

Snow Entrepreneurs - fellowships for social change Stage 2: Full Application

Snow Entrepreneurs 2025



A Curious Tractor

Application identifier

2025/OC0146

Generated on

2025-08-22

Information from the Expression of Interest

Contact details

Name

Mr Nicholas Marchesi

Position

Co-Founder

Phone number

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Email

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LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/nicholasmarchesi/>

Do you identify as

Male

Organisation

A Curious Tractor

ABN

21591780066

Legal name

NICHOLAS MARCHESI

Organisation type

Profit-for-purpose

Does your constitution include reference to your social purpose?

Yes

Is this an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander-led organisation?

Yes - some Indigenous leadership (less than 50%)

Is the organisation registered under ORIC (Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations)?

No

Address

Line

40 Scott Road

Suburb

Herston

Postcode

4006

State

QLD

Website

<https://www.act.place/goods>

Eligibility Checklist

i Initiative since : 2024

What year was your organisation incorporated

Please provide additional context (add N/A if not applicable)

NA

i Has a social purpose to address disadvantage.

i Initiative has annual revenue of less than \$1m.

i Business model includes some self-generated revenue

i Has national reach / potential and benefits people in Snow Foundation's key regions.

i Organisation registered in Australia.

i Founder / CEO (key decision-maker) of the organisation.

Focus area

Theme

First Nations

Primary cause area

First Nations self-determination

Primary geographic scope

Northern Territory

Other geographic scope

Northern Territory, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia

About your initiative

Describe your initiative in a sentence

The Goods Project creates durable, repairable, culturally designed essential household goods (mattresses, washing-machines, fridges) for communities building local jobs and recycling capabilities

What is your initiative about (elevator pitch)?

We're building the "Toyota Troopy of household goods" - essential items designed specifically for remote conditions, starting with beds and expanding to washing machines and fridges. Through community-led manufacturing and design, we're creating sustainable solutions that address both practical needs and provide economic opportunities. Our successful bed pilots in Tennant Creek have proven the model's viability.

How is your initiative innovative?

Our initiative represents a groundbreaking approach as no organisation currently prioritises community-led design and manufacturing of essential household goods for remote communities. While traditional manufacturers design products in urban centers and distribute them remotely, we're pioneering a model where local knowledge and cultural practices drive product development from the ground up.

Our innovation combines three unique elements that create lasting impact. First, we integrate community wisdom with modern manufacturing techniques, ensuring products truly reflect local needs and conditions. Second, we're building a circular economy where products are designed for repair and recycling from inception, creating sustainable local employment opportunities. Third, we're establishing skills development pathways that transform community members from consumers into manufacturers, repairers, and designers.

This holistic approach creates a scalable framework that can be adapted across different communities and product types. By addressing both immediate product needs and long-term economic resilience, we're building a sustainable solution that stands apart from existing market offerings.

What stage is your initiative at?

Since August 2024, we have demonstrated our commitment to community-led design through successful deployment of 150 bed and mattress prototypes across Kalgoorlie, Mt Isa, Tennant Creek, and Palm Island. Our extensive community consultation process includes:

- Direct collaboration with Traditional Custodians like Richard Cassidy, following the principle to "read the river, walk the walk, talk the talk then create our story"
- Implementation of our "4x3x3" model:
 - Working with 4 remote communities
 - Focusing on 3 essential goods (mattresses, washing machines, fridges)
 - Conducting 3 iterative prototyping cycles with continuous community feedback

Our community engagement has provided valuable insights, as evidenced by community member Ivy highlighting the critical need: "It's very hard and expensive on Palm. Hardly any people around the community have beds".

We're now advancing to our second-generation mattress design with improved features for washability, modularity, and recycled components. Simultaneously, we're developing our first washing machine prototype, with plans to install 8 washers in community living areas and shared spaces.

This development process is strengthened through:

- Regular on-country workshops bringing together communities, design experts, and manufacturers
- Building local capacity through training programs
- Establishing modular, repairable designs that can be maintained locally

Our approach ensures products are "desirable, functional, fit for purpose" and are both "goods that heal and goods that are healed by the community".

Business model: Briefly describe how you expect to generate revenue – now and/or in the future. Include information on how you (will) generate your own revenue

Core Revenue Streams- Direct product sales with community co-investment-Working with communities to develop appropriate payment models that respect local economic conditions and cultural practices

Skills development and capacity building-Generating revenue through training programs that enable local maintenance and manufacturing capabilities

Circular economy services-Creating sustainable income through recycling operations and maintenance services, ensuring products remain functional long-term

Community-Centered Approach-Our model emphasises community participation and ownership through local maintenance capabilities

Integration with existing community infrastructure and systems, as demonstrated by our successful bed pilots across multiple communities

Regular community feedback and adaptation, ensuring products and services remain aligned with local needs

About you and your team

About you: Please tell us about your motivation, background, experience and aspirations in starting this initiative

As an award-winning social entrepreneur and innovator, my journey stems from a deep commitment to creating lasting social impact through innovative solutions. Having co-founded Orange Sky, the world's first free mobile laundry and shower service for people experiencing homelessness, I've spent the past decade leading its growth to over 65 services across Australia and New Zealand, one third being in Remote Communities in Australia.

