

Ethics Charter

The Ross Trust Ethics Charter



> Roy Ross and with wife Molly in front of the SS Orion in March 1939.

The Ross Trust's ethical approach

Ever since its inception the Ross Trust has sought to stay true to its purpose as set out by the late Roy Everard Ross. We are committed to staying true to his intent by always acting with integrity and transparency in our decision-making across our operations and in our grantmaking. This approach assists us in making values-based and ethically grounded decisions. We communicate these decisions openly to our stakeholders, grant partners and the broader Victorian community.

The Ross Trust is especially mindful of and acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we operate and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Hillview Quarries operates on the lands of the Bunorong people, and we acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners.

We highly value the partnerships we have with First Nations Peoples on the Mornington Peninsula and across Victoria.

We are always conscious that our social license to operate as a trust comes from our doing the right thing by the Victorian communities in which we operate. Hence sourcing the income to fund our grants depends on us being ethical by –

- Prioritising social responsibility: focusing on being socially responsible in the way it conducts its operations
- Delivering community benefit: ensuring community benefit is given the highest priority
- Enhancing our environment: ensuring responsible management of the land and assets it owns, while enhancing the environment through targeted and considered initiatives
- Achieving positive social impact: achieving long-term social impact for the most vulnerable members in our community

Who we are

The Ross Trust is a perpetual charitable trust with a purpose to create positive social and environmental change so Victorians can thrive.

The Ross Trust was established in Victoria in 1970 through the generosity and farsightedness of Roy Everard Ross who set out in his will the formation of a Trust and left assets of shares, property and a quarry that could provide the capacity for grants to charities in perpetuity.

That quarry is Hillview Quarries, the Ross Trust's wholly owned subsidiary. The quarry is located on the Mornington Peninsula. Hillview Quarries gives 100 per cent of its net profits to the Ross Trust. Every year, these profits are distributed as grants across Victoria. This makes up approximately 70 per cent of the Ross Trust's income each year.

The Ross Trust's grantmaking support charities and charitable purposes. Our current grants support two core priorities: education equity and fairness, and biodiversity conservation. The Trust acknowledges the importance of ensuring these core priorities are upheld in ways that align with the values of Victorian communities, in particular those people living on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Ross Trust has operated for over 50 years to fulfil its obligation and duties to support charitable organisations that deliver social, environmental and community benefits that are fair and equitable.

The Ross Trust Ethics Charter

What we do

Every year the Ross Trust provides grants for charitable purposes across Victoria as per the wishes of the late Roy Everard Ross. Organisations approach the Ross Trust for this funding. We also collaborate with other philanthropic, government and non-government organisations to support the work of charities.

In accordance with the will, the Ross Trust provides funds for charities to protect vulnerable Victorians and their communities by:

- enabling educational opportunities and fairness for children and young people (Goal: 40% of our grants)
- enhancing biodiversity for the sustainability of Victoria's native flora, fauna and ecosystems (Goal: 40% of our grants)
- responding to Victorians in crisis and providing emergency relief (Goal: 20% of our grants)

We direct funding support to achieve long-term impact and systemic change for the most challenging issues being faced by those Victorians most in need.

Every year our subsidiary, Hillview Quarries, makes its own significant contributions to the Mornington Peninsula community. Hillview Quarries is committed to being an exemplary corporate and socially responsible organisation by supporting requests from local schools, sports and community organisations, for financial support, sponsorship and/or donations of stone products.

What we stand for

We at the Ross Trust are committed to applying our core values to all our grantmaking and operations:

Ethical

Sustainable

Innovative

Adaptive

Compassionate

We place high value on the relationship and mutual trust we build with our grantees; we remain committed to those relationships and operating in partnership.



Our Guiding Principles

Our four Guiding Principles are imbued in the Ross Trust's focus and actions to ensure we act responsibly, appropriately, and ethically in all facets of our operations and grantmaking.

They represent our philanthropic desire and mandate to support and advocate for the needs of the most vulnerable members of the Victorian community, by leveraging our financial resources for public good.



Prioritising social responsibility

The Ross Trust and its wholly owned subsidiary, Hillview Quarries uphold their responsibilities and obligations to consistently act in accordance with Mr Ross's will. We recognise that every commercial decision an organisation takes involves a social consequence. We therefore commit to addressing those consequences in the way we responsibly manage our land, assets and operations, for the long term benefit of the community to which we belong.

Hillview Quarries acts to ensure it operates within the law, and its work is conducted in a safe, legal and responsible way, with due regard for social, heritage, indigenous and environmental standards.

Every year, the Ross Trust provides consolidated audited accounts to the Attorney-General of Victoria, together with a report outlining the work and governance of the Trust and Hillview Quarries.

The Ross Trust is committed to developing its Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance Policy and applying the Policy to its investment portfolio. Consistent with these Principles, we strive to align our investments with our mission and core values as best we can, so maximum impact can be achieved.

As part of our focus on social responsibility, we set robust standards of eligibility and accountability for our granting program.

We have clear expectations of our grantees, and seek to form strong relationships with them, in order achieve our philanthropic mandate.

There is also established criteria for grant exclusions, which means certain organisations will not qualify for funding by the Ross Trust.

