

A BLUEBOAT REPORT | APRIL 2026

# ARE YOU READY FOR THE GREAT WEALTH TRANSFER?

UNDERSTANDING THE NEXT GENERATIONS OF DONORS,  
AND HOW BRAND STRATEGY CAN HELP YOU REACH THEM.

**BLUE  
BOAT**

WHAT'S INSIDE

THE SCALE OF THE WEALTH TRANSFER

WHO ARE THE NEXT-GEN DONORS?

WHY WOMEN HOLD THE KEY

THE VISIBILITY CHALLENGE

**“In Australia,  
\$5.4 trillion will  
change hands  
over the next  
20 years.”**

*JBWere Bequest Report, 2024*

## INTRODUCTION

**More wealth is moving than ever before, but the rules of philanthropy are being rewritten.**

Right now, we are living through the largest transfer of wealth in human history. Baby Boomers and older generations are passing their accumulated assets to the next generation at an unprecedented scale. In Australia alone, \$5.4 trillion will change hands over the next 20 years. Charitable giving is increasing too, with global figures reaching record highs in 2024.

On the surface, this seems like great news for the philanthropic sector. But the bigger picture is more complex. As wealth moves down the generations, it spreads across children and grandchildren, creating overlapping generations of potential donors. The challenge isn't a shortage of potential donors; it's conversion. How to turn inherited wealth and philanthropic intent into committed giving relationships, while the pool of people who give consistently and committedly is shrinking.

**In Australia, the proportion of people who do not donate at all surged from 35% in 2021 to 42% in 2024**

*(Fundraising & Philanthropy, 2024).*

For a variety of reasons, such as increased cost of living, fewer people are choosing to give regularly. Those who do are concentrating their support on fewer organisations. What's more, donor demographics and values are shifting, bringing new behaviours and higher expectations of the organisations they back.

What does this mean for organisations? Securing philanthropic support in your sector is about to get significantly more competitive.

**\$150 billion**

*inherited in Australia in 2024*

*JBWere Bequest Report, 2024*

**4.4 million**

*Australians make a tax-deductible donation annually*

*Australian Tax Office (ATO) / Philanthropy Australia, 2025*

THE AUSTRALIAN OPPORTUNITY  
(AND THE GAP)

# Australia has dropped in global donor participation rankings, and a striking behavioural shift has emerged.

The current intergenerational wealth transfer in Australia is fuelled by rising property prices, compounding superannuation balances, and strong investment returns. But turning that opportunity into philanthropic impact is not guaranteed.

Even though the Australian Government has set an ambitious goal to double charitable giving by 2030 (*Productivity Commission, 2024*), fewer Australians are donating year on year. Those who are giving are concentrating their support on fewer organisations, with the majority of Australian fundraising now driven by emergency and disaster appeals rather than committed regular giving. What's more, only 19% of first-time donors are returning.

With more than 59,000 registered charities competing for a contracting pool of committed donors, the implications for engaging and stewarding donors are serious.

“Five years ago, 60 per cent of Australian fundraising was in regular giving, with 40 per cent in response to emergencies, but that has now flipped.”

*Katherine Raskob, Fundraising Institute Australia Chief Executive, 2025*

Australia dropped from  
**8th to 13th**  
globally for donor participation

*CAF World Giving Report, 2025*

Australia gives  
**1% of inheritances**  
to charity (vs 3.7% in the UK)

*JBWere Bequest Report, 2024*

Only  
**6.5%**  
of Australian wills include a charitable bequest

*JBWere Bequest Report, 2024*

## WHO ARE THE NEXT-GEN DONORS?

# The incoming generations of wealth holders give, think, and choose differently.

For decades, regular giving in Australia has been built around a reliable archetype: the loyal, committed, Boomer-era donor who gives regularly to a small number of trusted institutions and have potential to be stewarded towards major gifts. That model is eroding as it's being influenced by the next generation of donors who hold a different set of values and behaviours.

The immediate beneficiaries of the wealth transfer are Gen X (born 1965-1980). Behind them are the Millennials a.k.a. Gen Y (born 1981-1996) and Gen Z (born 1997-2012), and it's these younger cohorts that are typically referred to as 'next generation donors'. While the aim is not to alienate traditional donors, it's crucial to begin understanding and nurturing the next generation now to ensure you're on their radar in future.

