



FY 2025

# Macdoch Foundation *Impact Report*





# Welcome



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This has been a period of consolidation and bold renewal for Macdoch Foundation.

In just a few short years, we've grown from a small, ambitious philanthropy to one seeking to work with a strategic collective of partners across borders and sectors to reimagine the future of food and agriculture. What unites this network is not only a shared sense of purpose, but a commitment to working at the systems level — challenging business-as-usual and backing those with the courage and capacity to drive long-term change.

Our new strategy, which we began to implement in FY25, puts food systems transformation at the centre. From Australia to the US and the UK, we are now backing efforts that address the full agrifood system, from production to consumption, finance to policy. The issues we face — climate instability, nature loss, economic inequality — are interconnected. The solutions must be too.

We're proud to be part of a growing global movement. Through alliances like Funders For Regenerative Agriculture, International Funders For Indigenous Peoples, the Global Alliance for the Future of Food, and the Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network, we continue to learn, contribute, and stay attuned to the broader currents of change. These connections strengthen our work and remind us that, while place matters, many of the challenges we face are shared — and so is the opportunity to act.

My thanks to our CEO, Michelle Gortan, for her exceptional leadership, and to our dedicated team — Sally, Claire and Imogen — whose skill and care power our mission forward. I am also grateful to my fellow Board members for their guidance and commitment.

Together, we remain steadfast in our belief that the future of food and farming can — and must — be different.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This year marked a pivotal next phase in Macdoch Foundation's evolution — building on the first three years of learning and momentum, and carefully responding to the shifting external environment.

Our early days saw a broad commitment to supporting regenerative agriculture. Over time, and through our experience with our partners, we've honed in on something more ambitious: catalysing change across the agrifood system.

This shift reflects both what we've learned and what the moment demands. In systems as complex and interdependent as agriculture and food, we've seen how interventions — at just the right inflection points — can have great impact.

Since beginning to implement our 2025-27+ strategic plan, we have deepened our work by forging stronger partnerships and growing our community of grantees. These allies — researchers, producers, practitioners, advocates, First Nations leaders, philanthropic peers — are united by shared values, but also by a sense of urgency to transform the way the agrifood system can serve people and the planet.

As always, I am deeply grateful to Alasdair and Prue MacLeod for entrusting me with the leadership and stewardship of their philanthropy, and for their bold and clear-sighted vision. I'm also indebted to the Foundation team and our Board for their time, hard work and love of what we do, and to the friends and advisors who have supported us in many different ways throughout the year.

I hope you enjoy this overview of our FY25 program.





# About Us

The Macdoch Foundation is a family philanthropy founded in 2019 by **Prue and Alasdair MacLeod**. We support the transition to an agrifood system that is fair, sustainable and resilient. Our funding focuses on three areas: **Nature-Positive Agrifood Systems, Climate Transitions and Healthy Communities**.

Since we began, we’ve shifted our focus from agriculture to the wider agrifood system, and expanded our global reach with a growing network of partners spanning Australia, the US and UK.

Our strategy reflects our belief that unlocking real change requires shifting markets, policy, finance and the stories we tell about our relationships to the food system. This work is complex and the path is never linear. It’s through learning from the expertise of our partners that we hope to make a difference.

We’re proud to be part of a community of diverse experts who consider the issues deeply and with great care, and who are approaching solutions with courage, creativity and collaboration. In the year ahead we look forward to enriching our engagement further in shaping a better and fairer food future. What follows is small selection of grants we’ve made in FY25 across our strategic pillars.

**Acknowledgement of Country**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work and pay our respects to Indigenous Elders past, present and future.

FY25

# Funding Snapshot

Total Funding in FY25:

\$10.8M

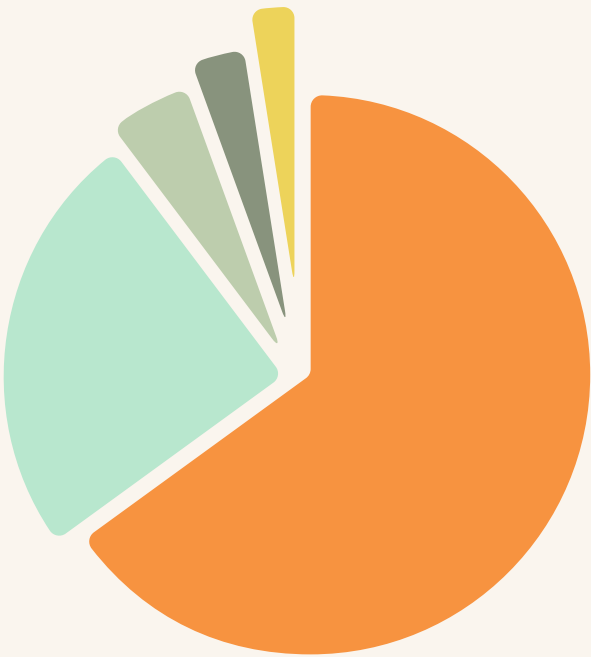
Macdoch Foundation-led strategic initiatives account for **17%** of our total funding

