

Hands Across Canberra uses Census data to inform community funding needs

Hands Across Canberra raises money and directs it to community organisations to help disadvantaged groups and people in crisis.

CEO Peter Gordon says 2016 Census data was instrumental to its Vital Signs community check-up report, which revealed the needs of disadvantaged people in the community.

“We support 300 organisations and 100 community projects,” said Mr Gordon.

“Since 2011 we have distributed \$3 million to community projects. To ensure our grants have an impact, we need to prioritise funding for where it is needed most to address the critical needs in the community.”

2016 Census data showed areas of Canberra with educational disadvantage and youth unemployment at 10%. This group is at a higher risk of mental health issues and suicide.

Hands Across Canberra granted \$25,000 to Canberra’s Police Community Youth Club (PCYC) for an engagement program offering activities and recreation for at-risk young boys living on the edges of South Tuggeranong and West Belconnen.

“It’s a program to keep kids off the street and out of trouble,” explained Mr Gordon.

“PCYC has already changed the lives of 30 boys through great experiences and positive connections, and 200 boys are on the waiting list to join.

“The not-for-profit sector plays an immense role in addressing community need and finding solutions to our toughest problems,” Mr Gordon said.

“Census data and the Vital Signs report helps make connections between real issues and trends in different areas, so funding can focus on immediate need as well as prevention.”

Mr Gordon explains that it is important for everyone to complete the Census because to make a difference in communities, funding decisions must be based on credible data.

“We could not have produced such a comprehensive and useful Vital Signs report if not for Census data. It allowed us to make well informed decisions for grant rounds in 2018 and 2019, and the data will influence granting decisions for years to come.”