



**Title:** Orphan's Christmas in the Floods

**Category:** Mental & Social Wellbeing

**Club Name:** Lightning Ridge Bowls Club

**Entrant:** Rata Jackson

- 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?)**

The objective of the Orphan's Christmas Lunch was started on Christmas 2016 by me Rata Jackson. It was to bring those who are lost, lonely, living in extreme heat conditions, new to the community, rich or poor, together on Christmas Day for a family style feast with no cost to the guest.

I am an employee of the bowling club and when I asked if I could possibly hold something on Christmas Day if the Club would support me. I was overwhelmed with the response from the Club and the town. The Club each year provides the premises with use of the kitchen and bars. Each year I have had a super bunch of volunteers to man the bars, prepare the food, courtesy bus drivers, not to mention the set up and clean up crews.

The first year we had 75 people and that was with volunteers.

2021 (year 6) we had over 200 guests, 50 volunteers and we also packed 400 containers of food to be helicoptered out to the SES crews at Collarenebri, Walgett and Moree.

I now have regular support through Red Cross, Walgett Shire and local business and the event is one that people really look forward to.

We are now at the stage we are discussing where our excess funds can go to help local business etc.

There is so much need in Lightning Ridge that it is exciting to know that we will now give back to others in need.

- 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.**

In 2016 I approached the then Club Manager Scott Franklin with my idea of a free Christmas Lunch for those who are on their own or without loved ones. The temperature here in summer reaches high 40's and on Christmas Day there is nothing open in town. A good proportion of residents live in camp style situations where many will have no cooling whatever and people literally die from heat exhaustion. Lightning Ridge can become like a ghost town in the summer, so a Christmas shindig is a nice change. The Club in Lightning Ridge is spacious and cool. Scott was happy to support me and once I started looking to see if I could raise enough funds for food and gifts from local business it seemed that the town was in favor also. We even have entertainment of bush poet's and a choir.

I did not do any survey's and in hindsight I still wonder how I pulled this off being new to the town and not knowing too many. The great part is our event has bought a lot of people together, new friendships formed and get togethers throughout the year.

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

The Club is the largest business facility in town and can host large events in comfort and style and is the perfect place to hold our event. Having use of all club facilities such as building, bars, courtesy bus and free soft drink etc has made it the event of the year for most. The only payment is if alcohol is to be consumed. The lunch and entertainment is free.

Due to the generosity of the club, we now can help other community ventures.

**4. Add any credits here (optional).**

Scott Bailey CEO of the Club. He is an awesome boss and has great vision. His encouragement is overwhelming.

The Board of Directors also have supported us throughout the years which without them the event would not happen. One of the members of the board opens lunch with Welcome to country. Staff from the Club volunteer on Christmas Day with bar duties, bus driving etc which without there skills it could not happen.

Then all the hands on hard workers setting up and cleaning up. Too many too list. Love them all

**5. Supporting material:**

- *To request copies of the supporting documents, please email [events@clubsnsw.com.au](mailto:events@clubsnsw.com.au)*