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McEwen Foundation managed by Equity Trustees backs Shepparton kids

A \$750,000 five year grant established in 2014 to support the social and educational outcomes of children in the Greater Shepparton region in Victoria's north has been boosted with a commitment from the Victorian State Government Budget 2017.

The original five-year grant was provided by the McEwen Foundation, of which Equity Trustees is the sole Trustee.

The Foundation, established via the Will of Lady McEwen, widow of former Prime Minister, Sir John ("Black Jack") McEwen, supports the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project (GSLP), which uses the money to ensure children in the region are ready for school, successfully transition to secondary school, and complete year 12 and then get a job.

"At any given time up to 2000 young people from the Greater Shepparton region are not at work or school – that is about a quarter of the young people here," said Lisa McKenzie, CEO, Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project.

"We know there are many challenges faced by local students battling to stay in secondary school. They include family breakdown, trauma such as family violence, bullying, and mental health issues – but we also know they are capable of remarkable resilience which keeps them at school, despite the odds. Our project recognises that 'it takes a village' to help our young people – and there are no quick fixes, which is why the McEwen Foundation commitment has been so important to us.

"Our plan is to keep creating ways we can care – we have established a youth haven, mentor programs in schools and school camps linked to regional jobs. We are creating a whole of community approach using data to drive change," she said.

In recognition of the outcomes being achieved by the GSLP, the Victorian State Government has announced additional funding of \$3 million over three years to the Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project in the 2017 State Budget.

Natalie Elliott, Grant Development Manager at Equity Trustees, said: "This is a really positive outcome, with the State Government's Budget decision to give an extra \$3 million making it, in dollar terms, a four-to-one return on the Foundation's contribution.

"The money aside, it's recognition by government of the quality of the work on the ground by the GLSP committee and an explicit endorsement of the granting strategy implemented by Equity Trustees, highlighting how the strategy and philosophy underpinning our philanthropic work is achieving better outcomes."

Lady McEwen's husband, Sir John, or "Black Jack" as he was better known, had a long and illustrious political career. He entered the Federal Parliament in 1934 after successfully contesting the seat of northern Victorian seat of Echuca for the Country Party, becoming the party's leader and Deputy Prime Minister in 1958 and retaining both posts until he retired in 1971.

He was briefly caretaker Prime Minister after the tragic death of Harold Holt in December 1967, holding the position until early 1968 when the Liberal Party elected John Gorton as leader.

Media Release



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