Number of grants made in FY25:

49

BY PROGRAM AREA:

<div></div> Nature-Positive Agrifood Systems	\$7.05M (65.3%)
<div></div> Climate Transitions	\$2.65M (24.5%)
<div></div> Healthy Communities	\$252k (2.3%)
<div></div> Sector & Market Development	\$330k (3%)
<div></div> Other Grants	\$528k (4.9%)



Total partners supported since inception:

65

Total funding granted since inception:

\$44.5M





# Nature-Positive Agrifood Systems

We support work that *treats nature as a critical partner*. This means investing in First Nations' stewardship, and regenerative food and fibre systems. This approach not only protects ecosystems but supports community wellbeing and long-term food security.



## Natural Capital Primer | Australia

### STRATEGIC PROJECT

The Natural Capital Primer is a science-based resource developed by Macdoch Foundation in collaboration with La Trobe University and Vizzuality. Launched in November 2024 in time for the Convention on Biological Diversity in Colombia (CBD16), it is designed to help business leaders through to land managers understand the nature and value of the services that natural capital provides to business and society.

The Primer breaks down complex ideas in a compelling, visual way to show how natural capital connects to everyday life. It gives decision-makers the insights needed to understand the opportunities of working with nature, and a holistic appreciation of environmental risk.

Already, it is becoming a go-to resource across sectors from finance to fashion to farming. It's helping reshape how leaders think about land, nature, and the economy – and how they interact. Visit [naturalcapitalprimer.com](https://naturalcapitalprimer.com) to learn more.

## North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems | USA

### CORE FUNDING

North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) is leading efforts to restore First Nations foodways across North America. Founded by Lakota chef, Sean Sherman, NATIFS is reconnecting Native communities to ancestral knowledge while addressing health, cultural, and economic inequalities.

One of NATIFS' flagship initiatives is the Indigenous Food Lab, which provides workshops, videos and educational materials on Native American agriculture, seed saving, wild foods and Indigenous cooking techniques.

The Indigenous Food Lab helps participants to preserve and pass down traditional knowledge and strengthen connections between Indigenous communities, nature and food traditions.

Our support is helping to expand and enhance this program over three years, specifically for Indigenous entrepreneurs. It is also helping to establish new Indigenous Food Labs in Montana and Alaska.

Sean's work in leading NATIFS – and as an active and influential voice – has helped change public understanding of Indigenous food systems and their connection to the land.

## Food Connect Foundation | Australia

### CORE & PROGRAM FUNDING

Food Connect Foundation is a Queensland-based social enterprise reconnecting people with local food and farmers. Founded and run by Rob Pekin and Emma-Kate Rose, it's built on values of fairness, collaboration and resilience.

Through the Food Connect Shed, they provide a space for the making, buying and selling of regeneratively-produced food. They ensure a fair price for farmers and producers, reduce food miles and engage everyday people in choosing and buying local seasonal food directly from the source. In a year of climate disruptions, their decentralised model proved its strength – helping absorb shocks to the supply chain and keep food moving. It's a clear example of how local, values-led food systems can be more resilient in the face of change.

Macdoch Foundation provides core funding to Food Connect, offering financial stability and the opportunity to appoint a Fundraising Consultant to help with organisational growth. We also funded the inaugural South-East Queensland Food Summit in 2024. This was a unique 3-day event that brought together 1300 growers, makers, industry leaders and policy makers specifically around the shared vision of sourcing 30% local food for the upcoming 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The intention of these grants has been to enable Food Connect Foundation to build an enduring future for the organisation. Our goal has been to support the team in expanding their connections and conversations, and to strengthen their capacity to influence food conversations in Queensland.





# Climate Transitions

As climate change reshapes our world, new opportunities are emerging to build stronger economies and communities. Our funding **supports communities to adapt and thrive**. By partnering with some extraordinary organisations, we’re working to make climate transitions more inclusive, grounded, and resilient.



