



Cowan Grants Pty: Young Endeavour grant

www.cowangrant.org

Innovation

Cowan Grants support a number of scholarships at universities in South Australia and Queensland for students experiencing financial, geographic and other forms of disadvantage. Depending on the grant, students use the financial support in different ways. This may include contributing to the purchase of a musical instrument or assisting with travel and accommodation expenses. Overall, Cowan grants help students attend and fully engage in their learning and development at university. Since its inception, \$2 million in Cowan Grants have been provided.

One specific grant, designed to expose and enhance a student's social and leadership capabilities, is the Cowan Young Endeavour grant. This unique experiential learning opportunity is offered through the University of South Australia and James Cook University, Cairns Australia. To be eligible, students between the ages of 16-23 need to be enrolled fulltime in any of the university's programs and demonstrate their financial disadvantage, educational merit and provide a personal written statement. The grant of \$5,000 covers travel expenses and enables a student to access the 11-day Young Endeavour sailing program with 23 other young people.

Outcomes

The Cowan Grants provide a vehicle for improving student outcomes. These include improving post-school transitions into tertiary education; academic achievement; student confidence and the development of personal, social and leadership capabilities.

Assisting students to overcome financial barriers to post-school learning has been an enduring focus for Cowan Grants, with the Cowan family believing strongly in the benefits of tertiary education. In addition, over the last couple of years, Cowan Grants have also taken a strong interest in the benefits of experiential learning opportunities because these can help foster leadership development through exposing students to different and challenging experiences. The Young Endeavour grant is illustrative of such an experience.

Discovering whether the grants have gone to those most in need and are helping to improve student outcomes can be a challenge.





Examples include

Improving	What might help you notice whether improvements are being made? Through... Evidence and approaches, such as
Post-school transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meetings with all scholarship recipients. The Cowan family makes a point of trying to meet all recipients at a formal scholarship ceremony.• Family member anecdotes about how recipients have used the grant and to what effect (e.g. what have been their post-school transitions experiences, employment opportunities etc).
Student capabilities personal and social competence; confidence; leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family member anecdotes about the impact of the grant in terms of personal and social competence. Over the years, through conversations, family members have become attuned to identifying the impact of a grant (e.g. sometimes parents will spontaneously describe the changes in their child).• Anecdotes from students reflecting on how the experience has changed them (e.g. improved confidence, a shift from feelings of apprehension to feelings as expressed in such statements as, 'it's been a life changing experience').• Student summaries of their experiences are compared to their personal written statement prior to selection to identify shifts in attitudes, leadership development and confidence.

Lesson learned

The need for quality relationships: Quality assurance is the most difficult part of administering grants. We have talked about tracking grant recipients over a number of years, but the most important lesson we have learned is to get to know and work with the people who are selecting the grant recipients. This builds trust and transparency. In turn, this leads to fully frank conversations about what is and is not working.

