Report for the Collier Charitable Fund 2016

TransFormation
Christian Leadership Training for People of a Non-English Speaking Background
The TransFormation program began at Whitley College in 2003.

It provides training for Church leaders from non-English speaking backgrounds now living in Australia. It combines study, spiritual growth, worship and community experience which are essential in the formation of Christian leaders.

It is designed to help people overcome the obstacles of time, money and language that have previously prevented them from attending existing courses of college study.

Individuals who enrol in the TransFormation program commit to 10 Saturdays per year for 3 years at Whitley College. The program is taught in English but allows time for participants to work in groups with others who speak their own first language. A highlight is a shared lunch, prepared each month by the different churches of the participants. This fosters a strong sharing of different cultures among the group.

Many students who seek enrolment in the TransFormation program have come to Australia as refugees from Burma, Sudan, Liberia, Vietnam and Cambodia. They often are working a variety of jobs to support themselves and their families, whilst undertaking further study in the program.

We consider the TransFormation program an important part of the activities at Whitley College.

Whitley College Faculty and guest lecturers donate their time to support the program. This volunteer support has helped us to maintain the cost of the program to the students at $360 per year. Further subsidies are available to students for whom this is a challenge.
In the 14 years that the TransFormation Program has been running, we have seen growth and development in our TransFormation community. This has been in part thanks to the financial assistance of the Collier Charitable Fund in recent years.

In 2016, we had 67 non diploma and 24 diploma students, therefore a total of 91 enrolled in TransFormation. 15 of the 67 non diploma students didn’t pay their fees so they would have been subsidised $360 each.

Diploma in Theology

The Diploma in Theology is accredited through the University of Divinity.

It involves 8 units of study completed over 4 years. Six of these units are based on the regular TransFormation lectures – held 10 Saturdays a year for 3 years. English for Theology is taught separately on selected other Saturday mornings. The final subject is selected from one of the other Whitley College Biblical subjects.

The majority of participants are refugees from Burma – either Karen or Chin ethnicity. Others are Vietnamese, Filipino, Samoan, and Hungarian.

Diploma units qualify for FEE-HELP assistance, so where possible students have used the FEE-HELP system. However the TransFormation Diploma program is open to students who are not yet Australian citizens or holders of permanent humanitarian visas and therefore are not eligible for FEE-HELP. Those students face an up-front cost of $1,386 for each unit of study while students eligible for FEE-HELP incur a debt of $1,732 per unit (undergraduate units incur a 25% loan fee). These up-front costs or debts have proven to be a prohibitive barrier to study for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Of the 24 diploma students two were ineligible for Fee-Help and were offered the $400 per unit up front fee. The other diploma students were each subsidised $400 per unit which brought their up front fee cost per unit down to under $1000. At least 3 then paid their fees up front rather than taking on a Fee-Help loan. They were very pleased with this arrangement. In this year we have more diploma students so we are only offering $400 subsidy for a maximum of 2 units per student.

The generous provision of $15,000 by the Collier Charitable Fund has contributed significantly to our capacity to grant bursaries in this way in 2016, providing access to education and qualifications which were previously beyond the reach of many of our students.
Student stories

Rev. Japheth Lian started his journey with the TransFormation course 10 years ago and finally finished his Masters Degree through Whitley College.

“The TransFormation course was really nice pathway for me to study Diploma, Bachelor and finally Master Degree.” Japheth said “This helps me a lot for my pastoral role.”

He is now a pastor of the Victorian Chin Baptist Church. This church is now constructing a new building, total areas of 2,200 square metres. He is serving the church as an assistant site manager for this building project as well.

Darius

Darius is from Liberia and is a member of the Reservoir Baptist Church and is enrolled in the TransFormation program. He is interested in studying theology full time at a later date.

Nancy

My name is Nancy. My family arrived in Australia on 15 Oct 2013 from Malaysia as Refugee status. I started TransFormation from last year and this is my second year. Hopefully I will finish next year.

The TransFormation course is very important for those English is second language because we basically learned how to write and submit in online. This is really good and helpful pathway to study Diploma and further. Also we can experience and learn about the principle of church and God’s mission.

I am an elected chairman of woman department for this year. And from this month I am appointed from Mission board, to encourage and evangelize to members, especially for the people who are not able to attend the church for a long time.

I hope I will studying further after completing the Diploma and also I would like to study deeply which will profit me, as well as my community for the kingdom of God.