnership in the distribution of funds for COVID Relief during 2022, the Wellness Grants for the Victorian First Nations Communities was a partnership between Koondée Woonga-gat Toor-rong (KWT), the Fellowship for Indigenous Leadership (FIL), and supported by the Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF).

PRF in March 2023 confirmed that KWT could allocate \$50,000 from their current PRF Funds to provide wellness support in response to community challenges by providing micro-grants to First Nations communities across Victoria. These communities were identified and funds distributed by KWT with administration support provided by FIL.

It was also agreed that this project would be reassessed by PRF after the progress report.

Setting a standard that is culturally embedded in everything KWT do is a priority therefore KWT looked at the grant process not only with cultural due diligence but also with a western way of working framework.



The PRF funding was instrumental in supporting KWT to reach families and individuals in First Nations communities across Victoria who were in crisis or impacted by the recent floods.

- Micro-grants: 92 Micro-grants were provided.
- Gender: 63 Micro-grants were provided to females and 29 males.
- Flood Affected Areas: 45 Families residing in flood affected areas were provided with support.
- Employment: 15.67% of the total household members were employed.
- Rent or Mortgage: 93.48% of households resided in rental properties.
- Household Members: 300 household members were provided with essential support. Households consisted of 1-8 family members.

The Wellness micro-grants were provided to assist individuals with disabilities/ medical conditions or caring for family members include:

- 🌀 Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) including:  
Physical Disabilities, Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Issues & Trauma  
Ankylosing Spondylitis Atrial Septal Defect – Cardiac (ASD) Attention  
Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- 🌀 Bipolar, Blood Pressure, Carer for Elderly Parent and/or Relative,  
Children with High Needs (eg Attending Special Development Schools).
- 🌀 Depression, Diabetes, Dialysis, Discopathy (Degenerative Disc Disease)  
Epilepsy, Fibromyalgia, Frozen Shoulder.
- 🌀 Hearing Impaired, Hemoglobin D Disease, Incontinence, Intellectual  
Disability, Kidney Atrophy, Mental Health (Anxiety, Depression etc),  
Morbid Obesity, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Myotubular Myopathy.
- 🌀 Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Osteoarthritis, Polycystic Ovary  
Syndrome (PCOS), Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- 🌀 Rhabdomyosarcoma, Schizophrenia, Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD)  
Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB), Thyroid.

The following should be noted:

