

MEDIA RELEASE

11 October 2018

Local community organisation celebrates million-dollar milestone

A local community organisation today celebrated a major milestone, with the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre issuing more than \$1 million in life-changing No Interest Loans ([NILS](#)) to the local community since 2009.

More than 1200 No Interest Loans have been issued across the Douglas Shire, with most loans used to purchase fridges, washing machines, televisions and to pay for car repairs.

The No Interest Loans program, run by not-for-profit Good Shepherd Microfinance in partnership with NAB, was introduced to Port Douglas ten years ago, in response to a need in the community for affordable finance options.

Peter McNamara, CEO of Good Shepherd Microfinance, congratulated the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre on its commitment to improving financial inclusion in the local community.

“If you’re on a low income, it can be hard to find the extra money to replace the fridge or washing machine when it breaks down, or to pay for the car registration. Many people turn to high cost credit options which can leave them in a debt spiral,” Mr McNamara said.

“Our No Interest Loans give people access to the goods and services they need, on an easy and affordable repayment plan, without all the fees and charges associated with payday loans and rent-to-buy schemes.”

More than two-thirds of clients at the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre have been women and 61% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community.

Megan Blacklow, NILS Microfinance Worker at the centre, said the introduction of the NILS program had transformed the financial situation of the local Aboriginal community.

“When we started the NILS program ten years ago, the people living in the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community were sleeping on mattresses on the floor, using old and unreliable appliances and were being targeted by door-to-door sales scams and rent-to-buy schemes,” Ms Blacklow explained.

“The NILS program has given people the freedom to purchase the things they need for their families, but most importantly, it is giving people control of their finances and their future and creating intergenerational financial inclusion.”

47-year-old Kerry McCall from Wonga Beach was the very first NILS client at the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre ten years ago.

“I was a single mum with five kids, and when my washing machine blew up, I had no idea how I was going to replace it,” Ms McCall explained.



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“That’s when I met Megan and the team at the Port Douglas Neighbourhood Centre, and I was able to buy a brand-new washing machine. Since then, I’ve used No Interest Loans to purchase other household appliances, new furniture for my kids and get my car repaired – things I wouldn’t have been able to afford otherwise.”

No Interest Loans can be used for household goods, medical expenses, education expenses, and car repairs. The loan amount is paid directly to the supplier of the good or service.

Find out more about Good Shepherd Microfinance at goodshepherdmicrofinance.org.au

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