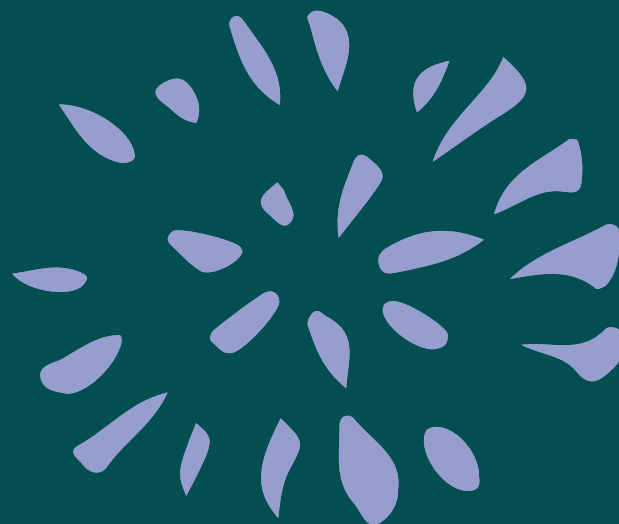


Strengthening Democracy Together

Mannifera's achievements, learning
and 2023–2026 strategic plan



mannifera

Introduction

Since our inception in 2019, Mannifera has played a pivotal role uniting funders across Australia to fuel the work of civil society organisations protecting our democracy and tackling the drivers of economic inequality.

As we ramp up our efforts and plan for the future, we have taken time to reflect on all that we have achieved and learned through our work to date. To inform this reflection we conducted an in depth evaluation of our work. This report presents an overview of our findings, including a summary of Mannifera's achievements and learning drawn from stakeholders engaged in the evaluation process, and leads into an outline of our new three-year strategic plan.

Vision

A more complete democracy and an economy with fairness at its heart, protected by a robust and vibrant civil society sector.

Mission

We are a collective of Australian funders working together to invest in civil society organisations advocating for the systems change we need to strengthen our democracy and build an economy that works for everyone.

Approach

How we work is who we are, which is why our approach to philanthropy guides everything we do. We are:

- Led by civil society and First Nations expertise
- Focused on supporting advocacy that tackles systems-level change
- Committed to fostering collaboration and collective action
- Building trust-based relationships and partnerships
- Responsive to evolving needs and changing contexts
- Innovative and willing to take risks
- Continuously learning and improving on our practice

Commitment to First Nations Justice

Mannifera members acknowledge that a history of colonisation, dispossession and disempowerment of First Nations peoples is woven into the fabric of our political and economic systems. We recognise that Australia cannot achieve a complete democracy or a fair economy without addressing this history, instating the rights and respecting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Mannifera is committed to listening to and learning from First Nations perspectives on the state of our democracy and economy, and for these perspectives to inform our funding decisions. We are also committed to dedicating at least 20% of our grant-making budget to First Nations-led initiatives.



