

Investment in Regional Communities 2024-2026



ARDOCH

**REALISING CHILDREN'S POTENTIAL
THROUGH EDUCATION**

Regional Communities Expansion Program

Nurturing the confidence, wellbeing, social skills, aspirations and engagement of children facing disadvantage

Over 2024–2026, Ardoch aims to support 8,000 children in regional communities. Students in regional areas do not have the same opportunities as their urban peers, and the consequences for their education and lives are significant.

But we can take practical and meaningful steps to give these students opportunities to help redress the imbalance.

Each regional community comes with its own challenges, and students will have differing needs. Ardoch will work closely with students, teachers and local communities to develop programs and approaches that meet students' needs, complement the curriculum and will make a sustained impact on students' potential.

Our work in regional areas is with primary schools and will focus on the vital transition years of grades five and six to set the students up to succeed in secondary school.

The offered programs will:

- Increase student's confidence in their ability to learn
- Strengthen their resilience, social skills and wellbeing
- Reinforce their foundational learning in literacy and STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths)
- Build their aspirations for the future
- Increase engagement in education.

Research shows that each of these are vital to give children every chance to succeed in secondary education – and in life.

Each school will be able to choose a program that best meets the needs of their year five and six students. For example, a school may identify that their students need extra support in:

Supporting student's literacy

- Writer in Residence
- Education support volunteers
- Programs focusing on improving students' communication and social skills

Strengthening students' engagement in STEM:

- Scientist in Residence
- Robotics Club
- Speed Careers with a focus on sciences

Fostering students' creativity and self expression:

- Artist in Residence
- An excursion to see the works of local artists and gain an appreciation of culture and art's role in society
- Information session on careers in art and design.



Why support regional programs?

Regional students are facing significant academic challenges, as evidenced by NAPLAN scores in Victoria. By grade 3, students in regional communities are already three months behind their urban counterparts in literacy levels, and this gap widens as they progress through primary school. By the time these students reach age 15, they have fallen behind by approximately 1.5 years of study.

These educational disparities in regional areas can be attributed to various social, economic, and community factors. While some challenges stem from differences in social and economic circumstances, there are several intersecting obstacles that contribute to the inequity, including:

1. Regional areas often struggle with a **lack of qualified teachers**, with high turnover further disrupting students' learning experiences
2. Regional areas typically have limited **access to educational facilities**, which hampers students' learning opportunities
3. The **curriculum** in regional schools may not be tailored to the specific needs and interests of students, impacting their engagement and motivation
4. Due to resource constraints, regional schools may be **unable to hire specialist staff, equipment or programs**, depriving students of valuable educational opportunities
5. Students in regional areas often face **limited access to support such as, mental health, wellbeing and remedial programs**, further hindering their academic progress
6. Regardless of their level of education, students in regional communities face a scarcity of **job prospects**, limiting their future prospects and sense of what is available to them.

The consequences of these challenges are manifold:

1. Students in regional areas are more likely to be **absent from school**
2. Both parents and students may develop **diminished confidence in the importance of education**, affecting their motivation to excel academically
3. Limited resources and support services in regional areas contribute to higher rates of **mental health issues** among students
4. Students may have **reduced ambitions** and expectations for their future due to the lack of opportunities and support
5. Regional students **have fewer opportunities** to engage in cultural activities, limiting their exposure to diverse experiences
6. Regional students are less **likely to complete secondary school** compared to their urban counterparts, further impacting their long-term prospects.

These issues contribute to a cycle of disadvantage. To address them and ensure regional students have the best chance of success, additional support measures are necessary.

Our programs provide students with the skills and experiences to help them reach their potential, including:

1. Building students' confidence in their ability to learn
2. Developing social and communication skills essential for their academic and personal growth
3. Promoting strong student wellbeing and mental health
4. Inspiring students to reach their full potential
5. Encouraging active engagement in learning.

Where we work

Ardoch builds partnerships with schools whose rating on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) is below 1000, the median score across Australia. This measure allows us to identify schools in communities facing disadvantage. Our Education Partners are all located in communities facing multiple challenges and disadvantages, and have an average ICSEA of 945.14 – well below the median. Students attending these schools do not have the same opportunities as their peers to succeed at school or in life.

Research demonstrates that education interventions directly impact children's educational and social development, and have a lasting effect. Improving children's confidence, academic and social skills, and engagement with learning is core to our changing these children's lives.

In most of the schools with whom we work, there is a concentration of children whose families are in the bottom quartile of socio-economic advantage. For example, the proportion of children or youth in the bottom socio-economic quartile for some of our partner schools is significant:

- Mildura Primary – 83%
- Stawell West Primary – 63%
- Linton Primary – 63%
- Gowrie Street Primary School – 82%

Multiple studies in Australia have demonstrated an unacceptable link between the socio-economic status of students and their educational outcomes. "A child's earliest years fundamentally shape their life chances. Starting school 'behind the eight ball' can begin a cycle of disadvantage that sets a trajectory for poorer outcomes later in life." (Productivity Commission, 2013.)