My motivation for The Goods Project emerged from witnessing firsthand the heartbreakingly poor conditions people face in remote communities, particularly the impact of inadequate sleeping arrangements on overall wellbeing. I saw how poor sleep environments led to cascading issues including infection, RHD and broader social challenges.

Through my experience at Orange Sky, I developed expertise in:

- Leading and scaling high-impact social enterprises

- Product innovation and technology integration
- Building and managing successful non-profit organisations

Today along with Orange Sky, I co-lead A Curious Tractor (ACT), a platform dedicated to fostering creativity, curiosity, and connection. Through ACT, we support innovative projects focused on sustainability, inclusivity, and remote communities, working closely with First Nations communities to co-design culturally appropriate initiatives.

My aspirations for The Goods Project are deeply rooted in our successful pilot programs, where we've demonstrated the viability of community-led manufacturing and design. The project represents a convergence of my passion for innovative problem-solving and commitment to empowering communities through sustainable solutions.

My experience has been recognised through various accolades, including:

- Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2020
- Young Australian of the Year in 2016
- Forbes 30 Under 30 recognition in 2019

About your team: Please tell us about the other people involved (as staff, contractors or advisors)

This diverse team combines community wisdom, technical expertise, and cultural knowledge to ensure our solutions are truly community-led and sustainable.

Ben Knight is the co-founder of ACT, bringing over two decades of experience in social justice, youth advocacy, and community empowerment. His journey spans from working with Indigenous communities in remote Queensland to global experiences across South Korea, Turkey, and South America, shaping his deep understanding of cultural nuances and storytelling in driving social change. His expertise in empathy-driven innovation with a commitment to fostering creativity and connection. His approach is rooted in the belief that every story matters, developed through his extensive work across diverse communities.

First Nations Leadership Advisory-We have established strong partnerships with Traditional Custodians in Tennant Creek, Palm Island and Mt Isa, including Richard Cassidy, who guides our principles. In Tennant Creek, we work closely with respected community leaders and Traditional Owners including Patricia Frank, Norman Frank, LT and Dianne Stokes, alongside Wilya Janta. These partnerships have been instrumental in co-designing and implementing our solutions through deep community engagement.

Dr. Simon Quilty and the local health services team have provided crucial support in understanding community health needs.

Manufacturing Partnerships like collaboration with Zinus, the world's largest mattress manufacturer.

Why do you want to be a Snow Entrepreneur? What difference would it make to you, and what qualities do you bring to the cohort?

The Snow Entrepreneurs fellowship would provide an invaluable opportunity to both contribute to and learn from a community of passionate changemakers. I understand and have been fortunate enough to see the power of peer learning and collaborative growth in action. I deeply believe this has been key to my personal and organisational impact to date.

I bring three key qualities to the cohort:

- A proven track record of scaling social impact while maintaining deep community connections
- Experience in fostering genuine partnerships and co-design processes
- A commitment to shared learning and mutual support

Most importantly, I see this fellowship as an opportunity not just to receive support, but to actively contribute to a community of innovators. Through sharing our experiences in community-led manufacturing and design, while learning from others' diverse approaches, we can collectively amplify our impact in addressing social challenges.

Video pitch

[Video link](#)

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/0eknyci6n0e8q5j3nqsx6/SnowiesxGoods_2.mp4?rlkey=gb9cazsjylu3wm7wus1lpj8ef&dl=0

Video password (if applicable)

Focus area

Theme

First Nations

Cause area

First Nations self-determination

Need: What is the nature and size of the problem you are addressing? Why is this a need?

Over 150,000 First Nations people across 1,000+ remote Australian communities lack access to basic, durable household goods that directly impact health outcomes. Poor sleeping conditions and inadequate mattresses contribute to respiratory infections and RHD - a preventable condition at rates 20 times higher than urban areas. As community member Dianne from Tennent Creek shared, "It's very hard and expensive. Hardly any people around the community have beds." Essential items cost triple metropolitan prices yet fail quickly in harsh conditions. No manufacturer prioritises community-led design for remote health needs, leaving this critical gap unaddressed while preventable health conditions persist.

Beneficiaries to date: How many users / beneficiaries have you had to date?

500

Briefly describe who these beneficiaries are, how they've participated, and any outcomes you may have measured to date.