Our Achievements

Filling a critical funding gap

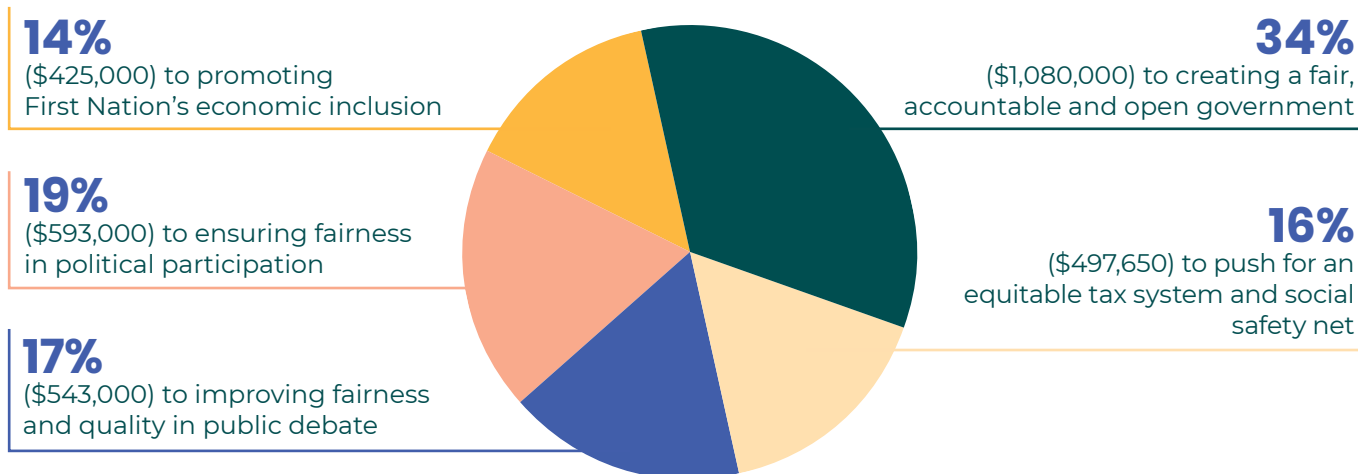
Mannifera has addressed a critical gap in Australia's philanthropy community by backing advocacy organisations and initiatives that protect our democracy and tackle the structural causes of economic inequality.

Between 2019 and 2023:

\$3+ million delivered

45+ organisations

\$10k – \$100k sized grants



25% Thus far we've granted 25% of our total budget (\$793,000) to First Nations-led organisations working across our focus areas, with the guidance of our First Nations advisors since 2021.

Influencing philanthropy and facilitating collaboration

Mannifera has been instrumental to informing and influencing practice in Australia's philanthropic community. Our innovative collective model also helps bring funders and civil society advocates closer together to learn from each other and achieve systems change. And our grant partners now also have the space to share their work, test solutions, and establish additional advocacy and funding relationships.

21 members

5 annual musters

16 partnership events

25 think tables

18 learning events

Creating Systems Change

Through Mannifera's support, our grant partners have achieved far-reaching systems-level change, making a real and lasting difference to communities across Australia.

April 2021

Increasing social security benefits:

Mannifera's core funding to ACOSS enabled the organisation to continue and strengthen its 'Raise the Rate' campaign, which resulted in a small but permanent increase to JobSeeker payments in April 2021.

May 2021

Sustaining independent journalism:

Mannifera provided rapid response funding to the Australian Associated Press, which enabled them to transition to a not-for-profit and unlock millions in philanthropic and federal funding. This move ensured the sustainability of a source of public interest news that is critical for the health of Australia's democracy.

November 2021

Ground-breaking research:

Research on the state of local news across Australia, conducted by PIJI and funded by Mannifera, brought national attention to the decline of news media in the country. Thanks to Mannifera's support, PIJI leveraged further philanthropic funding. In 2023, PIJI was awarded federal government funding to extend their research for 12 months

November 2021

Protecting the right advocate for change:

In 2020, Mannifera's seed funding helped launch the Australia Democracy Network (ADN). With renewed support in 2021, ADN led the Hands Off Our Charities Alliance to victory by defeating the proposed Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission regulations that sought to prevent charities from doing advocacy work.

December 2021

Ensuring everyone can cast a ballot:

Thanks to the Mannifera-backed advocacy work of the Australia Democracy Network, Voter ID legislation that would have impacted First Nations communities and people experiencing homelessness' right to vote did not go through.

February 2022

Defeating the Religious Discrimination Bill:

Mannifera provided funding to Equality Australia that helped them lead the coalition that brought down the Religious Discrimination Bill. The bill held provisions that would allow for the marginalisation of LGBTIQ communities, women and religious minorities.



May 2022

Protecting workers rights in remote Indigenous communities:

The advocacy work of the First Nations Workers Alliance, backed by Mannifera, helped to abolish the discriminatory and exploitative “work-for-the-dole” program that ran in remote First Nations communities. The program was notoriously hailed as a form of modern-day slavery because it suspended Indigenous participants from income support if they didn’t meet work quotas.