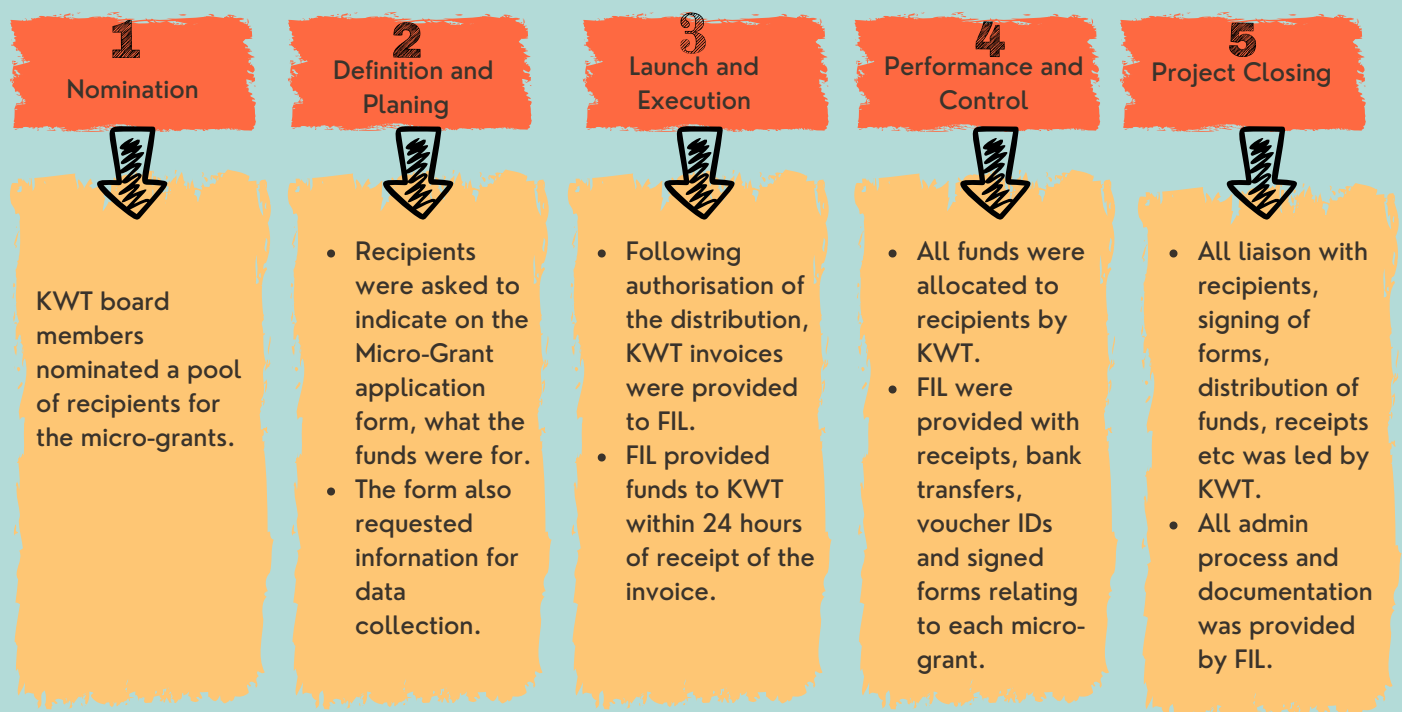
- disabilities/ medical conditions identified and reported in September 2022 were 11 as opposed to 35 for the Wellness Grants; and
- 4 of the parents with children with disabilities / medical conditions were referred to KWT for a Wellness Grant by the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH).

- 🌀 Due to the recipient's ABI he struggles to remember to pay bills. This has caused many financial problems particularly with his rental payments. He owes over \$3,000 in rent arrears to Aboriginal Housing. A payment of \$500 was made by KWT to Aboriginal Housing on behalf of the recipient.
- 🌀 Recipient has a 17 year old daughter who was recently diagnosed with Rhabdomyosarcoma and a current inpatient of RCH, expected long admission for treatment. She has casual employment but unable to work due to caring for her daughter.
- 🌀 5 year old child diagnosed with Myotubular Myopathy and ASD (cardiac condition) requires regular followup with RCH.

- grant recipients ages ranged from teens to mid 70's with the highest category being 20 – 30 years old followed by 31 – 40 and then evenly distributed from 41 - 70;
- targeting the more disadvantaged households in communities across 24 Victorian Local Government Areas - Refer to page 13; and
- enabling an Aboriginal organisation (KWT) to design and deliver support in a culturally appropriate way – taking a self-determination approach.

## PROCESS

KWT and FIL adhered to the following process for the distribution of the funding:



## GRANT DOCUMENTATION

All documentation was treated with strict confidence and was guided by FIL's Privacy Policy which was adopted via the Australian Privacy Principles (APPs) contained in the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) (the Privacy Act). The National Privacy Principles (NPP) govern the way in which we collect, use, disclose, store, secure and dispose of Personal Information.

FIL documented all information for the distribution of the funding along with receipts, signed application forms, any relevant documents, and can only be accessed through FIL's Executive Officer. This information includes names, addresses, contact numbers, bank accounts and history will not be disclosed outside of FIL.



It should be noted that in some instances due to family violence, residing in a safe house/refuge or transitioning into accommodation that the contact was through a Counsellor, Aboriginal Outreach Worker, Family Services Worker, Eastern Health Hospital, and the Royal Children's Hospital to ensure the recipient's privacy was protected.

The recipient had to flee her home due to family violence. She is unable to return to collect clothing or personal items due to the risk of the partner assaulting her again. She requires funding to replace clothing, shoes etc and is currently couch surfing at a friend's home.