They include:

- organisations that receive direct income from entities whose principal purpose is to promote gambling, alcohol, tobacco or armaments
- organisations whose funded activity may seek to proselytise a particular faith or religion to its beneficiaries
- universities and other institutions seeking funding for academic research projects or research positions with no or minimal research translation activity or no community-based partners

Similarly, the Trust has clear expectations of the policies and practices of its subsidiary, Hillview Quarries, reflecting the careful, measured approach of the Trust's founder, Mr Ross. The Trust strives to achieve a balance between the financial and infrastructure benefits offered by Hillview Quarries with the imperative for biodiversity conservation.

Stars Foundation mentoring First Nations young women

This \$150,000 grant enables the expansion of the Stars Foundation school-based mentoring and engagement program for First Nations young women in Mildura, Victoria. The program addresses entrenched social and economic disadvantage, and the significant inequity in provision of high-quality education programs.



Delivering Community benefit

We are committed to contributing to a stronger, fairer and more sustainable Victoria.

For over 50 years the depth and breadth of the Trust's philanthropy has been, and continues to be, reliant on the revenue delivered by Hillview Quarries, which is deployed for demonstrable social good across Victoria.

Hillview Quarries also has a mandate to 'give back' to the local Mornington Peninsula community and contribute to the common good. Over the last 50 years Hillview Quarries and the Ross Trust collectively distributed over \$19 million - just under 15% of total distribution - through either grants, donations or product or sponsorship, to community organisations on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Ross Trust is committed to an outcome on the Boundary Road Project that fairly balances the multiple priorities of all key stakeholders, including the adoption of practical, measurable steps to mitigate and minimise impact on native flora and fauna, and respond to community expectation and social values.

Hillview Quarries is committed to playing an important role as a local employer and supplier of local infrastructure product to the Mornington Peninsula community and businesses.

Philanthropy is a vital part of any community. It is the Ross Trust's responsibility to be responsive to social and environmental problems and enable charities to implement possible solutions.

The Ross Trust believes it has an additional role to play beyond providing financial support; to support advocacy and give voice to the wellbeing, social and economic needs of marginalized people.

ACOSS Raise The Rate advocacy campaign

Since early 2019 The Ross Trust has committed \$165,000 to the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) Raise the Rate campaign. These funds support the continued advocacy of the Raise the Rate campaign team, to help ensure jobless people, currently receiving Job Seeker payments, are no longer forced to live on an unsustainable \$40 per day.



Enhancing our environment

The Ross Trust recognises the importance of reconciling the future needs of the community and one of our core priorities, to support biodiversity conservation. We aim to find ways to deliver measurable community benefit, while managing any risk of environmental impacts from the source of our income.

The Ross Trust's Biodiversity Conservation funding priority supports increased and coordinated biodiversity conservation actions and increased community support for conservation. It is informed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 15.

We take seriously our responsibilities to deal with any consequences of our actions, including the impact on the environment caused while Hillview Quarries is in operation. Such consequences are treated with due seriousness through responsible mitigation and management strategies.

The Ross Trust Ethics Charter informs our thoughtful and careful approach to the current Boundary Road Project. The Charter guides the Trust and Hillview Quarries through any decision-making on the purpose and imperatives of the project and is an open demonstration of our commitment to working in an ethical and sustainable way.

Australian environmental charities receive only 2.5 per cent of all the donations and bequests in Australia. The Ross Trust is committed to ensuring at least 40 per cent of its annual grants are made to environmental organisations.

The Nature Conservancy restoring lost reefs

A grant of \$287,000 is supporting The Nature Conservancy Australia's plan to bring back Victoria's lost reefs, with a reef restoration project in Port Phillip Bay off the coast of Dromana. This project, *Bringing Back Victoria's Lost Oyster Reefs*, is restoring one hectare of new oyster reef near Dromana and engaging local volunteers in citizen science and active restoration activities.



Achieving Positive Social impact

For decades, the Ross Trust has committed to geographical place-based investments across Victoria to create the best chance of positive community change and social impact. These commitments focus on the significant educational and social inequalities experienced by vulnerable children. We take a long-term view and have provided funding for at least 10 years to programs including those in East Gippsland, Robinvale, and Benalla. The next 10 years are focused on Hastings, Crib Point, Rosebud and surrounds, on the Mornington Peninsula.

The Ross Trust Educational Equity funding priority is focused on improving educational attainment of vulnerable

Victorian children. It is informed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.

We apply evidenced-based strategies to measure our impact, ensuring we capture the wider legacy, impact and outcomes of all our grantmaking and share this with the broader community.

In the 50 years to 30 June 2020, the Ross Trust and Hillview Quarries have distributed \$139 million to organisations supporting vulnerable Victorians, particularly children and young people experiencing a range of social, economic and geographical challenges, plus environmental protection and preservation across Victoria.

The Ross Trust is active on the Mornington Peninsula, meeting diverse community needs:

- Covid-19 relief grants to schools and emergency relief centres in Hastings, Rosebud and Mornington
- Capacity building support for Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association in Hastings
- Technology support for Western Port Secondary College students in Hastings
- Grant to Mornington Peninsula Landcare Network to work on the Dunns Creek Biolink
- Funding partnership with the Mornington Peninsula Foundation to improve school readiness for primary school children across Western Port.