"Millennials and Gen Z donors are reimagining what philanthropy can look like. They tend to be values-driven and see philanthropy as an extension of activism and responsibility," explains the AEGN in their September 2025 'Next Generation Philanthropy' report. They are moving away from institutional loyalty towards cause-driven, spontaneous giving. They give in response to stories, rather than solicitations. And they back organisations that communicate transparently and demonstrate real impact.

**44%** of Gen X are 'committed givers' (compared with 51% of Boomers). This number drops further as we move down the generation ladder, with only **33% of Millennials** and **22% of Gen Z** being 'committed givers'. This proves a trend towards younger generations being more selective around what and when they support. In here lies opportunity for major gift campaigns, as long as your program connects with this audience.

*McCrindle, The Not-for-profit Landscape, Australia*

**83%** of next-generation donors identified the environment as their top funding priority. This is likely to jump to more than 90% in the next 10 years.

*AEGN Next Generation Philanthropy Report*

## BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHT

# Understanding the Millennial mindset

For Millennials, inherited wealth arrives in complicated circumstances. They hold just 5% of the nation's wealth (*Property Update, 2026*), squeezed by housing costs, debt and stagnant wages. When inheritance does arrive, it is likely to land after decades of financial strain.

Inheriting wealth under financial pressure can create anxiety and decision paralysis rather than confidence (*Oxford Risk, 'The Psychology of Inheritance', 2025*). As a result, recipients may seek expert advice to help them navigate sudden assets (*CNBC, 2025*), making the professional advisor community an increasingly important channel of influence.

However, Oxford Risk reports: "Many younger inheritors, raised on digital platforms and social media, bypass traditional financial advice entirely. They turn to influencers, peers, and online communities – not out of ignorance, but because these sources feel more accessible, emotionally resonant, and aligned with their identity."

HOW TO CONNECT

## 3 Key Strategies for Engaging Next-gen Donors

**“Exploring innovative approaches that authentically reflect [new generations’] values and aspirations is key.”**

### **Embrace creativity.**

This tip comes from Bella Conyngham, who leads Philanthropy Australia’s New Generation of Giving Network. She says: “Recognise that traditional donor engagement strategies may not fully resonate with this demographic. Exploring innovative approaches that authentically reflect their values and aspirations is key. This might entail diverging from your conventional brand and messaging to ensure relevance and resonance.”

### **Create ongoing ways to connect.**

Based on the shift towards giving based on opportunities, you can understand why this will become increasingly important. If a donor consistently sees your message, whether through a mix of campaigns, events, social media and emails, and you’ve made the act of giving quick and easy (for example, a few clicks on a website), then your cause is top of mind at the moment a donor is ready to give.

*MIH.com.au: ‘How to Make Millennials and Gen Z Care About Your Cause’, 2025*

### **Communicate your impact on multiple platforms.**

Globally, 66% of Millennials track results for the nonprofits they support (vs. 40% of Gen X and 32% of Boomers). They read letters and reports from the organisation but they also frequently visit the organisations’ website and social channels.

*Fidelity Charitable: How a New Mindset is Changing Philanthropy*

## WOMEN HOLD THE KEY

“Australian women are emerging as a defining force in the next era of philanthropy”

*She Gives: 'Growing Women's Giving in Australia' Report, 2026*

A new landmark study conducted by the Centre for Social Impact UWA reveals “a defining opportunity for the Australian philanthropy sector to modernise its pathways (and its culture) to unlock women’s giving at scale, becoming more accessible, collaborative and aligned with how women choose to engage.”

According to the report, women are set to control the majority of Australia’s \$5.4 trillion wealth transfer. They already make most household giving decisions. And critically, they outlive their male partners, which means they become the sole decision-makers for estate planning, legacy gifts, and gifts in wills at the most significant philanthropic moment of their lives. Yet most giving programs have not been designed to reflect this reality.

Women tend to give more collaboratively, through networks, peer conversations, and shared decision-making. They are more likely to want to understand the *why* before committing to a major gift, and more likely to respond to evidence of impact and organisational values alignment than to prestige or naming opportunities alone. They often want to be educated and engaged as philanthropic thinkers, not simply solicited as donors.

For organisations running capital campaigns, building future funds, or cultivating major gift prospects, this has direct practical implications. Women need to be in the room earlier. Stewardship programs need to be designed with their decision-making style in mind. And the case for support needs to speak to values and legacy.