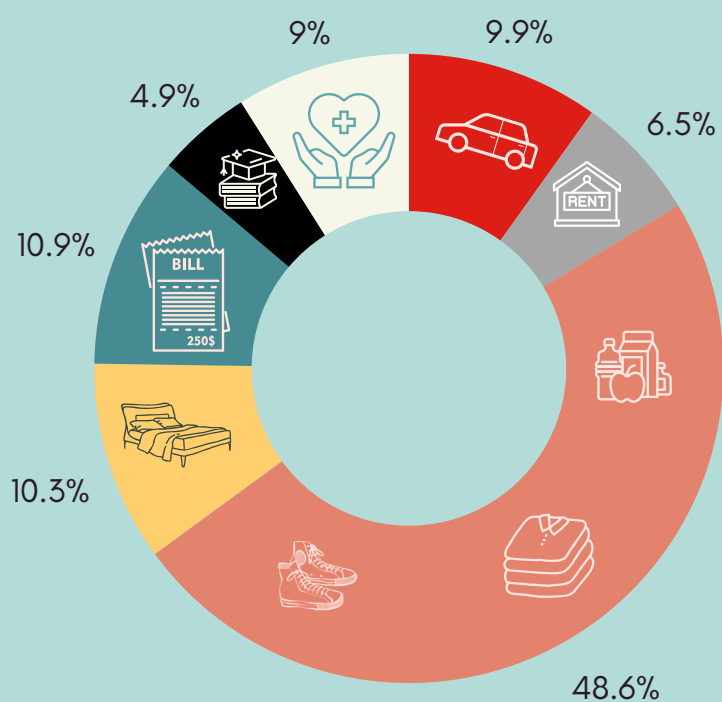
Another recipient had urgent car repairs for escaping/relocating due to domestic violence - the car is her escape path.





## GRANTS AWARDED

The micro-grants ranged from \$250 - \$1,500 with the majority being \$500. The micro-grants were mainly distributed through Coles, Woolworths, ACTIV Petrol & Auto and Australia Post Pre-paid Visas as well as Kmart, Amart, Harris Scarfe or Spotlight Gift Cards. In some instances, direct payments were made for rental arrears or bank transfers for medical bills.



- SCHOOL RELATED**  
Beds, blankets, pillows, shower curtains, rugs, towels
- RENT ASSISTANCE**  
Outstanding rental payments
- CAR RELATED**  
Petrol, maintenance, registration
- UTILITY BILLS**  
Electricity and gas
- FAMILY NEEDS**  
Clothing, shoes, groceries
- HOUSEHOLD GOODS**  
Beds, blankets, pillows, shower curtains, rugs, towels
- MEDICAL**  
Medical and pharmacy bills



# CASE STUDY

## ESCAPING FAMILY VIOLENCE

A young mother of three, who recently escaped from family violence left her family home with her three little ones (ages 4, 2 and a newborn) to stay with her parents in the metropolitan north. In leaving her home she did not take any belongings for her children or for herself.

The referral for the micro-grant came via a community member who knew the young mother well and realised that she needed some financial support to get by. The community member contacted KWT as she was a recipient of a micro-grant in the 2022 round.

KWT provided the young mother with a micro-grant of \$1,400 to support the purchase of clothing and other needs for her children as well as funds towards the legal fees for her family matter to be heard at a Court in the northern suburbs.



'The micro-grant amount will help me and my sons out so much. When you are in a situation and don't know where or who to turn too, it's great to know that organisations like KWT have small micro-grants to support community members have some dignity and some sense of safety. I cannot thank KWT Management Team and Committee enough for the support and information.

KWT went above and beyond to ensure that we not only received the micro-grant but that we were linked into some support services in the local area. As well as providing me with information and linking me into services that support women and children escaping family violence.

I really appreciate the care, time and information provided to me. Knowing that KWT is supported and run by First Nations women for community and with deadly allies, it gives community mob like me some hope knowing that we can access grants via philanthropy. I've never accessed any philanthropic grants in my life, I always thought that I was not going to get a grant even if I applied. Thank you KWT Community Fund and to the deadly women of KWT, thank you for your hard work.'

