

THE
P/NNACLE
FOUNDATION

ABN 81 127 662 604

Theory of Change

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Why?

A theory of change helps us to improve our strategy, measurement, communication and partnerships.

This document has been developed leveraging the inputs of a broad range of stakeholders in The Pinnacle Foundation.

Context and Situation

Many young LGBTIQ+ Australians continue to face family, faith and community rejection because of how they identify. Discrimination, bullying and abuse are commonly reported in these situations. This often results in needing to leave unsupportive environments (home/community) leading to a greater risk of homelessness. Sustained discrimination, bullying and abuse leads to high rates of self-harm and psychological distress. A lack of visible LGBTIQ+ role models may compound a sense of helplessness/worthlessness. A lack of money means education is subjugated to the need to find paid employment.

A societal perception (particularly in more progressive communities) that the achievement of marriage equality has led to widespread community acceptance of the LGBTIQ+ community is flawed. It overlooks that a significant minority of Australians do not embrace the LGBTIQ+ community – often attributable to a lack of understanding/LGBTIQ+ exposure, cultural and faith beliefs and similar. The surprise expressed in more progressive communities when young LGBTIQ+ Australians share the enormous burden and angst they feel when “coming out” reinforces this paradigm.

Narrative Theory of Change

The Pinnacle Foundation supports LGBTIQ+ Australians aged between 18 and 26 who have faced challenges because of how they identify to realise their full potential. We do this by awarding multi-year educational scholarships for fulltime study at public tertiary institutions in any field.

We know that providing the funds to study alone is often insufficient. To overcome the impact of sustained bullying, abuse, rejection and similar, and the associated feelings of being alone, helpless and worthless, frequently requires expert intervention. This may include psychological support in addition to access to positive role models and a sense of belonging to a more supportive community.

The Pinnacle Foundation carefully matches every scholar with a mentor who has trod a similar path. They will work in the same field that the scholar is studying – and be of the same gender and sexuality. They will provide encouragement, support and inspiration to the scholar to see through their studies.

Further, The Pinnacle Foundation fosters an extensive national network of volunteers, as well as an expansive corporate partner, donor and supporter network. This collective group is referred to as the "Pinnacle family". The Pinnacle family seizes opportunities to support Pinnacle scholars and alumni to realise their full potential. Scholars and alumni see others giving freely to support them – helping to restore their faith in the goodness of society – and affirming the rich intrinsic rewards of giving back and helping others.

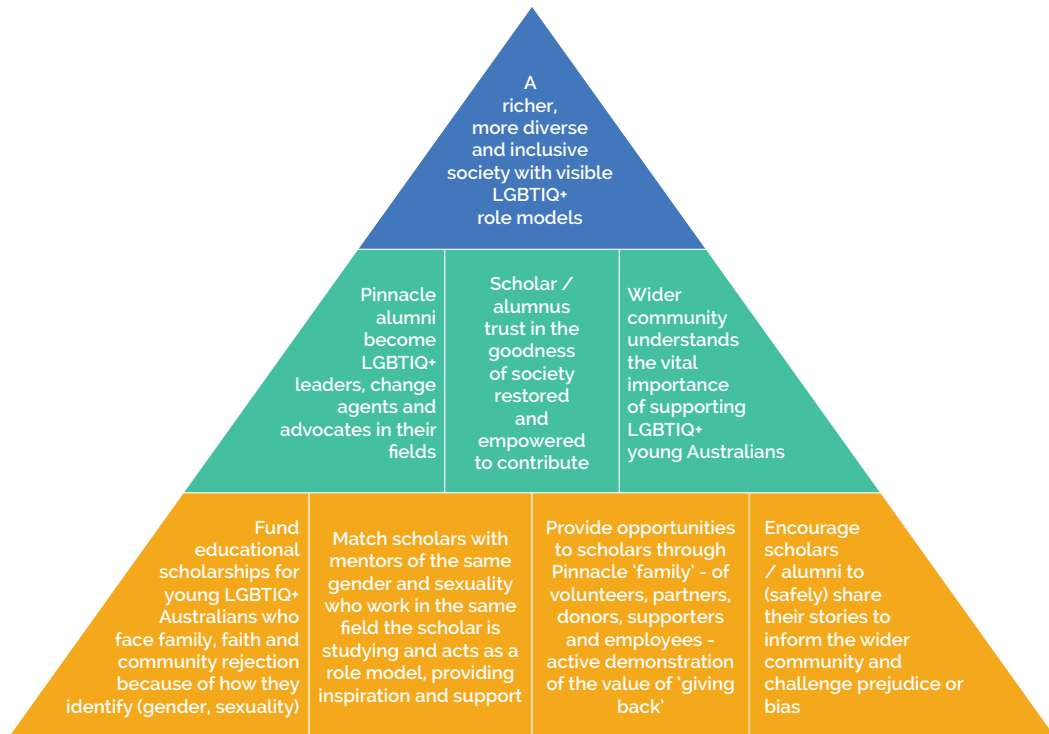
Systemic Impact (Upstream)

