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LEADERLIFE MAKING A SPLASH

Local business launches aquaponics project this Indigenous Business Month

This Indigenous Business Month, a local not-for-profit organisation is providing a platform of empowerment with the launch of a new aquaponics program, proudly supported by Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation and the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS).

Founded in 2018, with the mission of ensuring young people are empowered to reach their potential, LeaderLife's latest initiative, 'Let's GROW with Aquaponics!', has been designed to support the health and wellbeing of young people through learning sustainability practices.

Aquaponics is a sustainable farming method which involves cultivating plants alongside aquatic animals such as fish, as a way of growing fruits and vegetables.

The plants and fish sustain each other, as the nutrient-rich water from the fish tank is used to feed the plants, where the plant's roots filter the water before it flows back to the fish tank for the cycle to start again.

Aquaponics serves as an efficient solution to many farming challenges by using less water, minimising waste and generating sustainable food production.

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation Chair, Ross Griffiths, said the project will teach young people important practical skills to support future aquaponic farming in regional areas.

"Aquaponics offer a sustainable and low-cost ecosystem that provides access to fresh fruit, vegetables, fish and crayfish," Mr Griffiths said.

"The waste produced by farmed fish and other aquatic wildlife supplies the nutrients for plants grown hydroponically, in turn purifying the water.

"This is such a unique and innovative project and the first of its kind to receive funding from the Charitable Foundation.

"The GROW project is just one more way that LeaderLife is engaging young people, giving them a sense of purpose through contribution."

LeaderLife Founder, Joh Leader, said the project is more than just an aquaponics program.

"Our aim for the GROW project is to engage young people at risk of being early school leavers by providing educational opportunities above and beyond the typical classroom setting," Ms Leader said.

"Participants of the project will learn social enterprise skills that will build their understanding about the aquaponics system from a range of perspectives including agriculture, technology, science, finance and history.

Media release

“Along with teaching our young people about aquaponics and sustainable food systems, our partners, the RFDS will offer education around mental health, alcohol and drugs, nutrition, curriculum opportunities and peer support.

“Our voluntary programs support around 60 people a day, from children as young as five, right through to adults. Our aim in all that we do is to provide a safe environment where youth and their families feel supported and loved, while learning tools to make positive choices for their futures,” she said.

Mr Griffiths said the impact LeaderLife is having on the community is clear to see, particularly in the Indigenous community, with over 90% of those accessing LeaderLife’s supports being Indigenous.

“We have been proud partners of LeaderLife for a number of years and previously supported their SoiL2Soul Lime Farm enterprise, which addresses the employability gap by providing meaningful jobs and skills to young people,” Mr Griffiths said.

“We were fortunate enough to have some of the young people who worked on the lime farm attend one of our Grant Ceremonies last year, bringing with them a few cases of their lime cordial to sell.

“On account of the delicious taste and their excellent salesmanship, they sold every last bottle!

“We have seen firsthand the difference that LeaderLife is making in the community, and the impact these programs are having on the lives of the next generation,” he said.

For those interested in learning more about LeaderLife, please visit <https://www.leaderlife.org.au/>

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About Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation

Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation provides more than \$1 million in grants each year to charitable projects aimed at improving the health and social wellbeing of vulnerable people in regional New South Wales. Since its establishment in 2003, the Foundation has provided more than \$26 million to some 550 community initiatives.