# APPLICANT STATEMENTS

The following are some of the statements provided by applicants when applying for the micro-grant:



I am applying for the micro-grant to assist with family needs. I currently have my 2 grandsons in my care 12 and 16 years old. I'm receiving no financial support for them and have recently given up my employment to be able to provide care and support for them. They have recently relocated to Heywood due to non-suitable living environment and lack of stability at their previous living arrangements. I also have another family member living with us who struggles with AOD issues, which I am also supporting his living needs as well as SEWB needs. My grandsons came with a few clothes each that was it. The micro-grant will assist with the transition as well as providing them with essential items they are currently lacking, such as bedding, shoes etc.





I am a single mum. My youngest son still lives at home. He currently has some health issues, which we are having to have several test and procedures which have not been covered by Medicare. He also is heavily involved in sports, including representative sports, with several registration fees and uniforms required it's a lot of pressure for me to try fund on my own. I am a cleaner and have just been put on light duties due to a back injury, so my mental health has been on a decline due to all the financial pressure at the moment and loss of income. My older sons, both struggle with mental health issues which often results in them returning to home from time to time, this money would help support me in supporting them as well as my youngest.





I had to move out of my home at just over 16 due to a non-suitable living environment. I was only working casually and left school due to needing to work to support myself. I have been saving for a car but finding it difficult due to having to support myself, as well as younger siblings. Recently I have paid for my little brother's football registration and bought him some clothes as he had none. It would help me out a lot once I got a car, I wouldn't have to rely on people to take me to things like work, training and help me support my siblings further with transport to school and other activities.




 I am a single Mum, deaf. My daughter can be contacted on my behalf. One child attends SDS school. Appreciate any assistance for food vouchers.


 I have 3 children that attend special school, always needing help with uniforms, especially winter months. I am unemployed, single parent, vehicle issues.

 With the increase in cost of living, as a family we struggle with basic needs, food, sport fees, fuel going up. Electricity for heating in the winter months.

 Renting as a young (living away from home) person the living expenses are hard to cope with and helping to look after my Mum with her needs this would help me a lot.

 Cost of living is too high and not being able to make ends meet as I am a single parent and not employed.

 I am recently unemployed - struggling to make ends meet.

 I am applying for this micro-grant for some stress relief from day-to-day living with utility prices on the rise.

 I am a RMIT First Nations University Student who is living away from home and struggling to cover costs of university fees and accommodation. My part-time job does not cover my living expenses.



  
I am a single Mum and I suffer with living expenses as I only get Centrelink - this would help me with buying food and paying rent.

# GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

The geographic range of micro-grants distributed across Victoria were as follows:

TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	TOWN OR SUBURB
Bunurong, Wadawurrung	City of Wyndham	Hoppers Crossing, Point Cook, Wyndham Vale
Bunurong, Wurundjeri, Wadawurrung	Shire of Melton	Caroline Springs, Keilor Downs, Taylors Hill
Dja Dja Wurrung	Shire of Mount Alexander	Campbells Creek, Castlemaine, Fryerstown, Harcourt, Maldon
Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung	City of Greater Bendigo	California Gully
Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Wurundjeri	Shire of Macedon Ranges	Malmsbury
Gunai kurnai & Wurundjeri	Shire of Baw Baw	Drouin, Warragul
Gunditjmara Tjap Wurong Bunganditj	Shire of Southern Grampians	Hamilton
Gunditjmara, Boandikt, Jardwadjali	Shire of Glenelg	Heywood, Milltown, Portland
Ladji Ladji	Rural City of Mildura	Mildura, Ouyen
Taungurung, Wurundjeri,	Shire of Mitchell	Kilmore, Seymour
Wadawurrong, Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung	Shire of Moorabool	Bacchus Marsh
Wadawurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung	City of Ballarat	Alfredton, Ballarat East, Golden Point, Winter Valley
Wadawurrung, Eastern Maar	Golden Plains Shire	Smythesdale
Wamba Wamba, Latji Latji, Tatti Tatti, Waddi Waddi, Barapa Barapa	Rural City of Swan Hill	Robinvale
Wotjobaluk, Wergaia Jupagulk, Jaadwa, Jadawadjali	Rural City of Horsham	Horsham
Wurundjeri	City of Darebin	Kingsbury
Wurundjeri	Shire of Yarra Ranges	Healesville
Wurundjeri	City of Whittlesea	Mernda, Mill Park
Wurundjeri	City of Hume	Craigieburn, Mickleham
Wurundjeri, Bunurong	City of Maribyrnong	Footscray
Wurundjeri, Bunurong	City of Brimbank	Deer Park, North Sunshine Sunshine, St Albans
Yalukit-willam	City of Hobsons Bay	Altona Meadows
Yorta Yorta	City of Greater Shepparton	Kialla, Shepparton
Yorta Yorta	Shire of Moira	Nathalia



