

The Snow Foundation – committed to ending rheumatic heart disease in Australia



The Snow Foundation

The Snow Foundation is an Australian philanthropic organisation that brothers Terry Snow and George Snow founded in 1991. Georgina Byron became CEO in 2006, leading the Foundation's significant growth in National reach and impact, and increased its commitment to social justice and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Our purpose is to create opportunities and strengthen resilience for a more caring and inclusive community.

Our Commitment to Indigenous Health

Since 2011, we have been working with First Nations leaders and communities and other stakeholders and partners on eliminating rheumatic heart disease (RHD) and crusted scabies.

Significant funding has been invested towards the prevention and elimination of RHD, and this will be accelerated into the future.

Our focus has been on supporting community-led initiatives, First Nations education, and bringing RHD to the attention of the public and decision-makers as well as some support to medical research.

We are aligned to the **RHD Endgame Strategy** and outlined below are some of the initiatives we contribute to:

Community Action

Crusted Scabies

We invested in a 10-year crusted scabies elimination program through One Disease which made significant impact, achieving below 5% recurrence rates in the Northern Territory and improving educational resources in communities.

Maningrida

Maningrida is a small community in the Northern Territory. In 2018, the community set out to address their high RHD rates with a whole of community approach.

Traditional Owners, doctors, the school, the health clinic and Mala'la Health Service worked together to educate school students and the wider community using traditional languages and local metaphors. Local Aboriginal health workers were upskilled to use hand-held echo screening devices and with experienced doctors conducted screening for early diagnosis and treatment.

613 children were screened, and 34 new RHD cases identified and treated, an additional 15 cases were known.



Central Australia Trek team on launch day

Deadly Heart Trek

The **Deadly Heart Trek** was developed in 2021, as an opportunity to listen and learn from communities, and work together to provide education, early diagnosis and treatment for Indigenous people affected by RHD.

The delivery teams are led by First Nations guides and include experienced doctors, health workers and nurses.

Many are known to the communities having worked for decades together on RHD.

Communities, RHD Control programs, local Aboriginal Community Control Organisations, Land Councils, Dept of Education and others have contributed significantly to the project. The Snow Foundation provides project management, logistics, community engagement, funding and communications.



Deadly Heart Trek Echo Scan Results: 2,702 children's hearts screened across 36 communities. The vast majority were healthy, but new RHD cases were diagnosed and treated and known cases were also reviewed. The prevalence of RHD detected in all communities visited was 5% (1 in 20). A high number of children were identified with significant skin infection – up to 1/3 in some communities.

Throughout the Treks we built trust, post-visit community survey confirmed: 100% would welcome the Trek to return and 100% would recommend the Trek to other communities.



Dr Ben Reeves on the QLD Deadly Heart Trek



Champions4Change advocates

Champions4Change

Champions4Change is designed and developed by community members.

The program supports people and communities across Australia with lived experience of RHD to advocate for change, raise awareness in their communities, design and inform program and resource development as well as present at workshops.



Orange Sky laundry vans operating in community

Community Action (continued)

Orange Sky Australia

Orange Sky is committed to healthy hygiene and employment opportunities in remote communities. They provide access to laundry facilities and work with local Indigenous partnerships to enable local employment.

The Snow Foundation supported a feasibility study for a remote mobile laundry in 2018, and in 2019 the launch of a mobile laundry in the remote Northern Territory community of Maningrida with Ma'lala Health – our support continues today. There are now mobile laundry vans working in 13 remote communities.

Education & Awareness

We contributed to two film-led advocacy campaigns with the **Take Heart Project** and hosted many awareness events including at Parliament House with local Indigenous voices.

Documentaries we supported:

- 2022: Take Heart: Deadly Heart
- 2016: Take Heart: the Quest to rid Australasia of rheumatic heart disease



In addition, the Foundation supported community educational films on RHD in local languages with local people using metaphors and storytelling in four communities in Northern Territory and some in Central/APY Lands.



RHD awareness event at Parliament House

Partnerships & Alliances

We thank the many people and organisations we work with in our aim to eliminate RHD in Australia: Vicki Wade our Aboriginal cultural advisor, Heart Foundation Australia, Telethon Kids, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Nganampa Health, Gidgee Healing, AMSANT, HeartKids, NT Cardiac, Take Heart Project, RHD Control Programs, Champions4Change,

Orange Sky, One Disease, QLD Children's Hospital, Far North QLD Hospital Foundation, Humpty Dumpty Foundation, GE HealthCare, Medtronic, Pfizer, Griffith University and philanthropy: Aspen Foundation, CAGES, Oranges and Sardines.

We have also worked with State and Federal Governments, including a recent joint event at Parliament House with Assistant Indigenous Minister Senator Malarndirri McCarthy.



Visit to Griffith University, Queensland

Medical Research

We are contributing to the development of a Streptococcal A vaccine to prevent RHD with Professor Michael Good, a National Health and Medical Research Council Senior Principal Fellow at Griffith University.

Great work is being done, but more is needed

- In 2018, the World Health Assembly passed an international resolution to prevent and eliminate RHD. Australia was a co-sponsor of this resolution, amplifying national commitments to eliminate RHD.
- Significantly, since 2021, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) has led national efforts to address RHD and established governance partnerships.
- The Australian Federal Government has increased their commitment, along with philanthropic investment also increasing.
- The Blueprint to end RHD exists - the 2020 RHD Endgame Strategy provides an evidence-based roadmap to ending RHD in Australia.

We are committed to increasing our investment in RHD and invite others to join us in this commitment. We value long-term collaborative partnerships.

For more information please visit snowfoundation.org.au

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