

Collective giving: launching Impact100

How collective giving, a growing phenomenon in the US, can help inform philanthropy, potentially enriching the lives of all Australians – and how WA is set to make a big impact. By **James Boyd**, WA Manager Artsupport Australia.

All philanthropists have one thing in common – they want to make a difference. The only way to ensure a donation has impact is by knowing what you want to achieve and how best to achieve it. But, as many philanthropists and would-be philanthropists have discovered, finding good investments is often easier said than done. In the US, collective giving through Giving Circles is becoming increasingly popular, and their ability to offer significant education to donors is making the search for impact much less of a guessing game.

A cross between a book club and an investment group, Giving Circles offer an engaged, collaborative approach to philanthropy. In a Giving Circle, donors place their charitable dollars into a pooled fund, and decide together which charities to support. The appeal is simple: involvement in a social and rewarding environment where donors see the benefits of a group gift above and beyond what they could achieve alone.

Giving Circles also offer exciting educational benefits. Research on 600 Giving Circles in the US tells us that 65 per cent of circles offer donors workshops and speakers on community issues; 56 per cent offer speakers on philanthropy and giving; and



The inaugural committee of Impact100 WA (left to right): James Boyd, Simone Eley, Loretta MacDonald, Rory Thomson (seated), Andrew Johnson, Paul Chamberlain, Sophie Chamberlain (seated), Simon Bedbrook and Iris Koomstra.

27 per cent offer donors how-to workshops on proposal evaluation and understanding non-profit budgets (Bearman: 2007).

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Impact100 is one of the successful US models of Giving Circles, which began in 2001 in Cincinnati. Their rationale is simple: 100 people give \$1000 each annually; they pool the funds and then make high impact grants to local community organisations. Educational activities are an important key to their success.

Excitingly, Impact100 is about to be launched in Western Australia – a first in Australia – and promises to offer an educational stepping stone to enriched personal philanthropy.

The two founders of Impact100 WA, Simon Bedbrook and Sophie Chamberlain, come from families with a strong history of philanthropy. Simon Bedbrook, inaugural chairman of Impact100 WA, found the concept instantly appealing. “Working in the financial services sector, I see a growing interest in the area of philanthropy,” he says. “I’m involved in our own family charitable trust and get a huge kick out of it. A growing number of West Australians have the capacity to be involved in philanthropy and Impact100 WA will give many of them an opportunity to test the water, introduce them to non-profits to explore what inspires them, and learn about the needs of the community.”

Sophie Chamberlain says, “It’s also important to increase people’s involvement in effective and engaged philanthropy,



Young people from Burringurrah (Gascoyne region) Western Australia taking part in Country Arts WA’s ‘Out There’ Regional Youth Arts Leadership Program. Photographer: Wendy Carmichael (Courtesy of Country Arts WA).



Ezekiel Peumorra takes part in the 'Mobile Moments' project, part of the Boab Festival's MarshART 2011, held in Derby. MarshART was established by DADAA in 2007, in collaboration with local community groups in the West Kimberley. MarshART is supported by the Collier Foundation. ('Mobile Moments' Artworker: Sarah Nelson; Photographer: Matt Scurfield).

and make that experience accessible to many – so they can feel firsthand how rewarding it is. The minimum donation to Impact100 WA will be \$1000, so should be affordable to most.” Subject to successful recruitment, Impact100 WA intends to make at least one \$100,000 high impact grant to a Western Australian non-profit organisation each year.

Sophie explains, “Making fewer, big grants will be our greatest strength. Our members will see the impact and we are also able to keep the costs of administration and reporting to a minimum”. Simon Bedbrook adds, “So far, I’ve been surprised how easily it came together. Some people not fired up in the past are enjoying this idea.”

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Impact100 WA will be a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation (ACF). This will allow the group to offer a tax deduction to donors and reduce the burden of administration on the volunteer committee. The ACF charges 2 per cent of the value of the fund, allowing the vast proportion of donations to go straight into the community.

“We want Impact100 WA to offer lots of opportunity to learn about the community sector,” Sophie explains. “We hope this will develop highly educated donors, new major donors, advocates for charities and, ultimately, a culture of giving in WA.”

Indeed, US research suggests exciting spin-off effects of Giving Circles. 76 per cent of circle donors reported that their awareness of community problems had increased (Eikenberry and Bearman: 2009); 35 per cent of donors contribute additional money to charities met through their involvement; 65 per cent end up volunteering; 32 per cent offer pro bono support; and nearly half of participants end up on non-profit boards (Bearman: 2007).

More people in Australia would be philanthropic if they felt better informed of community needs and knew how to have impact. Impact100 WA is sure to catch on and, through a modest donation, will open the door for many to the enriching world of philanthropy. ■

www.impact100wa.org.au

Artsupport Australia is the Commonwealth Government’s adviser to philanthropists on supporting arts, culture and related Indigenous projects in Australia. James Boyd also mentors Giving Circle start-ups. Tel: 08 6488 7339.

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