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## **Philanthropic trust supports innovation and trialling new projects**

Fifteen innovative research and pilot projects received funding totalling \$900,000 this month from The Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust, managed by Equity Trustees.

The projects are very broad-ranging and their outcomes will go a long way towards improving the lives of many Australians and their families. Projects include:

- research into a medical therapy to reduce brain injury in newborn babies who experience a lack of oxygen at the time of birth (\$30,000);
- seed funding to support an early intervention youth suicide initiative (\$65,000);
- a pilot project to support men in prisons and their families so that when the fathers are released they can better settle back into life with their partners and children (\$50,000).

Head of Philanthropy at Equity Trustees, Tabitha Lovett, said supporting charities and not-for-profit organisations to start-up a new project or trial new services is an effective use of philanthropic money.

During her lifetime Miss Phyllis Connor was a generous woman known for her support of many Victorian charities. Even after her death in 2010, at the age of 99, she ensured her generosity would continue by establishing a perpetual charitable trust in her Will (establishment value approximately \$15.5 million) and appointing Equity Trustees and Mr Norman Bourke as trustees.

The annual income from The Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust is distributed each year to eligible charitable organisations through an expression of interest and application process. This year, the Trust has distributed \$900,000 to the 15 successful applicants and also funds a full scholarship (years 9-12) each year for students who have demonstrated academic excellence and financial need, to attend Melbourne Girls Grammar School where Miss Connor was a student.

The Trust's grants program focusses on 'proof of concept' or innovative pilot projects and provides seed funding for new projects in Victoria.

Miss Connor was a long-time client of Equity Trustees and she relished the opportunity to immerse herself in new experiences. Ms Lovett said, "The projects and organisations that have received funding in 2013 are pushing new boundaries in a range of areas, which we think Miss Connor would have appreciated."

According to Ms Lovett, Equity Trustees manages more than 200 charitable trusts which last year distributed over \$18 million to charitable organisations and causes, mainly in Victoria. Currently, Equity Trustees has more than \$370 million in charitable trust monies under management and The Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust is one of the larger trusts distributing income through a discretionary grant program.

"The majority of these perpetual trusts were established through a Will upon the death of the benefactor, but we also have living donors who are actively involved in the distribution of income from the Philanthropic Foundations they have established."

"Structured giving like this can be very rewarding," said Ms Lovett. "Often, the charitable organisations that benefit are able to undertake activities or trial new projects that wouldn't be possible through normal funding sources, such as government funding."

The 15 charitable organisations receiving grants from the Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust in 2013 are:

1. **Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect)** – an innovative workshop for parents of young children with autism designed to help families understand and better manage the challenging behaviour of their autistic child. **(\$36,000 grant)**
2. **Connections Uniting Care** – working alongside MacKillop Foster Care to pilot a new option of care in the out-of-home care system (foster care and permanent care) that will provide earlier stability for children who can't live with their birth family. **(\$69,769 grant)**
3. **In 2 Life** – seed funding for the 'Here for Life' early intervention youth suicide program that is centred around social media and which has already prevented the deaths of many young people. **(\$65,000 grant)**
4. **Interact Australia** – to extend a disability & homelessness pilot project supporting young people (18-25) who are leaving care facilities so that they can better transition to independent living. **(\$73,000 grant)**
5. **Mental Health Legal Centre** – a project designed to respond to the burgeoning demand for civil law legal advice to, and advocacy on behalf of, mentally ill people in Victoria's prisons and forensic hospitals. **(\$100,000 grant)**
6. **Monash University** – a medical research project into a new therapy to treat babies with brain injury from birth asphyxia using activated protein C (APC). **(\$30,000 grant)**
7. **Monash University, Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine** – for a mobile study vehicle (called a Biobus) that will be fitted with specialised retinal-imaging equipment for testing senior Australians participating in a research project to determine whether a low dose of aspirin daily can prevent age-related macular degeneration. **(\$88,974 grant)**
8. **Save the Children Australia** – a pilot project to address the needs of refugee and newly-arrived migrant families in Fitzroy's high-rise housing estate that will bring together a number of organisations that provide vital support services. **(\$58,190 grant)**
9. **St Martins Youth Arts Centre** – a support program for children with autism and other disabilities to participate in the drama programs offered at St Martins. **(\$84,000 grant)**
10. **Task Force Community Agency** – for a new 12-week skills-based program called Money4Jam that will teach food production skills to disadvantaged groups accompanied by counselling and support. **(\$65,000 grant)**
11. **The Royal Melbourne Hospital** – for a 12-month program to educate and assist chronic disease sufferers so that they can understand and access home dialysis therapies. **(\$23,933 grant)**
12. **Urban Seed** – a new project that will connect women experiencing homelessness in the City of Melbourne in a supportive, safe and inclusive environment to build confidence, capacity and hopefully make positive life changes. **(\$40,000 grant)**
13. **Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency Cooperative Limited** – for 'Connecting to Country' pilot project that will take Aboriginal children in foster care (many of whom have experienced abuse, trauma and neglect) to visit the country of their family, community and culture of their ancestors. **(\$54,121 grant)**
14. **Victorian Association for the Care & Resettlement of Offenders** – for a holistic service that will support men in prison and their families and help the family unit to maintain their relationship whilst the father is in correctional services and then adjust and transition safely back into family life after release **(\$50,000 grant)**.
15. **Woor-Dungin Inc** – expansion of a pilot program and support to Woor-Dungin, a coalition of Indigenous organisations, philanthropic trusts and foundations, pro bono service providers and community groups working in partnership to enable Indigenous organisations to achieve self determination and access the resources and support needed to address issues affecting their communities. **(\$61,953 grant)**

**ENDS**

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