Our beneficiaries are First Nations families across Central Desert, Tennant Creek, Mt Isa, Palm Island and Kalgoorlie who actively co-designed our solutions. Through community-led iterative prototyping, Traditional Custodians like Norman Frank guide our approach. We've helped over 500 people through building over 200 beds and 10 indestructible washing machines. Impact measurement uses our empathy ledger through conversation-based research, capturing authentic voices like Alfred's: "This basket-style bed is easier to set up than anything else I've seen." This reveals improved sleep quality, reduced floor sleeping, enhanced dignity, and stronger community ownership. We log every product and lesson into an open-source system.

Beneficiaries in the future (next 12 months):

Who will be the primary beneficiaries of your initiative?

Indigenous

What is the primary age group that will benefit?

All

What percentage of beneficiaries is First Nations?

95%

What gender does your initiative primarily support?

All

Approximately what percentage of beneficiaries will be women and girls?

60%

If relevant, how does your initiative consider the needs, interests and circumstances of different genders?

Sleep and washing needs disproportionately impact women and girls in remote communities. Women often bear primary responsibility for family hygiene and health management, making access to functional washing machines critical for preventing infections and maintaining dignity during menstruation. Poor sleeping conditions particularly affect pregnant women and mothers who need quality rest while caring for families. Our community co-design process includes strong female voices, ensuring products address gender-specific needs like privacy, safety, and cultural protocols around washing spaces. By improving access to essential goods, we're reducing the care burden on women while supporting whole-family health and wellbeing outcomes.

Goals and impact

Goals: What are your top 3 goals for the next 12 months?

1. Scale production and delivery - Manufacture and install 300 additional beds across our four core communities while launching our first 40 indestructible washing machine prototypes, directly supporting 800+ community members.
2. Build local manufacturing capacity - Establish community-owned assembly and maintenance facilities in Tennant Creek and Palm Island, training 15+ local residents in production, repair, and quality control to ensure long-term sustainability.
3. Develop next-generation products - Complete community co-design and prototyping of our modular refrigeration units, integrating learnings from our empathy ledger research to create culturally appropriate cooling solutions that withstand remote conditions

Demo: Please provide a link to a demo of your product / service, if available.

<https://www.act.place/goods-product-page>

Impact: How will you know whether your initiative is successful in the future? What indicators will you measure, and how?

Success will be measured through our innovative **Empathy Ledger** approach, which captures authentic community voices through conversation-based research rather than traditional metrics alone. This methodology ensures communities own their impact stories while providing rigorous measurement.

Health Outcomes We'll track reductions in RHD cases, respiratory infections, and floor-sleeping through partnerships with local health services, linking improved living conditions to measurable health improvements.

Community Ownership Indicators: Success means communities independently manufacturing, repairing, and maintaining goods. We'll measure local employment creation, skills development, and the transition from external dependency to community-led production.

Product Durability and Functionality Our open-source "cause of death" database will systematically track product failures, repair rates, and lifespan, informing continuous design improvements. Every product and lesson is logged into our transparent system.

Narrative Impact Measurement: The Empathy Ledger amplifies community voices like Alfred's: "This basket-style bed is easier to set up than anything else I've seen," capturing dignity, comfort, and quality of life improvements that quantitative metrics often miss.

Scale and Sustainability: Long-term success includes replication across Australia's 1,000+ remote communities, with communities requesting expansion—as Palm Island did after requesting 100 additional beds following successful trials.

Consultation and collaboration

Lived Experience: How do you involve lived experience in the design and delivery of your initiative?

Lived experience is the foundation of our entire approach. Guidance from Traditional Custodian Richard Cassidy, our methodology is to "read the river, walk the walk, talk the talk then create our story"—ensuring community knowledge leads every stage. Our model centers lived experience through working with remote communities, focusing on 3 essential goods, and conducting iterative prototyping cycles. Community members don't just provide input—they lead the design process. Traditional Custodians including Richard Cassidy, Norman Frank, Patricia Frank, LT and Dianne Stokes guide our cultural protocols. Community members like Alfred, Ivy, and Jason are co-creators whose lived experience directly informs product design.

Collaboration: Who do you collaborate with in the delivery of your initiative, and how?

Our collaboration model spans everything we do. Community Partners include Traditional Custodians and leaders from Palm Island, Tennant Creek, Mt Isa, and Kalgoorlie who guide all design decisions through organisations like Wilya Janta. Our Advisory Board features Traditional Custodians (Richard Cassidy, Norman Frank, Patricia Frank, LT and Dianne Stokes) and industry experts who meet quarterly for strategic guidance. Manufacturing Partners include Zinus providing R&D support, plus emerging partnerships with Beko and LG. Research Partners include Centre for Appropriate Technology and Purple House. We conduct on-country workshops where community members lead assembly and maintenance training, ensuring local ownership.

Strategy and Risks

Who are your competitors? And how does your initiative differentiate itself from them.