Ardoch engages local volunteers and artists to support program delivery, strengthening community links to the school and exposing children to a range of positive adult role models.

This project will initially be undertaken in the following regions of Victoria:

- Ovens Murray
- Loddon
- Mallee
- Central Highlands
- Barwon
- Wimmera South West.

The project will extend into regional communities facing disadvantage in New South Wales in years two and three.



Bringing the program to life

Resources in regional communities are stretched. The children who most need support are from communities facing considerable disadvantage. Making this program a reality requires members from across the community – businesses, philanthropists, trusts, foundations and governments – who are committed to ensuring that education equity is a reality.

Over the next three years, we aim to secure \$1,500,000 to ensure we can make a difference to 8,000 students in regional communities.

Direct program delivery costs comprise over 80% of total spend, with program management and administration and evaluation just under 20%. The program will initially support 35 schools and increase to 40 in year two and 45 in year three.

To make the program a reality, we are looking for supporters to partner with Ardoch and offer to match the donations made by regional communities.

With 5–7 partners committed to matching gifts for three years, we can make sure that children in regional communities have additional support to help them reach their needs.



Program Impact

Ardoch's monitoring, evaluation and learning framework ensures we can maximise the effectiveness and impact of our work.

Research shows that children are most likely to succeed at school if they meet the following five key criteria:

- they are confident in their ability to learn
- have aspirations beyond school
- their wellbeing is supported
- their social skills are developed
- they are engaged in their schooling.

We track the effectiveness of our programs using feedback from students, volunteers, staff and teachers. We use surveys, interviews and focus groups.



Our evaluation framework focuses on these five key criteria:

Confidence

Students are more comfortable expressing themselves, increased pride in their work and have greater overall confidence in themselves.

Aspiration

Students are inspired to seek broader possibilities for themselves and are inspired to pursue these aspirations, they have an increased knowledge of potential careers as well as an expanded sense of their potential.

Wellbeing

Students have increased knowledge of what positively supports their wellbeing as well as increased resilience.

Social Skills

Students increase their communication skills, their ability to work effectively with others as well as being able to connect and interact with people from outside their social circles.

Engagement

Students have increased enthusiasm and interest in their learning as well as an increased willingness to participate in school, they place an increased value on their education and participate more in school-based activities.

About Ardoch

One in three children facing disadvantage starts school developmentally behind their peers. As a national, not-for-profit organisation, Ardoch seeks to address this gap by offering educational programs that build children and young people's confidence, aspirations, social skills and wellbeing. These are essential elements for enabling full engagement in education and a love of learning.

Engagement in education is the key to opening future pathways and possibilities. Without it, the cycle of disadvantage and inequity continues.

Disadvantage takes many forms and affects people from a broad range of backgrounds and life circumstances. As Ardoch continually strives to deepen the impact of its work, we also seek to increase the diversity within our organisation, to expand our perspectives and broaden our understanding of the children and young people we hold at our centre.

Ardoch's unique approach brings together schools, students, volunteers, businesses, experts, and community to identify needs and design how best to create impact. This approach has been further strengthened in our Strategic Plan 2023–2026.

Our priorities are to:

- Deepen Ardoch's impact by collaborating with researchers on contemporary, effective programs and approaches, and developing models to maximise the impact of student connections with volunteers and facilitators
- Give students a voice and greater agency in program design, delivery and evaluation, establishing student program co-design and advisory models and initiating student led program options
- Support school-led, needs-based change for improved educational outcomes, in partnership with teachers and school leaders
- Strengthen community connections with schools to enhance and expand educational opportunities
- Influence education policy, practice and investment to address systemic inequity, share evidence and learning to contribute to systemic change.



www.ardoch.org.au



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<https://www.linkedin.com/company/ardoch>



Ardoch publishes its Strategic Plan, Annual Report on our website as well as our audited accounts.

<https://www.ardoch.org.au/annual-report-audited-financial-reports/>

Ardoch's Programs

Ardoch's programs are constantly adapting to community needs, research, and school and student priorities. Our program offering includes:

Literacy support – programs focused on engaging students with the written word with the support of volunteers, including Education Volunteers and Literacy Buddies, and Writer-in-Residence

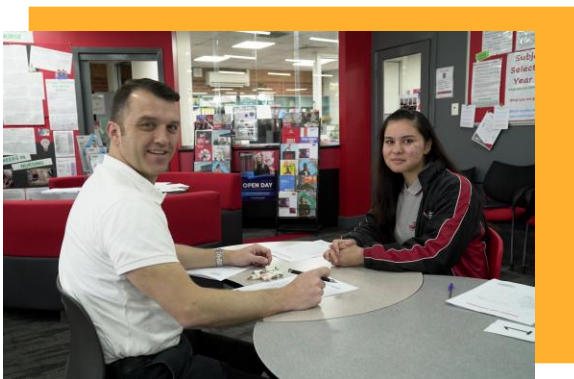


STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths) programs – including Numeracy Buddies, Robotics program, and STEM-based incursions and excursions