**80%+**

of women in philanthropic networks say they want to give more

*She Gives: 'Growing Women's Giving in Australia' Report, 2026*

**60%+**

of women living with a partner always or usually make household giving decisions

*She Gives: 'Growing Women's Giving in Australia' Report, 2026*

**50%**

The oldest daughter (not necessarily the oldest child) is 50% more likely to be entrusted with managing the family estate at the point of wealth transfer

*JBWere Bequest Report, 2024*

**4+ years**

Women outlive men by an average of 4+ years in Australia, making them the primary legacy gift decision-makers

*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2025*

## HOW TO BE MORE VISIBLE IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

# The vast majority of donations in Australia (94%) flow to a small minority of organisations (10%).

*The Funding Network / Philanthropy Australia, 2024*

Research by McNair yellowSquares, published in *Fundraising & Philanthropy*, established that a minimum of 70% prompted awareness is required before an organisation achieves even a 10% donor rate. This means that at least 70% of your target audience need to be aware of your brand name or logo before you can expect meaningful donor conversion.

Add to this increasing competition and shifting donor dynamics, and you begin to realise that now might be a good time to take a step back and evaluate your brand strategy.

## How brand strategy can help

The great wealth transfer is not a distant horizon. It is happening now, and the organisations that benefit most will be those that begin preparing today. Brand strategy gives you a framework for assessing your readiness and identifying where investment in brand, communications, and campaign strategy will deliver the greatest return.

Here are the kind of questions that a strategic brand audit might prompt you to consider:

**1. Is your brand identity unique enough to stand out amongst rising competition,** especially considering changing donor demographics? If not, where are the gaps and opportunities?

**2. Are you communicating and proving your impact?** 87% of Australian donors say they would switch to a more effective charity if shown the evidence (*Giving What We Can*). Are you telling your impact story clearly across the donor engagement cycle?

**3. Is your communication strategy still relevant?** For example, is direct mail still the right primary touchpoint for your most valuable prospects, or are you missing them entirely on digital? Are you learning from the rise of influencer-led giving? Is your digital presence something a donor would actually want to share?

**4. Is your giving ecosystem robust enough,** so that regular giving, major gifts and future giving (gifts in wills) work cohesively together? This also goes back to ensuring you're engaging donors in the ways and places they prefer, rather than how your organisation wants to.

**5. Does your organisation and / or major gift giving program look and feel like it belongs in the top 10%?** Your visual identity is the first filter donors apply. Would a high-net-worth individual encountering your brand or program for the first time have immediate confidence in your credibility?

### PRO TIP

## Brand strategy and fundraising strategy must operate as one.

Too often, marketing and development teams work in parallel rather than in partnership, with brand teams focused on awareness and advancement teams focused on dollars raised, each optimising for different metrics.

The organisations that reach their philanthropic goals are the ones that have made brand a shared mission: where the communications team understands the philanthropic objectives, where the advancement team understands the brand, and where every donor touchpoint, from a social post to a major gift proposal, is part of a single, coherent story.

## THE BLUEBOAT DIFFERENCE

**Since 1994, Blueboat has been helping purpose-led organisations build the brands, campaigns, and impact stories they need to thrive.**

Blueboat is a full-service agency with deep expertise, partnering to raise millions of dollars with our clients. We understand philanthropy, not just as a funding mechanism, but as a complex, emotionally driven relationship between organisations and the people who believe in their work.

Our work spans brand strategy and identity through to strategic design and implementation. From campaign pre-planning, donor engagement strategy, comprehensive campaigns, regular giving and bequest programs. Our approach is always grounded in evidence, strategy, and measurable outcomes.

If this report has prompted questions about your team or organisation's readiness for what's coming, we'd welcome the conversation.

### Get in touch:

**T** +61 414 401 975

**E** [jeremy@blueboat.com.au](mailto:jeremy@blueboat.com.au)

**W** [blueboat.com.au](http://blueboat.com.au)

*“Blueboat’s strategic guidance has brought our philanthropic goals to life. From communicating our masterplan, to catapulting our scholarship, capital campaign, and our strategic giving plan into the future. They masterfully design creative campaigns that resonate with our audience and amplify our message. Our partnership with Blueboat continues to be invaluable, turning our vision from page to stage with professionalism and heart.”*

### **Myfanwy Stanfield**

*Director of Community Engagement / Senior Leadership  
Ascham School*

*Chair  
educate+ Board*

# SOURCES

In order of appearance:

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*CAF World Giving Report*

*AEGN Next Generation Philanthropy  
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*McCrinkle, The Not-for-profit  
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*Oxford Risk, 'The Psychology  
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Australia' Report*

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*The Funding Network / Philanthropy  
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*Giving What We Can*