## IMPACT FOR COMMUNITY

The feedback from grant recipients has highlighted how impactful the small grants have been in supporting First Nations communities. However, it should be noted that KWT could have provided substantially more micro-grants as the need in the community was far greater than anticipated.

Unfortunately, due to inflationary pressures rising faster than increases in wages and government support, the community have had insufficient funds to purchase the basic necessities such as groceries.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the annual food inflation eased to 7.5 per cent in the June quarter, down from 8.0 per cent in the March quarter and the peak of 9.2 per cent in the December quarter. Annual price increases were highest for dairy products (15.2 per cent), bread and cereal products (11.6 per cent) and food products n.e.c (not elsewhere classified) (11.3 per cent). Price rises were softer for fresh food categories like meat and seafood (3.5 per cent) and fruit and vegetables (1.6 per cent).

Consumer Price Index (CPI), Australia – The CPI measures household inflation and includes statistics about price change for categories of household expenditure.

Reference Period June Quarter 2023 – Released 26/07/23

<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/price-indexes-and-inflation/consumer-price-index-australia/latest-release>

There is also a housing crisis across Victoria, and especially in regional areas. This is an extremely critical issue especially for women and children who are fleeing from their residence due to family violence.

Linked to this is also the increase in household utility bills that have become more and more difficult for some community members to pay.





The following are some examples of the impact these micro-grants made on the community:

To tell you the truth I thought when Marie was talking to me about how support could be provided, I thought it was a joke. To go out of your way to help community is something I feel like crying about. I did shopping on line - for the first time - and went with Marie to collect groceries and the stuff from Big W. Too much, too much. I am sooo happy, thank you.

Thank you for this help, it will get me on my feet. I don't feel embarrassed about seeking help after talking to Marie. My two kids and me are going to eat like kings and queens over the next few weeks.

I am living in a caravan park in a rural town and have to travel over an hour to Mildura for medical care at M.A.C. This support will help me with fuel and fresher groceries over the next couple of weeks. I really thank you all XX.

Thanks so much - need that fuel - XX

This will help me to put food on the table for all our families as my sister also has a couple of kids. I can also use this for fuel to get to Cobram. I can't say how much this help means to me. I was feeling a bit shame to get to my sister with nothing. XX

Just to be able to buy proper beds and warm bedding will be a godsend so the kids don't keep having to come into my bed to keep warm. We can even get some warm clothes and slippers as well as do a big shop. Your group is amazing, thank you, you are all angels.

You are all kind for helping us. This is a big help and a big thank you from my heart.

Thank you, this is very hard for me to accept this gift but it means I don't have to use my swag, I have a proper bed with sheets and blankets. This means so much but I prefer not to give my details as I am funny about people contracting me if I don't know who the caller is. I am happy to tell you that I am so grateful and really appreciate this special gift. Big Mwah!

I live alone and just get by fortnight to fortnight. This money will make a big difference to how I eat, how I get around and I will be sure to check out the op-shops for some warm clothes and winter boots. Thank you so much.

We have just moved into a place in Tatura where rent is cheaper ... We need new blankets and a heater so these vouchers are so good ... Thank you. XX

Due to the recipient's ABI he struggles to remember to pay bills. This has caused many financial problems particularly with his rental payments. He owes over \$3,000 in rent arrears to Aboriginal Housing. A payment of \$500 was made by KWT to Aboriginal Housing on behalf of the recipient.