Rather than viewing others as competitors, we see potential collaborators addressing the same systemic challenges. Current mainstream manufacturers like commercial bedding and appliance companies serve urban markets but their products fail prematurely in remote conditions, often harming the communities they're meant to serve.

Go-To-Market Strategy: How will you increase the number of people using/benefiting from your initiative?

Our go-to-market strategy centers on community-led expansion through proven testing and organic growth. We scale through demonstrated success in our four pilot communities where we've deployed over 200 beds, creating authentic demand that spreads through community networks. Communities seeing successful implementations request our involvement—Palm Island requested 100 additional beds after initial trials. Our "4x3x3" approach allows systematic expansion to additional communities while focusing on 3 essential goods through 3 prototyping cycles. By training community members in assembly and maintenance, we create local advocates who support expansion while ensuring sustainability through community ownership principles.

Geographic reach: Please tell us the geographic spread of your current users, and any specific partnerships, channels and/or strategies to reach participants across Australia, particularly in ACT and NSW.

Our current geographic reach spans four key remote communities where we've deployed over 250 beds and washing machines across Queensland (Palm Island), Western Australia (Kalgoorlie), and Queensland mining regions (Mt Isa), with strongest focus on Northern Territory Central Desert region, particularly Tennant Creek. Tennant Creek serves as our NT hub with deep Wilya Janta partnerships, Traditional Owners including Norman Frank, Patricia Frank, LT and Dianne Stokes, and manufacturing capabilities at Community Shed on Paterson Street. Alice Springs emerges as our technical hub. NT partnerships with Purple House, Children's Ground, Red Dust, and Barkly Regional Deal create expansion pathways.

Risks: What are the risks that might prevent you from achieving the intended outcomes, and what are you doing to mitigate them?

Funding Constraints: Growing demand across remote communities outpaces available resources. We mitigate through diversified funding streams including Snow Foundation, AMP Spark, manufacturing partnerships with Zinus and developing community co-investment models that share costs however need to do much to insure sustainably. **Scale vs Community Leadership:** Risk of losing community-led approach during rapid growth. We address this by transferring manufacturing, assembly, and maintenance capabilities to communities ensuring local ownership drives expansion. **Dependency Risk:** Communities becoming reliant on external support. Our mitigation focuses on skills transfer, local employment creation + establishing community-owned production facilities, enabling us to step back to achieve self-sufficiency.

Development: What areas do you need to develop to achieve your desired outcomes over the next three years? (Human, research, infrastructure & systems, financial, etc.)

As a young leader I need to keep learning and growing, I need to focus on community to become the real leaders and experts - not just helping, but actually running these operations themselves. I want to establish R&D capabilities that blend Traditional wisdom with technical innovation, ensuring communities control their own product development. I'm working to build

local manufacturing facilities and supply chains that communities can operate without me. My goal is helping communities create sustainable social enterprises that generate revenue through sales and services, achieving true economic independence.

Financials and governance

Financial commentary, including what income is confirmed vs projected

Please list any funders or investors supporting your initiative.

Snow Foundation

Our Community Shed

AMP Spark Program

QIC Staff Giving

Do you currently have any investment agreements (e.g. SAFE, convertible note, equity, loan)?

No

Please provide brief information about your Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board, if applicable (e.g. name, position, expertise).

Goods Project Advisory Board:

Corey Tutt

April Long

Judith Meiklejohn

Audrey Deemal

Shaun Fisher

Daniel Pittman

Sally Grimsley-Ballard

Community First Nations Leadership and Advisory:

Richard Cassidy (Traditional Custodian, Palm Island)

Norman Frank (Traditional Owner, Tennant Creek)

Patricia Frank (Community leader, Tennant Creek)

LT and Dianne Stokes (Community leaders, Tennant Creek)

Community Partnerships:

Wilya Janta organization (Tennant Creek)

Dr. Simon Quilty and local health services team

Manufacturing Partnership:

Zinus (world's largest mattress manufacturer) providing R&D team support, manufacturing expertise, and knowledge sharing

Referees

Referee 1

Richard Cassidy
0499 866 435
walkingoncountry@gmail.com
T/O Palm Island

Referee 2

Sally Grimsley-Ballard
0417 851 341
S.Grimsley-Ballard@snowfoundation.org.au
Supporter / Advisor

Supporting documents

Document type	File name	File size
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Declaration

I declare that I am authorised to submit this application on behalf of the organisation.

I state that the information in this application is to the best of my knowledge true and correct. I will notify The Snow Foundation of any changes to this information and any circumstances that may affect this application.

I understand that The Snow Foundation may request more information and seek sector feedback as part of the application assessment.

I have read and understood the *Snow Entrepreneurs – fellowships for social change grant guidelines and standard grant conditions*.

I have read and agree to the above.

Applicant accepted the declaration.

Applicant has consented to the Snow Foundation sharing their application with other potential funders.