

Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund

Extending the work of Sid Spindler

Background

The Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund has been established to extend the work of the late Sid Spindler. Sid and his family established the Towards a Just Society Fund (TJSF) as well as supporting many other initiatives for justice for Aboriginal people in Australia.

The Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund (ASBF) is managed by the TJSF. Both these funds are sub-funds of the Australian Communities Foundation.

TJSF has already established Aboriginal student bursary partnership arrangements with:

- LaTrobe University
- Monash University's Centre for Australian Indigenous Studies (CAIS)
- University of Melbourne's Centre for Indigenous Education
- University of Melbourne's Willin Centre
- Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE
- Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place
- Trinity College

with a total value of about \$80,000 per annum. During 2007, TJSF funded bursaries supported over 70 Aboriginal students in the primary, secondary, TAFE and tertiary education sectors. These arrangements will now be funded from the ASBF.

Aims

The aim of both funds is to increase the participation and retention of Aboriginal students in post-compulsory education¹. The sole focus of ASBF is to provide funds to Aboriginal partner organisations to directly support the needs of individual Aboriginal students in the public or Aboriginal community-controlled education sector in Victoria. The bursary and emergency support model used by ASBF was developed, tested and refined by the Towards a Just Society Fund (TJSF) over a period of three years and is outlined below.

Donors wishing to specifically support the model may donate to the Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund.

Underpinning principles

The following principles underpin the operation of the Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund:

Expectations of successful student outcomes

The Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund recognises that providing Aboriginal students with access to some bursary

or emergency funds may remove one of many obstacles to their successful participation in education.

Partnerships

Rather than using a formal application process, ASBF will work in partnership with grant recipient organisations to achieve the common goal of increased participation and retention of Aboriginal students.

Trust

While recognising the need for accountability and feedback, ASBF will establish agreements with grant recipients that do not involve burdensome reporting requirements.

Self determination

ASBF provides general guidelines for the use of grants, however arrangements with partner grant recipient organisations will attempt to support self determination and self management by seeking guidance from Aboriginal people on what they see as their priorities.

Responsiveness

Rather than having a prescribed application format and timetable, ASBF will react flexibly and quickly to proposals.

Leverage

ASBF will use its efforts as a lever for action by governments, other philanthropic funds and the corporate sector, by encouraging them to:

- contribute to ASBF, or
- enter a co-funding arrangements with ASBF, or
- establish their own bursary funding arrangements.

Innovation and experimentation

ASBF will seek innovative ideas from its grant recipient partners and help them seek funding through TJSF or other sources.

Key features of ASBF grants

The key features of the Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund grants are:

1. Grants support an increase in participation and retention of Aboriginal people in post-compulsory education.
2. Grants are based on a partnership arrangement between ASBF and an Aboriginal organisation or Aboriginal unit within a larger institution.
3. Partner organisations may include universities, TAFE institutions, schools and community-controlled NGOs.

¹ For our purposes "post-compulsory education" refers to Years 9 to 12, university and TAFE/VET courses.

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4. Grants support students currently enrolled or wishing to commence studies.
5. The funds are dispersed by the partner organisation on the basis of students' need for financial support and their capacity to complete their course of study.
6. The funds support individual bursary and emergency funds including:
 - contributions to living costs, particularly for mature age students
 - books and study materials
 - additional tuition including in history, language, culture
 - travel to home community
 - traditional culture courses
 - bridging or remedial courses to enable students to enrol
 - tools, equipment and materials for training and the transition to employment.
7. The partner organisation uses ASBF forms to report on outcomes.
8. Arrangements with partner organisations will normally be for up to three years. During that time, partner organisations are encouraged to:
 - seek alternative funding sources, and
 - consider other innovative ideas that the Towards a Just Society (TJSF) might fund.

Management and co-ordination

The scope of the Towards a Just Society's existing structures and processes for managing grant recommendations and reporting arrangements have been extended to manage the Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund as a second sub-fund. The role of the TJSF Executive Officer has been extended to cover ASBF activities.

Any person who donates not less than \$1,000 in any one year to ASBF or TJSF may apply for TJSF membership. As a member, donors may then become involved in grant recommendations and reporting processes.

Other funds entering a partner funding arrangement with ASBF will be included in relevant grant recommendation and reporting processes.

Donations

Donors may now choose to support Aboriginal education through the:

- Aboriginal Student Bursaries Fund (ASBF)
- Towards a Just Society Fund (TJSF) for use in other flexible and innovative activities.

Evaluation and accountability

While attempting to not be burdensome, ASBF's reporting processes are designed to gather information to:

- account to donors and co-funders
- evaluate bursary outcomes, model and processes
- gather evidence to leverage alternative, preferably systemic, funding
- identify other potential areas for philanthropy to support.