I can't thank you enough, this is what I need to just get that little bit ahead especially now that we are all feeling the cold and with school starting back ... and thanks for meeting me here (KMart Shepparton).

My birthday month in July was travelling to family with my daughter to Townsville in the school holidays ... I can fix my car, pay 3 months rego, buy fuel and food and maybe have enough left over to travel back with. I don't have to ask my family for money this time, big thanks.



My heart is happy and my buli (tummy) will be full ...  
thank you for everything you do for this community.

## AIMS OF THIS PROJECT FOR KWT AND FIL

The aim of this project for KWT was:

- To respond to community challenges by providing support to First Nations communities across Victoria who have been experiencing disadvantage or distress.
- To build and model a pathway for funding which is culturally respectful and rigorous, and consistent with the requirements of the KWT Board.

The aim of this project for FIL was:

- To work in collaboration with KWT and support the work of members of the Alumni who are also members of the KWT Board.
- To demonstrate best practice with this project and define a process that works for KWT and FIL.
- To deliver valuable support for First Nations families in Victoria.
- FIL sees this collaboration as a springboard to similar types of collaborations in the years ahead.



“  
I was not aware that there was an organisation like yourselves around to help community out, this is great. Thank you for all you do, and for coming out to the community. You're all deadly, thank you KWT Fund.

“  
I want to thank KWT Community Fund, you're all doing a great job. Having to journey with our son to the RCH you do things yourself. I am thankful to the team for connecting us to KWT Community Fund and for this micro-grant, this will go toward our son's school fees.'

## LESSONS LEARNT AND FEEDBACK

KWT and FIL further developed their partnership model based on the lessons from working together on the COVID Surge Relief Fund.

What the micro-grants provided for families was to give people a little bit of a lifeline and hearing some of the stories and feedback what the micro-grants did confirmed the grants have done so much more than envisaged.


It is a resilient model of trust, self-determination and collaboration.

Some of the feedback included:


“  
You are all kind for helping us. This is a big help and a big thank you from my heart.









I was truly shocked to know I could be supported this way. I only wanted to get what was necessary so there was money to share around for as many of us doing it hard. I am truly grateful to have this support. This will help with a much needed single bed for the toddler, some very warm blankets, new pillows and a big shop to fill up the fridge and stuff for lunch boxes. Thank you, thank you, thank you from the four of us.




I can't remember a time before where this sort of support has been provided to me. I have reached out many times to different places but when Marie came to see me I was so happy. Marie told me what you all do and why you do it. I am very proud to be part of this community and the way people reach out to other people when they can see the struggles. I will make sure I use the vouchers wisely, especially the Spotlight one which means I can get lots of new blankets and even a rug for the floor. I will be able to shop for food without having to count the pennies. Big hugs and thanks.




Every little bit will help but this is a lot of money that I can stretch out to make sure I catch up with my bills and buy groceries ... thank you xx.



Thank you for the support to me and my mother - we are experiencing some very hard times and we can't thank you enough.



I can't work so this help is great ... and having it dropped off was so good because it meant I could give you a big hug. I really mean it, having this help makes me feel like there is hope for our mob if we stick together.



I had to take the time to sort out what really was necessary for me and decided that winter bedding was a must. We talk about how much I could apply for and decided that I would ask for only what I needed. The kindness Marie and all of you have shown makes me want to cry and I want you to know how much I appreciate this help. I can afford to get some new towels and a new shower curtain as well as warm bedding and fuel and food. This is the best news!

KWT and FIL will continue to work together in a culturally appropriate and relevant manner to assure the success of our allyship.

This final report has been approved by:

Terori Hareko-Avaivilla  
General Manager  
Koondee Woonga-gat Toor-rong  
2nd April 2024

Marie Murfet  
Chair  
Koondee Woonga-gat Toor-rong  
2nd of April 2024

#### Artist Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge the gift of art by First Nations artist Terori Hareko-Avaivilla. Terori kindly donated the artwork 'Give Together' for the exclusive use by KWT, inclusive of its logo. Images or photos used are stock images.