May 2022

Building a diverse and representative government:

Our government has the highest-ever number of female parliamentarians thanks to Mannifera funding. Support to Australian Democracy Network, the Big Deal documentary, Centre for Public Integrity, Fair Agenda and Tomorrow Movement fueled work that influenced the agendas of successful parliamentary candidates, and support to Women for Election aided training and mentorship for many of those elected.

November 2022

Ensuring the utility of the National Anti-Corruption Commission:

Through three years of core funding, and by leveraging funding from peers, Mannifera helped the Centre for Public Integrity increase their capacity and play a key role in shaping, amending and strengthening the legislation that governs the work of the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC). This ensured the ongoing utility of the NACC for all Australians.

August 2023

Safeguarding whistleblowers throughout Australia:

With the backing of Mannifera, the Human Rights Law Centre has spearheaded the launch of a groundbreaking whistleblower project. The initiative will provide whistleblowers with vital legal assistance, enabling them to reveal wrongdoing under the protection of law and ensure the wrongdoing they disclose is dealt with promptly and fairly.

March 2023

Levelling the playing field for charity fundraising:

Mannifera provided the only dedicated funding to Justice Connect at a critical endpoint in their long-term #FixFundraising campaign, leading to a commitment from the federal and state governments to make fundraising rules uniform across the country. This is a result that every charity in Australia can benefit from.

December 2022

Setting standards for sexual assault and harassment in government:

Core funding was provided to Fair Agenda to lead the advocacy coalition that successfully strengthened the Code of Conduct for MPs. Advocacy coalition members included Mannifera partners Australian Democracy Network and Human Rights Law Centre. The code now sets standards to prevent and respond to sexual assault and harassment in government settings.

Our Learning

From November 2022 to March 2023, Mannifera collaborated with Regina Hill, Director of Effective Philanthropy, to conduct an in-depth evaluation of our work to date. This involved an analysis of systems-level changes that resulted from our grants, and surveys with our grant partners and members to better understand what's going well and how we can improve moving forward.

Insights from our grant-making

Grant partners perceive Mannifera as a partner, not just a funder. They appreciate the strong foundation of trust that allows them to set their own agendas, and by backing their visions and approach, Mannifera boosts their confidence, clarity, and organisational sustainability.

Mannifera's contributions have had the most impact when:

- Providing core, renewed funding to smaller, newer organisations and initiatives.
- Being the first to support overlooked advocacy initiatives.
- Offering rapid response funding for urgent issues.
- Investing in sector-wide advocacy campaigns.
- Trusting grant partners to drive their agendas.
- Successfully leveraging further funding for grant partners.

"I love that Mannifera funds things that can't get funded, and sees that as a role for itself, but then also helps partners to grow funding pools for previously unfundable work."

– **Saffron Zomer**,
Executive Director, Australia Democracy Network

We also learned:

- Our impact is moderate when our grant is a smaller part of a larger funding effort, and even less significant when we provide a small grant to a long-term campaign with a large budget.
- Providing multi-year grants is needed to drive greater stability and impact
- We should actively incentivize collaboration between civil society organisations through grants
- Partners are keen for us to work on interventions that foster greater diversity and representation in civil society (including building capacity of emerging leaders)
- We must find funding gaps and address them through capacity building grants
- Members would like us to develop strategies to guide how we fill funding gaps, deliver rapid response grants, and make multi-year grants to underfunded entities.
- Members feel there is a need to articulate our gender-lens and commitment to geographic equity and apply it across our own activities.



Insights from operating as a collective

Members find value in being part of a collective, and feel Mannifera has stayed true to its intention of being a values-aligned community within the systems-change movement.

