



Title: Helping our Schools

Category: Heart of the Community

Club Name: Lithgow Workies Club

Entrant: Geoff Wheeler

- 1. Provide an outline of the program, project or cause that addresses each of the following aspects:**
 - a. The program/project/cause objectives**
 - b. The support the club provided, i.e. was it financial, in-kind, staff volunteers or use of club facilities?**
 - c. A timeline of activities/events**
 - d. Any developments made since implementation (for example: if the support spans multiple years, how has the program grown? Will the club provide support again? Will the program be enhanced in the future?)**

Lithgow Workies Schools Breakfast/Food Program

During mid 2021 the Lithgow Workies Board were made aware of significant issues relating to Greater Lithgow community school students not having breakfast before school with some students going without dinner the night before or having lunch. The Board were very concerned regarding these issues and thought if this is occurring in one school, we need to check on the wellbeing of other schools within our community and requested the General Manager to contact all local schools in an attempt to determine the severity of the problem throughout within the greater Lithgow community.

The GM met with representatives from all local schools, where it was clearly identified that all schools, with some schools greater than others experiencing problems associated with many of their students not receiving daily sustenance to help them through their schooling day.

For a combination of different reasons, there are some members of our community doing it a little harder than normal. Whether it be changing workforce demographics within Lithgow, COVID-19, mental health or wellbeing concerns, or any other mitigating factors the ultimate cost and final impact always falls upon our children. As a result, more than ever before, a substantial number of students within our community experience significant disadvantage and do not have access to enough healthy, nutritious food each day. Additionally, many students arrive at school having eaten little or no breakfast. Some have not eaten dinner the night before.

The coordinator of the Lithgow High School wellbeing center advised that, many students at Lithgow High School experience significant disadvantage and do not have access to enough food each day. A large number of our families have no adult in paid employment and finances are extremely stretched. Many of our kids bring no food to school and are hungry".

Samantha Bodner teacher at Coerwull Public School conducted a survey and reported that around 70 students do not have breakfast before school, 116 students do not have fruit in their daily diets,



63 students do not drink water every day and some students do not have any lunch to eat on a daily basis and appear at the staff room asking for something to eat.

The GM collated all information gained through his meetings and reported back to the LWC board. It was obvious that our local school communities have significant problems associated with many students being impacted by lack of family resources for healthy nutritional requirements on a daily basis.

The board resolved to set up a Lithgow Workies Club School Breakfast Program for all effected schools within our community and create a budget funding of an initial \$20,000.00/year. The GM set further objectives by investigating other ways of helping with student education in nutrition, menu planning, budgeting and seeking other forms of financial support.

LWC initiated a timeline of events and activities where we would provide chefs, and other resources to attend schools for education and career development guidelines and programs, unfortunately due to ongoing covid restrictions this would be delayed; albeit achieved in a modified way.

The GM wrote to all schools informing them of the support offered through the LWC Breakfast Program. LWC will provide \$20,000 annually to support the Lithgow Community Schools Breakfast Program.

LWC will provide Chefs and other resources to attend schools for student education purposes, food safety & hygiene, food budgeting, menu planning, cooking methods, career paths and others.

Since the inception of the program, the GM Geoff Wheeler approached the Lithgow based Westfund Private Health Insurance Company CEO Mark Genovese to ask if they would support the LWC School Breakfast Program, Mark approached his team and happily became an equal partner with LWC.

Westfund will provide \$20,000 annually to support the Lithgow Community Schools Breakfast Program.

Westfund will provide expertise and resources to attend schools for student health education purposes, healthy lifestyles, eye & dental health, promote health & wellbeing, mental health, career paths and others.

Two of Lithgow's oldest and respected businesses Lithgow Workmen's Club and Westfund Health Insurance have combined in a partnership to support the Greater Lithgow Community of Schools Breakfast/food Program. Both businesses have their roots firmly established in Lithgow, they have been around for over 135 years, and have supported Lithgow and other regional communities for many years.

Another business in Lithgow, Centennial Coal, being approached by CEO of Westfund Mark Genovese, through discussions with Centennial Coal CEO Lithgow local Craig Gillard, also joined as an equal financial partnership with LWC and Westfund, coming on board in late 2022, they are also offering employment/training opportunities to students from the Lithgow school community.

Lithgow High School Principal Foty Loupos has identified that many of his students for a variety of reasons would like to leave school after the completion of year 10 and met LWC GM Geoff Wheeler



and board chairman Howard Fisher in October 2022, with a proposal for the club to partnership with his school in providing School Based Traineeships for high school students from year 9 onwards. He believes these opportunities will encourage some of the students to gain a qualification and seek employment opportunities and career paths in apprenticeships, traineeships and other. The LWC are pleased and proud to provide this partnership and provide opportunities for students in a range of areas within our club including kitchen operations, cellar/maintenance operations, motel operations, cleaning and administration operations. During the 2022 Christmas school holiday period the club employed several students as casual kitchen/tables employees which, proved very successful for both the students and the club, they remain employed.

As clearly demonstrated above the program has grown from its inception in mid 2021. LWC will continue to support the program into the future with up to \$20,000.00 included in P&L budgets for 2021, 2022, and 2023 onwards. The program has been enhanced since its inception with training and education and with the inclusions of the partnerships with Westfund Health Insurance and Centennial Coal we are confident of further enhancement and opportunities for our school communities being achieved.