In addition to the direct impact the Pinnacle program has on the lives of the young LGBTIQ+ Australians it supports, the program is focused on impacting systemic (societal) change. This happens in two main ways:

1. As the number of Pinnacle alumni grows, they are increasingly spreading their influence (the multiplier effect) to generate positive change. The Pinnacle program seeks to maintain active engagement with Pinnacle alumni to maximise the Pinnacle alumni multiplier effect.
2. The Pinnacle program embraces a model which encourages scholars and alumni to (where it is safe for them to do so) share their stories and the impact of the Pinnacle program. To maximise the extent and reach of the scholar/alumni stories, The Pinnacle Foundation relies on the involvement of corporate partners. When Pinnacle's corporate partners seek to leverage their involvement with Pinnacle by using scholar/alumni stories to engage their workforces and encourage personal reflection about the importance of LGBTIQ+ inclusion and belonging, it also helps realise The Pinnacle Foundation's vision of a more diverse and inclusive society with visible LGBTIQ+ role models.

Further development of the Pinnacle alumni program is underway, to ensure this cohort is optimally equipped to become LGBTIQ+ change agents, leaders and advocates in their fields. This development includes current exploration of a partnership with the pre-eminent Australian university to develop an LGBTIQ+ executive leadership program which will afford unique access to Pinnacle alumni to best practice LGBTIQ+ thinking, models and approaches, while at the same time deepening Pinnacle's engagement with its corporate partners – who will be invited to partner with Pinnacle and the university to support the development of the program and fund their employees to participate. (This initiative is modelled on the Stanford Graduate School of Business LGBTQ Executive Leadership Program.)

Theory of Change Model (Planning Triangle)



Measurement

Outputs of the Pinnacle program can be measured by the high rates of study completion by Pinnacle scholars, mentor connection, increased scholar/alumnus confidence and sense of self-worth, and the willingness of many Pinnacle alumni to themselves give back – often as Pinnacle volunteers or as donors. We are proudly witnessing Pinnacle alumni developing into future leaders in their fields, and as powerful advocates and role models for the LGBTIQ+ community.

Research

The Pinnacle Foundation's triennial longitudinal research, 'Are we making a difference?' affirms:

- 98% of scholars feel academically supported
- 92% say Pinnacle is helping them to achieve their academic goals
- 89% rate their mentor relationship as beneficial/extremely beneficial
- 98% would recommend the Pinnacle program.

In both 2020 and 2021, despite the impacts of Covid-19, every funded Pinnacle scholar successfully completed their studies for the year.

Scholar Feedback

Scholars and alumni reflect on the value of the Pinnacle program:

- Pinnacle gave me a chosen family where my biological one had broken down and showed me the good in all this
- Before ... Pinnacle, I'd never met another LGBTIQ+ professional, but now I know there's a whole community of people who have not only gone before me, but who I know have my back and are keen to see me succeed
- I never would have been able to study or had the courage to even try without The Pinnacle Foundation
- It has been a long journey for me to find my identity ... I was never really comfortable with my identity prior to being a Pinnacle scholar and I've learnt to embrace it and use it to help others
- The Pinnacle family, who believed in me and lifted me up in ways that I didn't think were possible or even deserved ... has done more for me than my biological family ever could have or knew how to do
- It helped me gain more confidence and to be proud in who we are and that we should not be ashamed.

Program Enablers

Key enablers of the Pinnacle program include:

1. Highly engaged scholars/alumni who are proud ambassadors for the Pinnacle program. Scholars and alumni who are "living proof" of the program's impact are vitally important when it comes to sharing their stories in wider contexts to bring about greater community understanding, challenge unhelpful LGBTIQ+ stereotypes and overcome prejudice and bias.
2. An extensive pool of engaged volunteers to support the delivery of the Pinnacle program (including as mentors, state and territory committee members, ambassadors, board and management team) and who, as members of Pinnacle family, open doors, encourage and engage scholars and alumni to realise their full potential – and through their actions as volunteers restore scholar/alumni faith in society and the importance of "giving back".
3. An active and engaged donor, supporter and partner base. Having corporate partners engage their workforces, suppliers and customers in the Pinnacle program extends our reach and expands our impact. Similarly, having donors and supporters as willing ambassadors raises community awareness and understanding of the challenges that continue to be faced by many young LGBTIQ+ Australians.