The greatest value members receive from being part of Mannifera comes from:

- Building their understanding of democracy and fairer economy issues.
- Forging deeper connections with civil society actors.
- Participating in peer-to-peer learning and collective decision-making that broadens their knowledge of philanthropic practice.
- Gaining confidence to take greater risks.

We also learned:

- We need to improve the consistency/depth of member onboarding processes.
- There's an opportunity for Mannifera to deepen its commitment to being civil society-led by bringing civil society partners into decision-making processes.
- It's important for Mannifera to remain agile and responsive as the collective's membership grows.

“Working as a collective builds confidence and creates greater awareness around different issues that I might not have experienced.”

– **Jill Reichstein**
Chair of the Reichstein Foundation



Insights from our work as conveners

Mannifera’s efforts to build collective power and bring civil society and philanthropy closer together have been highly appreciated.

The benefits of this work, shared by members and partners, include:

- Building trust between civil society and philanthropy.
- Sharing knowledge, lessons, and resources.
- Socialising problems and solutions to accelerate progress.
- Enabling partners to form new funding partnerships.

We also learned:

- Members feel connected to the work of our partners, but we need to create more opportunities for two-way conversations.
- We must increase the involvement and presence of civil society in our musters.
- We should do more to champion partners and the importance of systems change advocacy throughout our wider philanthropy network.
- There is a need for Mannifera to support convening of collaborative civil society and philanthropic efforts around issues where there is potential to shift the dial.
- We could increase our convening role for civil society given the gap in this area

“Funders have power and thus can set culture and expectations of collaboration. Mannifera has done this beautifully. Everyone is so busy working on their issue and fighting to get heard that an organisation with clout pulling us together is powerful.”

– **Dr Millie Rooney,**
Co-Director, Australia reMADE



Insights from our First Nations-led practice

Since inception, we have focused on incorporating a First Nations-led approach into our practice. We listen to and learn from First Nations perspectives, and identify and fund solutions that are initiated and controlled by First Nations communities through an Indigenous-led process.

Through our evaluation, our First Nations partners highlighted:

- Increased trust came from having a truly Indigenous-led process.
- They valued our willingness to genuinely listen in conversations.
- Mannifera's openness to exploring how funding can best be used was key.

We also learned:

- We must work with our First Nations advisors to identify and/or build the capacity of First Nations-led initiatives working at a systems change level.
- Our First Nations-led practice needs to be better integrated into our strategy.
- Our members felt our commitment to First Nations-led practice was an important reflection of First Nations sovereignty and through this they enhanced their understanding of First Nations perspectives and priorities, but they would like more opportunities to learn from this work in future.



Our 2023–2026 Strategic Plan

The insights drawn from our evaluation process have been crucial to informing our strategic plan, ensuring we build on what is working and adapt where needed. Below you will find a high-level overview of what we aspire to achieve from 2023 to 2026.

Pillar 1: Build Collective Power

1

Improve Operational Effectiveness

To catalyse transformative change through our work, we will build a capable team, efficient systems, seamless processes, and an effective relational approach.

2

Retain & Grow Membership

We will retain current members and grow our membership in order to enhance our collective power and provide increased support to civil society.

3

Improve Collective Practice

We will improve our practice by integrating civil society and First Nation's expertise into our work and enhancing learning and collaborative opportunities.

4

Influence Philanthropy

To inform best practice and expand the visibility of Mannifera we will enhance our thought leadership and engagement within the philanthropic community.

Pillar 2: Catalyse Systems Change

5

Progress Grant-making Practice

We will progress our civil society and First Nations-informed grant-making strategy and increase our investments into initiatives contributing to systems change.

6

Generate Learning

We will generate learning that progresses our grant-making strategy, advances the work of grant partners, and informs the wider philanthropic community.

7

Foster Shared Learning

We will enhance our efforts to facilitate opportunities for shared learning between philanthropy and civil society, but also within the civil society sector.

8

Amplify & Connect

We will leverage our networks, platforms, and voice to help grant partners forge partnerships and elevate their influence within philanthropy.



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