Pathways – a further education and career information program that over the course of a year provides students with exposure to mock interviews, speed careers, industry visits, university and TAFE visits, and Learning Through Lunch

Wellbeing and experiential programs – incorporating wellbeing, social and cultural incursions and excursions, and Artist-in-Residence

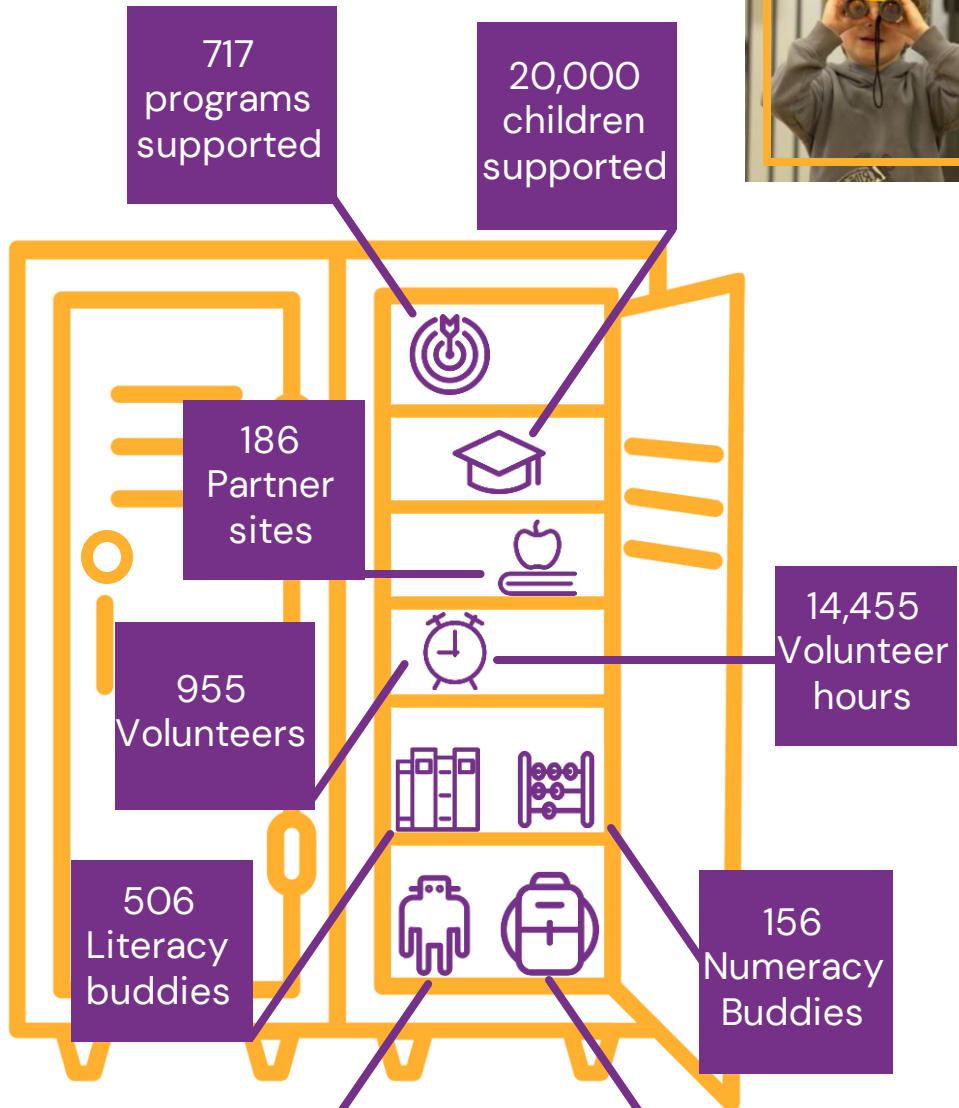


We deliver our programs, uniquely, to whole classes. We do this because we believe no child should miss out on a program alongside their peers. With a higher than average proportion of students in disadvantaged communities requiring extra support, this approach ensures all students receive the benefit of our programs.

Our program design proactively engages both the schools and the children in tailoring the program to suit their unique needs and interests. Schools and students are also central to our monitoring and evaluation of the program to ensure we have the greatest impact.

To find out more please visit www.ardoch.org.au/our-programs/

Our 2022 Impact



Thank you

Thank you for considering supporting children in regional communities. With your help, we can deliver an engaging and tangible education program to children and young people living within communities facing disadvantage.

To find our more, please visit: <https://www.ardoch.org.au/regional-expansion/>

Email: fundraising@ardoch.org.au

Call: 03 9537 2414



Ardoch Website



Regional Expansion



Corporate Partnerships

