

Postal Services Modernisation

Background

DeadlyScience Ltd (**DeadlyScience**) is an Australian based, Indigenous led charity. Our vision is to end Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) poverty amongst Indigenous students in regional, remote and very remote communities.

The 2020 Australia's STEM Workforce Report highlighted that the percentage of Australia's non-Indigenous population with a University STEM qualification (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) is 5.2%. The percentage of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population with a University STEM qualification is 0.5% (or one tenth of the non-Indigenous rate); in remote communities the percentage is even lower.

Our objective is to turn around this massive discrepancy.

One of DeadlyScience's key programs involves the distribution of STEM based resources to regional, remote and very remote communities to support teachers to engage students in the STEM curriculum. These STEM resources include microscopes, telescopes, books, LEGO, weather stations, trail cameras and drones.

Current relationship with Australia Post

DeadlyScience distributes STEM resources to regional, remote and very remote schools in all Australian states and territories.

Due to their remoteness, the postage cost to distribute resources to these schools is often hundreds of dollars per package.

Australia Post supports our operations through its Community Partnerships team. Under the banner of their Supporting Communities program, Australia Post currently supplies DeadlyScience with a postage credit amount. This postage credit allows us to distribute these resources to schools free of charge.

Australia Post doesn't contribute to the purchasing of the STEM resources.

In 2022 Australia Post partnered with DeadlyScience to develop a free teaching resource in support of Science Week. This resource was downloaded thousands of times and contributed to learning outcomes across Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools throughout Australia. Plans are underway for the production of another free teaching resource to support Science Week in 2023.

Impact of this support

Feedback on our programs from teachers and community Elders shows students are encouraged to return to school after an extended absence to interact with these new resources (e.g. LEGO, microscopes), and participate in the associated learning programs (e.g. weather station data collection).

The cost of postage to distribute STEM resources to regional, remote and very remote schools is a significant percentage (between 15-20%) of DeadlyScience's FY 23 operating costs.

Without this current level of support from Australia Post, DeadlyScience would need to either:

- significantly scale back our resource distribution activities, or
- stop or defer our other learning programs, and transfer funding to pay for postage costs.

The end result would be a negative impact on the quality of STEM learning in regional, remote and very remote schools across Australia. And these Indigenous students would be constrained in fully participating in the projected increase in STEM related jobs over the next decade.

Recommendation

DeadlyScience would encourage the Australian Government to:

- recognise the significant positive impact of the support provided to charities (including DeadlyScience) under the Supporting Communities program, and
- ensure sufficient focus and funding is made available to continue this successful program going forward.