

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE

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SharkPitch 2025 a Huge Success – Community Unites for Local Projects

There were tears, cheers and standing ovations at SharkPitch 2025 last night, as the Glenelg Shire community came together to celebrate courage, compassion, and the power of local giving.

The live crowdfunding event raised an incredible \$54,220 to support three inspiring community projects, each one driven by people determined to make a lasting difference both locally and beyond.

The night showcased heartfelt storytelling, raw emotion, and the spirit of generosity that defines our community.

- Days for Girls Portland – Raised \$19,695
- Rotary Club of Portland – Raised \$18,220
- Tyrendarra Sporting Club – Raised \$16,305

Inspiring Pitches

Days for Girls Portland opened with a story from Cambodia that moved the audience to silence. Pitcher Elizabeth Clements shared the experience of *Channary*, a young girl forced to choose between risking humiliation at school or missing out on her education when her period arrived and she had no access to pads or toilets.

“For Channary, dignity is left behind, on the dirt road alongside her education that day,” Elizabeth said.

The second pitcher for Days for Girls, Danita Smith reminded the audience of the power of the Portland chapter's 30-strong team:

“Each kit we make provides underwear, soap, liners, shields and a chart – packed in a bright drawstring bag. They are designed to last four years and cost just \$15 to make. That's a small investment with life-changing impact.”

In 2024 alone, the group produced over 1,200 kits for girls in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and even within Australia. Funds raised at SharkPitch will help them reach even more young women, lifting them out of the cycle of period poverty.

The **Rotary Club of Portland**, represented by Lynda Smith and Tony South, brought the issue of suicide prevention close to home with a confronting re-enactment of a phone call that could have ended in tragedy.

“Did you know that on Gunditjmara Country, there was one death by suicide every seven weeks?” Tony shared. “That is 27 unnecessary deaths over just four years. Our community's suicide rate is 32% higher than the state average.”

Lynda explained the solution they have:

"The SafeTALK and Safe Yarn training gives people the confidence to have life-saving conversations. All of us could, at some point, encounter suicide risk – and we must be ready."

Their vision is to train local facilitators, lowering the cost to \$35 per participant and making the training accessible across workplaces, clubs and community spaces. Their five-year plan aims to reach 1,500 adults, around 10% of Glenelg Shire's population, with skills that could save lives.

The **Tyrendarra Sporting Club** pitch brought the crowd from tears to laughter as Zoe Rhodes painted a picture of a "squeaking, rusty, 28-year-old playground" that has long overstayed its welcome at the heart of the Tyrendarra Recreation Reserve.

"But this is about more than a playground," Zoe explained. "It's about community, about connections, and about generations to come."

She described a new vision, a safe, fenced, inclusive play area with slides, climbing frames, soft fall, and seating for families:

"Just imagine, a safe area where children can learn through play, while parents and grandparents connect nearby. Our dream is an investment that will last another 30 years."

The Tyrendarra Recreation Reserve is fully funded by the local community and is home to sports, the 108-year-old Tyrendarra Show, and a gateway to the Budj Bim UNESCO World Heritage site. This project ensures the next generation can thrive in the heart of their community.

Community Spirit on Display

The night was filled with generosity, enthusiasm, and hope. Pledges came in from individuals, businesses, and community groups, demonstrating the power of collective giving. Thanks to the support of **Beyond Bank**, every pledge was matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$18,000, doubling the impact.

"SharkPitch is about more than fundraising, it's about connection, inspiration and a shared vision for a stronger community," said Nicole Carr, Executive Officer of United Way Glenelg.

Grant Howland Community Development Manager from Beyond Bank is thrilled to be again part of Shark Pitch in 2025.

"Beyond Bank is thrilled to once again partner with United Way Glenelg as the major supporter of SharkPitch 2025."

"Congratulations to all the community groups from across the Glenelg Shire who participated, and to our three outstanding winners. At Beyond Bank, we are proud to stand for and with United Way Glenelg to help build stronger, more connected communities."

United Way Glenelg extends heartfelt thanks to:

- Our major sponsors and partners, including Beyond Bank, Powerhouse Productions, and The Funding Network
- The South West Community Church for providing the venue and coffee on the night
- Local volunteers Debra Crespan, Neil O'Donnell, Susie Lyons
- Local businesses and individuals who pledged their support

With the funds raised, each organisation can take the next step toward their dreams, whether it's equipping hundreds of girls with dignity kits, training local suicide prevention facilitators, or building a safe and welcoming playground in Tyrendarra.

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