Assumptions

Key assumptions that underpin the Pinnacle program include:

1. Aspiring scholars continue to be courageous enough to "show their hand" by applying for and being awarded a Pinnacle scholarship. (Given many of those involved in supporting the Pinnacle program have long-ago overcome their fears of "coming out" we must always be conscious of how difficult this continues to be for many young LGBTIQ+ Australians.)
2. The Pinnacle Foundation will continue to attract corporate partners who find strong appeal in supporting a program that educates young Australians first and foremost – and for these partners to expose all of their employees, not just their LGBTIQ+ employees and allies, to scholar/alumni stories designed to inform, educate and encourage self-reflection about the importance of LGBTIQ+ inclusion – powerfully told through the story of young Australians. (For example, parents with young children reflecting on how they would respond if their own child turned out to be gay etc.)
3. The Pinnacle Foundation will continue to attract donors, partners and supporters because it is an apolitical organisation that is not advocacy led. Pinnacle supports systemic change through the delivery of its program – including equipping scholars to shape our community today and tomorrow, through effective leveraging of scholar/alumni storytelling and (it is hoped) through the development and delivery of high quality LGBTIQ+ executive leadership programs in partnership with a pre-eminent university.
4. Pinnacle being able to maintain sense of "Pinnacle family" as it grows and professionalises and maintain extensive volunteer involvement.

Building on Strong Foundations

Since 2017, there has been significant focus to hone the quality of Pinnacle program inputs and activities, and to invest in the scalability and sustainability of the Pinnacle program as follows:

1. Developed a triennial research program to measure the impact of the Pinnacle program and inform program enhancements.
2. Increased the financial value of scholarships and made them multi-year:
 - a. Maximising their likelihood of graduating
 - b. Deepening their engagement with Pinnacle
 - c. Increasing their perceived value of the Pinnacle program.

3. Developed an alumni program to continue to engage, support and encourage alumni to become future leaders/advocates/change agents – and promoting the concept of the "virtuous circle" whereby we now see many Pinnacle alumni as active Pinnacle volunteers/donors etc.
4. Established active volunteer committees in every state and the ACT to:
 - a. Raise awareness of, and funds for, The Pinnacle Foundation
 - b. Provide local support to scholars and alumni (the Pinnacle "family")
 - c. Deepen local understanding of the challenges faced by many young LGBTIQ+ people by including skilled local volunteers in the selection of scholars (within a careful framework)
5. Developed systems to support our growth (CRM implementation, scholar selection technology, Office 365 implementation, website re-development etc)
6. Resourced key roles with paid employees while maintaining our status as a volunteer driven organisation and volunteer engagement and buy-in.
7. Developed and implemented a fundraising strategy that seeks to maintain our historic funding channels (predominantly high net wealth LGBTIQ+ donors) while:
 - a. Expanding our corporate partnerships (who in turn magnify our impact by leveraging their partnerships with Pinnacle),
 - b. Developing a donor/supporter pipeline through community activations (eg annual Picnic for Pinnacle)
 - c. Promoting planned giving (especially to older LGBTIQ+ supporter cohorts who are less likely to have children to leave their wealth to).
8. Established robust risk and governance frameworks, processes and policies.
9. Built an endowment to ensure we have the capacity to fund multi-year scholarships while year to year funding sources are developing/uncertain (sustainability).
10. Re-branded Pinnacle to attract and connect with target audiences.

Patron Commendations

Pinnacle patrons reinforce the value of the Pinnacle program:

Jennifer Westacott AO - <https://thepinnaclefoundation.org/jennifer-westacott-ao-patron-of-the-pinnacle-foundation/>

Alan Joyce AC - <https://thepinnaclefoundation.org/alan-joyce-ac-patron-of-the-pinnacle-foundation/>

The Hon Michael Kirby AC CMG:

There are lots of scholarships and most of them are wonderful investments in the future of admirable young people. But the Pinnacle scholarships are special. They lift-up young people who are not only talented but have often faced dire problems with their families, beliefs, and communities. Helping young people to restore confidence in themselves and a trust in the goodness of society that once seemed hostile is something very precious.

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[THEPINNACLEFOUNDATION.ORG](https://thepinnaclefoundation.org)

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