2. Provide a brief insight into why this program, project or cause was supported by the club.

In your answer, summarise:

- a. How the project, program or cause was first presented to the club. For example, did a member present it to the Board or Executive team, was it part of a ClubGRANTS submission, did it come from a local business or the community based on a need, was a survey conducted to identify areas of community need, etc.**
- b. Why it was important to the club to support this community need.**

The GM received correspondence from one of Lithgow's Public-School teachers Samanther Bodner, outlining the dire circumstances that many of the students at her school were facing because of financial and other constraints their families were experiencing. The correspondence was seeking club financial assistance in support of a breakfast/food program the school had introduced and was severely underfunded. The board discussed this request and instructed the GM to conduct a survey of other local schools within the greater Lithgow community, to assess how many schools were in similar situations. The result was most schools have major problems, where six schools had requested assistance to varying needs. These requests were and continue to be funded outside of the Club Grants program.

The board initiated the LWC School Breakfast/Food Program and determined to support all schools that apply for funding or in-kind support and budgeted for an initial \$20,000.00 per year amount to support the program.

The Lithgow & District Workmen's Club (Lithgow Workies) has a strong and ongoing commitment to the local community, with many subgroups, support and activities being the backbone of the club today. Fondly known as the "Lithgow Workies", it is one of the oldest registered clubs in New South Wales. We were founded in 1887 and proudly we continue to support the wider Lithgow community particularly in times of need. Our club like all clubs is extremely focused on supporting our



community, our history and record of support is there for all to see. When Management and the Board became aware of the major issues confronting our school community, it was unanimously endorsed by all, including staff, board, management, members and the wider Lithgow community.

We as a well-established club, Lithgow Workies could not be part of the wonderful Lithgow community without helping our schools look after the health and wellbeing of the students in times of need, that may normally go without. They are our future and deserve the right to effective education which would be difficult to pursue with an empty stomach. Studies have found that a hungry student has less impulse control, becomes angry more quickly and is more likely to be absent from school, resulting in the loss of learning as well as poor self-esteem and low confidence as a learner. This impacts enormously on their academic success, emotional wellbeing and regulation, and future life choices and aspirations.

There are always many worthwhile causes to support and we as a club endeavor to support individuals, community groups, charitable organizations, sporting groups, schools and others, both in kind and financially. We want to continue in making a difference in improving our communities' lives, and in this case our disadvantaged school students lives, providing them with the opportunities, they so rightly deserve.

Lithgow like many other regional communities has been impacted by covid and the adverse effect it has had on all of our economies, and we understand that we alone cannot solve all of the problems our schools face; however, we will make a difference.

3. Provide an outline of the positive impact the club's contribution had on the community.

A recent review of the program conducted between the GM Geoff Wheeler and Foty Loupos Principal Lithgow High School found:

These generous donations have led to a larger food budget, and we have been able to feed more students and introduce protein into our breakfasts. We can now offer students cereal, toast, yogurt, eggs, bacon or other equivalents as well as a variety of fruit and juice.

With LWC support we have involved students in helping to order food from the supermarket, food preparation, recipe planning, cooking and cleaning. All indispensable life skills as well as engaging literacy and numeracy activities. Students volunteer to help cook and serve breakfast and are learning basic hospitality and etiquette skills as well. Pride is taken in these roles.

We have been able to add protein rich foods such as cheese, ham, tuna, other cold meats and eggs to our toasties available throughout the day. Some students choose to make healthy salads or soups to share. Of course, sometimes delicious not so healthy treats are also cooked by students to compliment the healthy foods they are regularly cooking and eating.

We are encouraging students who require additional wellbeing support to research and cook healthy foods whilst they are in our wellbeing hub before and during school. We hope that some of these skills might then be used at home as students build a repertoire of simple, reasonably nutritious and delicious meals and snacks they are confident to cook.

We are introducing a much wider variety of foods to what many of these students are used to in their daily lives.



Students in their teens experience rapid growth and development, and nutritious protein rich foods are vital to their healthy development.

Many studies have proven the crucial importance of a healthy breakfast for brain function which is critical for learning, concentration, engagement in a classroom as well as physical and mental health and wellbeing.

At Lithgow High School we are very proud of our innovative wellbeing support structures. The Lithgow Workies Club providing us the support and opportunity to be able to extend our breakfast program and daily food choices has had a consequential impact for many of our vulnerable students. Many look forward to arriving at school a little earlier for breakfast, attend more regularly, and new friendships have been established as they prepare, cook and share food. Self-esteem is improved and readiness for learning has improved for many students.

All of our schools have similar stories to tell regarding the improvement in most aspects of student wellbeing, particularly the improved student interactions with one another whilst sitting down at the table eating breakfast/lunch together, sadly something that not all experience in their home life. Lithgow Workies Club, our board, partners, management, staff, members, and community groups, are proud to be involved with the support of our school's breakfast program and the positive outcomes we have achieved both in support and results since its inception in July 2021.

4. Add any credits here (optional).

Lithgow Workies Board:
Chairman Howard Fisher
Vice President Ray Warren
Vice President Michael Quinn
Director Darryl Goodwin
Director Trevor Schram
Director Allan Gregory
Director Darryl Fitzgerald
Lithgow Workies GM Geoff Wheeler, Management & Staff
Tim Standing Executive Chef
Lithgow Workies Members
Mark Genovese & Westfund Health Insurance
Craig Gillard & Centennial Coal
Foty Loupos Principal Lithgow High School
Samantha Bodner Coerwull Public School
Lithgow Public School
Cullen Bullen Public School
Wallerawang Public School
St Patrick's Primary School

5. Supporting material:

- *LHS breakfast program appreciation*
- *Coerwull public school breakfast program*
- *LWC school breakfast program meeting notes & invitation*
- *LWC school breakfast program sample of school responses*