



FOUNDATION UPDATE - MAY 2026



From the Chair

This is my first newsletter as Chair of the Eastern Star Foundation, and I am delighted to share that this year marks another significant milestone for us. We have once again awarded the highest number of grants and the largest total funding since becoming a philanthropic

foundation. I am also pleased to announce that the Foundation was nominated for the 2026 Queensland Philanthropy Awards in the Philanthropic Foundation of the Year category—a recognition that reflects our shared commitment to creating positive change for older Queenslanders.

In 2026, more than \$464,000 has been distributed to nine charities working to improve the lives of older people across the state. This year's grant round welcomes four new partners—OzHarvest, Epilepsy Action Australia, The Belinda McGowan Foundation and COTA Queensland—alongside continued support for five valued

multi-year partners: Motor Neurone Disease Association Queensland, Legacy Club of Brisbane, Happy Paws Happy Hearts Foundation, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Dreams2Live4.

Among the new recipients, OzHarvest has received \$49,500 to deliver nine Nutrition Education Skills Training (NEST) programs across South East Queensland, supporting up to 100 older people experiencing food insecurity. With fewer than 10 per cent of Queenslanders aged 65 and over eating the recommended amount of vegetables, NEST combines nutrition education, hands-on cooking, and

Free Allied Health Support for Older Queenslanders Living with MS

Older Queenslanders living with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) and neurological conditions like motor neurone disease (MND), dementia, epilepsy, stroke, Parkinson's, and Huntington's disease have been receiving free, life-changing allied health support thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the Eastern Star Foundation—its largest single grant awarded in 2025. Members of the Foundation's Board recently visited MS Queensland's Milton Neuro Wellness Hub to see firsthand how the funding is transforming the lives of people aged over 65 who are living with MS and other neurological conditions.

The grant supports MS Queensland's Over 65 Allied Health and Community Engagement Pilot Program, which provides free physiotherapy,

occupational therapy, exercise physiology, and social work services. These services are delivered through MS Queensland's Neuro Wellness Hubs located in Milton, Springfield, Toowoomba, and the Sunshine Coast. Each hub is purpose-built to include advanced therapy equipment, exercise facilities, and community engagement spaces designed to promote both physical wellbeing and social connection.

Since the pilot commenced, the Program has already delivered significant outcomes. Fifty older Queenslanders have accessed allied health services they otherwise would not have been able to afford, with each participant receiving an average of eight appointments to ensure continuity of care. A total of 260 one-on-one appointments have been delivered so far, with a further 151

appointments already booked through to June, demonstrating strong and ongoing demand.

While the Program is designed for people living with MS, it has also supported individuals with other neurological conditions such as Parkinson's, Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy (CIDP), Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) and Multifocal Motor Neuropathy (MMN). This reflects the broader need for accessible neurological support services, particularly as one in four Queenslanders now lives with a neurological condition. Many of these conditions share similar symptoms and support needs, and the pilot Program is demonstrating how targeted allied health services can improve mobility, independence, and social connection for older people navigating complex health challenges.

Eastern Star Foundation's Chair, Nigel Faull, said that support for MS Queensland formed part of the Foundation's 2025 grant round and its largest grant round ever, with more than \$441,000 awarded to eight charities dedicated to improving the lives of older Queenslanders.

"We are proud to have supported such a worthy cause, and it was wonderful to see how the grant is changing lives for more older Queenslanders," said Mr Faull.



From the Chair (continued)

shared meals to build food literacy, improve dietary choices, and reduce social isolation.

Epilepsy Action Australia has been awarded \$16,280 to develop an evidence-based interactive, digital self-management toolkit specifically designed for women aged 65 and over living with epilepsy. Late-onset epilepsy is significantly more common in older adults, yet resources tailored to ageing women are almost non-existent. The new toolkit will translate complex medical information into practical guidance on the impacts of seizures and anti-seizure medications on bone health, fall prevention, medication interactions and cognitive wellbeing. It will also include interactive features that adapt to individual health circumstances and provide self advocacy tools to help women communicate effectively with their healthcare providers.

The Belinda McGowan Foundation will use its \$34,796 grant to purchase three cuddle beds for aged care facilities in Oakey, Clifton and Charleville. These specialised beds allow families to lie beside loved ones during end-of-life care, offering comfort, closeness and the opportunity for meaningful final moments. The Foundation has been installing cuddle beds across rural, regional and remote communities, where access to palliative care resources is often limited, and the new installations will extend this support to three more facilities closely connected to local hospitals and community health services.

COTA Queensland has received \$50,000 to produce Living Well with Confidence: A Practical Guide for Older Women in Queensland, co-designed with the Queensland Country Women's Association. The guide will support women aged over 65 who are facing financial or social vulnerability, covering key topics such as financial stress,

rental rights, housing options, income changes, safe decision-making, work or volunteering pathways, and essential health costs. The project also includes short explainer videos and an online launch, with distribution through QCWA branches, neighbourhood centres, libraries, and community organisations.

As part of the Foundation's ongoing multi-year commitments, Queenslanders living with Motor Neurone Disease (MND) will continue to benefit from a \$50,000 grant—the second year of a three-year commitment supporting the Free Equipment for the Over 65s project. This initiative provides essential equipment that improves independence, communication, and social connection.

Elderly War Widows across Queensland will benefit from a further \$92,070 to the Legacy Club of Brisbane, the second year of a three-year arrangement (reviewed annually). The funding helps support their complex case management and the 40 Laurel Socialisation Clubs serving more than 400 elderly members. Legacy also received \$91,998 from the Foundation in 2025.

Happy Paws Happy Hearts Foundation has received \$90,813 for the second year of a three-year arrangement (reviewed annually) to continue its "Hearts and Paws Connect" Intergenerational Ageing Program, which also received \$93,478 in 2025. The program brings together older people, socially isolated youth, and rescue animals—creating magical moments of connection—and has expanded to include older veteran groups and additional aged care facilities.

The Queensland Symphony Orchestra (QSO) will receive \$61,400 as the second year of a three-year commitment (reviewed annually) for its Health and Wellbeing Program, following last year's grant of \$15,700. The program brings

QSO ensembles to aged care facilities across Queensland and delivers two large annual performances for older audiences, offering wide-ranging wellbeing benefits. QSO continues to build an evaluation framework with Griffith University to measure the impact of the Program.

A further \$20,000 grant to Dreams2Live4, now in its second year of a three-year commitment, will help more Queensland women with advanced cancer rediscover and experience their dreams, providing emotional relief and renewed resilience.

Each of these organisations is delivering meaningful, practical impact. From nutrition education and digital health tools, to end of life comfort, social connection, creative wellbeing and essential equipment, these programs address the diverse needs of older Queenslanders and strengthen the communities around them.

Our investment portfolio, managed by our investment advisor Ord Minnett, has grown to \$13.3 million as at 30 April 2026. Guided by a conservative risk profile, our strategy continues to safeguard the portfolio against market fluctuations over the long-term while ensuring sustainable granting capacity into the future.

I would also like to acknowledge the Australian Communities Foundation for their ongoing invaluable grant making and administrative support.

We look forward to seeing the continued impact of these programs across Queensland and to working closely with our grant recipients in the year ahead. Together, we remain committed to creating measurable, meaningful change for our ageing communities.

Yours sincerely

Nigel Faul
Chair, Eastern Star Foundation

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Value of investment portfolio (\$ Million)

