

Trailblazers Leading Brisbane to Global Business Prominence: Meet the Visionaries Behind the City's Economic Transformation

The Lord Mayor's [Convention Trailblazer Grant](#) program, managed by the Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA), is a pivotal initiative designed to bolster Brisbane's status as a global business hub. Since its inception in 2017, the program has been instrumental in attracting international business events to the city, driving substantial economic benefits and enhancing Brisbane's reputation as a center of knowledge and innovation.

The grant program provides up to \$5,000 to Brisbane-based professionals, enabling them to attend key international conferences. This financial support is intended to help these professionals expand their networks, share their expertise, and promote Brisbane as a prime destination for future business events. The ultimate goal is to attract significant conferences to Brisbane, thereby stimulating the local economy and reinforcing the city's position on the global stage.

The impact of the program has been impressive. To date, it has successfully brought six major conferences to Brisbane, generating nearly \$9 million in economic impact. These events not only bring financial benefits but also enhance the city's global profile, showcasing its strengths in various high-growth sectors. The program underscores Brisbane's commitment to being a leading destination for business events, leveraging new infrastructure, a vibrant cultural scene, and a [growing reputation for innovation](#).

The [2022-23 grant recipients](#) exemplify the diverse expertise and innovative spirit that the program aims to support. This past year's awardees are:

1. **Morris Fedeli:** Project Lead at the [THRIVE Project](#), which focuses on sustainability education and holistic change. Morris's work emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices and the need for comprehensive approaches to addressing environmental challenges.

2. **Fernando Guimaraes:** Associate Professor at The University of Queensland's Frazer Institute, specializing in immunology and immunotherapy. Fernando's research is at the cutting edge of medical science, contributing to the development of new treatments and therapies.
3. **Aaron Tham:** Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Sunshine Coast's Business School, with expertise in Tourism, Leisure, and Events Management. Aaron's work helps to enhance the understanding of tourism dynamics and their impact on local economies.
4. **Nadali Mahmoudi:** Senior Manager at Ernst & Young and Adjunct Senior Fellow at the University of Queensland, specializing in electricity market modeling. Nadali's expertise is critical in the evolving field of energy markets, particularly as the world moves towards more sustainable energy solutions.
5. **Paula Rowntree:** Head of Events and External Engagement at the Australian Psychological Society, and a recognized leader in business events. Paula's role is crucial in organizing and managing events that have significant professional and social impacts.
6. **Joanne Tindale:** PhD candidate at Griffith Film School, researching the representation of older women on screen. Joanne's research addresses important issues related to media representation and its broader societal implications.

Among these trailblazers, [Morris Fedeli](#) stands out for his contributions to thriving education through the [THRIVE Project](#). His work is particularly noteworthy for its focus on holistic and integrative approaches to sustainability, which are essential in addressing the complex environmental challenges of our time. The THRIVE Project aims to educate and engage communities in sustainable practices, promoting a comprehensive understanding of how interconnected our systems are and the importance of systemic change.



Trailblazer Morris Fedeli from the THRIVE Project speaking with members of the panel

Morris's involvement in international conferences not only allows him to share his innovative approaches but also to learn from global peers, bringing back valuable insights and strategies that can be applied within Brisbane. His participation exemplifies how the grant program not only supports individual professional development but also brings broader benefits to the community by fostering the exchange of ideas and best practices.

The other recipients also highlight the breadth of expertise supported by the program. Fernando Guimaraes's work in immunology and immunotherapy is at the forefront of medical research, contributing to significant advancements in healthcare. His attendance at international conferences allows him to showcase Brisbane's contributions to global health challenges, attract future conferences to the city, and strengthen international collaborations.

Aaron Tham's expertise in tourism and events management is crucial for understanding and enhancing the tourism sector's impact on Brisbane's economy. By attending global conferences, Aaron can promote Brisbane as a prime destination for tourism and business events, sharing insights that help to optimize the local industry's growth and development.

Nadali Mahmoudi's work in electricity market modeling is particularly relevant as the world shifts towards more sustainable energy solutions. His participation in international forums allows him to discuss Brisbane's initiatives in this critical area, attracting attention to the city's efforts and encouraging further investments and conferences focused on energy sustainability.

Paula Rowntree's leadership in organizing psychological events has significant professional and societal impacts. Her work ensures that Brisbane is seen as a hub for important discussions in the field of psychology, attracting related conferences and professional gatherings that contribute to the city's intellectual and social capital.

Joanne Tindale's research on media representation addresses critical societal issues, particularly the portrayal of older women in media. Her work highlights the importance of diversity and representation in media, and her participation in international conferences brings attention to these issues, positioning Brisbane as a city that values and promotes inclusive practices.

Collectively, these recipients are poised to attract up to 3,000 delegates to Brisbane, potentially injecting \$6.3 million into the local economy. Their efforts underscore the program's dual focus on individual excellence and broader economic impact, demonstrating how supporting local talent can have far-reaching benefits for the entire community.

The Lord Mayor's [Convention Trailblazer Grant](#) program is a cornerstone of Brisbane's strategy to enhance its global business event profile. By investing in the city's brightest minds and facilitating their participation in international forums, the program not only boosts the local economy but also cements Brisbane's reputation as a dynamic, forward-looking city committed to innovation and sustainable development.

As the program continues to evolve, its impact will likely grow, attracting more high-profile conferences and further enhancing Brisbane's standing on the global stage. The grant recipients, with their diverse expertise and commitment to their respective fields, are at the forefront of this effort, spearheading initiatives that will shape the future of Brisbane's economy and its role in the global business community. The ongoing support and recognition of such talent ensure that Brisbane remains a leading destination for knowledge exchange, innovation, and

sustainable growth.

For more about the THRIVE Project and its efforts to bring prosperity to us all, please follow the organisation via social media and visit their website. Their [THRIVE Framework](#) offering is widely supported worldwide by the likes of UN-affiliates research groups as they collaborate with Project Drawdown, the World Benchmarking Alliance, r3.0, and several others. The THRIVE Framework provides positive forward guidance towards a future we all aspire to have - one that benefits all living creatures on this planet and beyond.