## Farmers for Climate Action | Australia

### CORE FUNDING

Farmers for Climate Action (FCA) is a farmer-led movement working to ensure agriculture is part of the climate solution. With support from Macdoch Foundation, FCA has created a Nature-Positive Program Manager role to embed environmental stewardship alongside emissions reduction across the agriculture sector. The role supports farmers to protect nature and advocate for nature-positive farming. Importantly it will also work to strengthen the perception and engagement of farmers as crucial partners in strengthening our food systems on a warming planet.

By focusing on both nature and climate, FCA is helping reframe climate adaptation as a whole-farm opportunity. Through advocacy, education and peer-to-peer connection, FCA is creating the conditions for lasting change. It is helping shape a future where farming strengthens ecosystems, supports rural livelihoods, and builds climate resilience from the ground up.

## The Next Economy | Australia

### PROGRAM FUNDING

The Next Economy (TNE) partners with regional communities across Australia to turn the challenges of climate and economic change into opportunities for local renewal. Its work creates space for genuine collaboration — bringing together councils, First Nations leaders, farmers, industry and community groups to build on local strengths and shape a shared vision for the future.

With support from Macdoch Foundation, TNE has launched a dedicated Land Sector program and team. It’s flagship project has been to develop the “Hay and Carrathool Regional Drought Resilience Plan” alongside the Australian Resilience Centre and local councils. This bold, community-led roadmap sets out 26 practical actions — already underway — that are helping the region to embrace change.

## Rural Climate Partnership | USA

### PROGRAM FUNDING RE-GRANTOR

The Rural Climate Partnership (RCP) is a collaborative philanthropic initiative that supports rural communities — particularly farmers — to lead climate solutions across the United States. With support from Macdoch Foundation and others, RCP has expanded its reach in the past year, investing in projects that help producers adopt regenerative practices, lower emissions, and access climate-aligned markets.

In parallel, RCP supports grassroots organisations that are building climate literacy and helping communities navigate the energy transition.

Rural Climate Partnership, with Macdoch Foundation funding, is also leading the **Regenerative Agriculture Narrative Project** to strengthen and unify messaging around regenerative agriculture in the American Southeast. The three-phase initiative began with coalition building and a research scan — bringing together stakeholders to map current regenerative narratives through literature review and social media listening. Next, RCP conducted communications research and message testing. The final phase will produce a shared narrative framework, alongside pilot communication materials and trainings for partners.

This work is improving livelihoods, strengthening local economies, and reshaping the story — placing rural voices at the centre of climate action. By backing locally driven solutions, RCP is helping to realise the potential of rural America as a powerful force for climate progress.







# Healthy Communities

Through this stream of work, we aim to expand pathways for education, employment and community cohesion – and to strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of farmers and their families. Our focus is on **building connected, supportive communities** that foster resilience and make it easier to *access help when it’s needed*.



## Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) “In A Good Place” | Australia

### PROGRAM FUNDING

“In A Good Place” is a rural mental health program. Macdoch Foundation initiated a collective of funders to expand the existing program with a dedicated stream for farmers.

The program focuses on normalising conversations about mental health. It was developed in response to growing evidence of the mental health crisis facing farmers – including research showing suicide rates nearly 60% higher than the national average.

The program supports community-led initiatives managed by people and organisations that understand local context and the challenges of farm life, firsthand. Initiatives range from community resilience workshops and men’s groups, to mental health programs and community support circles.

By resourcing small organisations with deep community ties, “In A Good Place” is creating trusted spaces for connection and early intervention. The goal is to achieve a quiet but powerful shift – where seeking help is a strength, and care is provided with respect, empathy and nuance.

## BackTrack | Australia

### CORE FUNDING

BackTrack enables at-risk young people to reconnect with education and training, become work-ready and secure meaningful employment. Most importantly BackTrack helps at-risk young people to get back on track by developing strong, happy and healthy foundations that result in positive life pathways.

In 2022 – 16 years after Bernie Shakeshaft founded the organisation – BackTrack received the extraordinary gift of Cubba Cubbah Farm in northern NSW. This gift opened up a new set of possibilities for both reviving the land and giving young people a hands-on experience of agriculture.

With Macdoch Foundation’s support, Backtrack commenced work restoring the farm – starting by establishing a water system, new cattle yards and an ecological survey. The project was complemented by a tailored education program that gave the kids curriculum-aligned learnings on site, based on their farm work.

