



Program supporters and partners

# Program Update

MARCH 2026

*Supporting young people through mentorship, fishing,  
and connection to community.*



[www.reelmates.com.au](http://www.reelmates.com.au)

## Executive Summary

The REEL Mates program has now commenced delivery, marking an important milestone in the development of the initiative.

Following several months of program establishment, mentor training, and partnership development, the program delivered its first structured fishing sessions in February 2026. These introductory outings included young people referred through Youth Off The Streets alongside community participants who joined the sessions.

The program is currently in its early delivery phase, with mentors now actively supporting activities and additional young people joining the program through community connections and partner organisations.

Early sessions have focused on building mentor–mentee relationships, introducing participants to recreational fishing, and creating a relaxed outdoor environment that encourages positive social interaction and engagement.

REEL Mates will continue expanding participation over the coming months while maintaining a strong focus on safe, structured delivery and meaningful mentoring experiences.

## Delivery Milestones

**Program Status:** *Operational – Early Delivery Phase*

- ✓ Mentor recruitment and training completed
- ✓ Referral partnerships established
- ✓ First program sessions delivered
- ✓ Participant onboarding ongoing
- ✓ Observation tracking framework operational

## 1. Program establishment

Volunteer mentor recruitment has now largely been completed, with seven mentors successfully inducted to support delivery of the REEL Mates program.

Mentor onboarding has included eligibility screening, role orientation, and training covering program procedures, child safety responsibilities, and participant supervision requirements. This process ensures mentors are appropriately prepared to support young people in a safe, structured, and supportive environment.

In addition to the formal mentor induction session, individual onboarding and guidance has been provided where required to ensure mentors are well prepared to support participants as they join the program.

Mentors bring a range of fishing experience as well as a strong commitment to providing positive role modelling and encouragement for young participants.

A small number of additional mentors are currently completing their onboarding process to further strengthen the mentor team as the program grows.

## 2. Early Program Delivery

The REEL Mates program commenced delivery in February 2026 with the first structured fishing sessions taking place with young people from Youth Off The Streets alongside community participants.

These introductory outings provided an opportunity to introduce participants to recreational fishing while creating a relaxed environment where mentors and young people could begin building connections through shared outdoor activities.

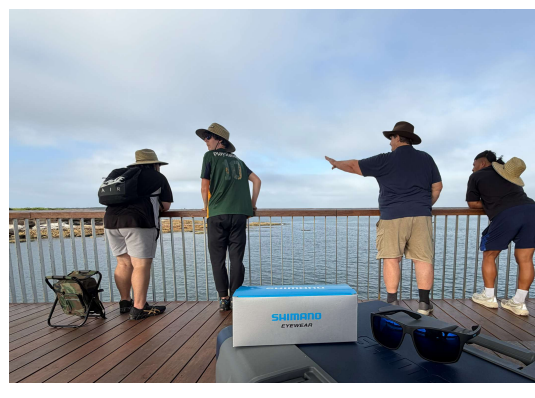
These early sessions also allowed the program team to refine logistics, test fishing locations, and ensure safety procedures and supervision structures are operating effectively.

With these initial sessions successfully delivered, the program is continuing to welcome additional participants through community connections and partner organisations as future activities are scheduled.

Early program delivery has required a degree of flexibility to align with participant readiness, partner schedules, and cultural considerations.

For example, young people identified through one partner organisation were unable to participate in the initial induction session due to timing around Ramadan and Eid. At the request of the partner organisation, onboarding for this cohort has been scheduled following these important cultural observances, with a dedicated induction session planned for their group.

To maintain momentum for the program's launch, REEL Mates proceeded with early activities for participants who were ready to engage. This flexible approach has allowed the program to begin operating while remaining responsive to the needs of partner organisations, young people, and their families.



### 3. Partnerships & Community Engagement

The early delivery of the REEL Mates program has been supported through collaboration with several community organisations and partners.

Youth Off The Streets has supported early youth engagement, with participants joining the first program outings through this partnership.

Marist180 has also identified a number of young people who may benefit from the program, with onboarding planned following Ramadan and Eid to ensure culturally appropriate participation.

In addition to partner referrals, REEL Mates has also begun receiving enquiries from community members through local networks, council connections, and families who have discovered the program through its website.

The program has also benefited from support from community and corporate partners.

Shimano has contributed fishing equipment to support program delivery, ensuring participants have access to quality gear during activities. In addition, Shimano has supported the program through significant discounts, enabling us to provide young people with their own fishing gear to keep and continue fishing independently beyond program.



DOOLEYS Club has been a major supporter of the program, hosting the REEL Mates induction session in February and supporting the initiative through ClubGRANTS funding and logistical assistance.

Further strengthening the initial funding provided by DOOLEYS, Cumberland City Council has also awarded grant funding to expand the program's reach and support additional young people within the Cumberland area.

Additional community support has been received from Grill'd, and REEL Mates is currently exploring opportunities with Lendlease to establish a corporate volunteers program to further expand the program delivery.

These partnerships play an important role in enabling REEL Mates to deliver accessible, well-supported mentoring activities for young people.

Early engagement with referral partners and community networks has also highlighted growing interest in the REEL Mates program. As delivery continues, the program will progressively increase participant numbers while ensuring mentor capacity, safety requirements, and program quality remain central to program growth.





#### 4. Early Program Observations

As REEL Mates has only recently commenced program delivery, the program is currently in the early stages of collecting data to support ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Initial observations from the first fishing sessions have been encouraging. Participants have demonstrated strong enthusiasm for learning new fishing skills and engaging in outdoor activities alongside mentors and peers.

The relaxed outdoor environment has supported early relationship-building between mentors and participants, providing opportunities for informal conversations and positive social interaction.

Mentors are recording structured observations following activities to support ongoing evaluation aligned with the program's four pillars:

- Health and wellbeing
- Future aspirations
- Engagement with education
- Positive social interaction



As further sessions are delivered, REEL Mates will continue gathering observations and feedback to better understand how participation contributes to confidence, connection, and engagement for young people involved in the program.

## **5. Program Impact**

As the program continues to expand, REEL Mates will use these observations and participation data to build a clearer understanding of how the program contributes to positive outcomes for young people.

At this early stage, the focus remains on establishing strong mentor–mentee relationships, supporting consistent participation in structured activities, and creating an environment where young people feel comfortable engaging with mentors and peers.

Over time, the program will continue monitoring engagement and participation patterns to better understand how the program supports young people’s confidence, connection, and broader development.

## **Next Phase of Delivery**

Over the coming months REEL Mates will continue expanding program delivery as additional participants complete onboarding and begin attending sessions.

The program will continue delivering structured fishing activities while monitoring participation, mentor engagement, and observation data to support ongoing learning and program development.

Most importantly, REEL Mates will continue to remain responsive to the needs of partner organisations, young people, and their families as the program evolves.