With these foundations in place, BackTrack is now embarking on a project to develop a 100 Year Vision for the farm – an ambitious, multigenerational plan based on an approach of “conservation, culture and cultivation.” The long-term roadmap is being formed with the input of those who have been part of their journey so far – young people, First Nations Elders, educators, cattle breeders and ecologists. Excitingly, it also includes new insights from futurists, creatives and climate scientists.

Macdoch Foundation is supporting BackTrack to develop this vision to ensure the organisation’s legacy endures.

## This Is A Conversation Starter (TIACS) | Australia

### PROGRAM FUNDING

This Is A Conversation Starter (TIACS) is a vital mental health initiative addressing the alarming rates of psychological distress among Australian farmers – 45% have experienced depression, 64% anxiety, and 30% have attempted self-harm or suicide (Norco study, 2023).

While many organisations work in mental health, TIACS fills a unique gap with its early intervention and prevention model, offering free, direct access to counselling.

Macdoch Foundation supported TIACS to increase its profile and impact in the agriculture sector by funding the costs of a marketing agency to codesign engagement with TIACS, farmers and industry. The “Don’t Keep It Under Your Hat” campaign was the result and it aimed to encourage help-seeking among farmers, equip farming community members to support others, and build stronger alliances across the sector.

The campaign sparked national and international media coverage, elevating awareness of the mental health challenges faced by farmers, and increasing counselling uptake. TIACS continues to lead with a prevention-first model, grounded in community insight and sector collaboration.



# Investing in *First Nations Peoples*

This year we have continued to focus on the importance of centring the deeply interconnected issues of *Indigenous land stewardship, food security, food sovereignty, cultural identity and wellbeing* against the backdrop of colonial history and the displacement of Indigenous peoples.

Our challenge — and opportunity — is to meaningfully incorporate Indigenous leadership and participation in negotiating an agrifood system transformation.

We have focussed our support on direct funding to Indigenous-led organisations, providing flexible support and co-designing programs that reflect cultural priorities and knowledge systems.

Our FY25 grant partners include SevGen, International Funders for Indigenous Peoples (IFIP), Noongar Land Enterprises, First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corporation, Native Foodways, Bula'bula Aboriginal Arts Corporation and North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems (NATIFS) — each working in powerful ways to connect culture, community, nature and food.


We've also committed up to 50% of our new catalytic impact capital pool to support Indigenous agrifood enterprises in Australia. These investments are about fostering equity and creating enduring economic opportunity.






# Our People


## Our Board




Alasdair MacLeod  
Chairman



Fiona Sinclair  
Director




Stephen Hall  
Director




Emma Jenkin  
Director


## Our Team




Michelle Gortan  
Chief Executive Officer




Sally Garis  
Program Manager




Imogen Corlette  
Communications Manager




Claire Cornu  
Grants & Administration Manager



Erin Kreiss  
Company Secretary and Head of Finance, Macdoch Australia



Karin Chan  
Business Operations Manager, Macdoch Australia



Louise Cliff  
Executive Assistant to Alasdair MacLeod and Michelle Gortan

FY25

# Our Partners

We're grateful to our partners for their commitment to building resilience *for people, communities and the planet.* The list below reflects the diversity of organisations we're proud to work alongside across Australia, the UK and the US.

Adelaide Fringe	First Hand Solutions Aboriginal Corporation	Open Food Foundation
Ambition Loop	Food Connect Foundation	Pie Ranch
Australian Conservation Foundation	Food System 6	Pocket City Farms
Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal	Potlikker Capital
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance	Funders For Regenerative Agriculture / Regenerative Agriculture Foundation	Rural Climate Partnership / Windward Fund
Australian Holistic Management Co-operative	Global Alliance for the Future of Food / Meridian Institute	SevGen
Australian Museum	Good Meat Project	Soil4Climate
BackTrack	Groundswell / The Redford Centre	Soils For Life
Bula'bula Aboriginal Arts Corporation	International Funders for Indigenous Peoples	Sustainable Table
Climateworks Centre / Monash University	Kitchen Table Advisors	Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures / Green Finance Institute
ClimateWorks Foundation	Mulloon Institute	The Next Economy
Cricket For Climate	Multicultural Leadership Initiative	White Buffalo Land Trust
Environmental Justice Australia	Nature Finance	World Benchmarking Alliance
Farmers For Climate Action	Noongar Land Enterprise Group	World Resources Institute
Farming for the Future	North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems	
Fibershed	Odonata Foundation	



**MACDOCH** FOUNDATION 

[macdochfoundation.org](http://macdochfoundation.org)