

Inspire

AUTUMN 2018



“Never see a need without doing something about it”

I CANNOT LET THEM DOWN!

Stewart James is no accidental role model.

When he applied for a Mary MacKillop Foundation scholarship at 29 years of age, **he was acutely aware of the positive impact his studies would have on his young family and extended community.** Despite dropping out of school in Year 9, Stewart had gone back to school, and was now pursuing his academic dreams.

When we first met Stewart, he was in his second year of study at the Australian Catholic University Strathfield Campus. It was a grueling **five-year part time study program toward an Associate Degree in Indigenous Education (Bachelor of Education).**

In his compelling application for the scholarship, Stewart explained what motivated him to complete his studies, despite many financial and emotional challenges.

“Completing University is a massive step for me personally, as I am the first member of my whole family to go to University. My children admire the commitment to my study, and it has had a direct impact on their perspective of education and the importance of it.”

But that commitment to study was taking a significant toll on his family finances. **The struggling father of five, and his wife, Sharona, were both working two jobs** to support their family. They were also caring for Stewart's elderly mother.

Stewart, who hails from the Narrandera community and is a proud member of the Wiradjuri people, admits the **financial stress threatened to derail his studies.**

He received no financial assistance and traveling far from home for each

Recent graduate and former scholarship student, Stewart.



residential took a huge toll on the family. Between travel costs and phone calls to and from home and uni, finances were stretched to breaking point. **His studies also suffered because he could only afford the minimum access to the internet;** his computer was unreliable at best, and he couldn't afford a printer or stationery.

Then came the phone call that changed his life.

Stewart can vividly recall where he was when Mary MacKillop Foundation phoned him to advise that he had been awarded the scholarship.

“Of all places”, he says: “I was in the vegetable aisle at the local Coles, shopping with one of my daughters. When I heard I had been successful, I almost danced for joy. It was a very emotional moment...**it truly was like winning Lotto!**”

While the security of a scholarship for the final three years of his University Degree was an immense relief, Stewart says it was more than the alleviation of financial hardship that motivated him to the finish line.

“Knowing the Mary MacKillop Foundation had enough faith in me to award me this scholarship was a precious gift, and one that I did not take lightly,” he explains.

“When I was feeling overwhelmed by my studies, my work and my family and community commitments, I did sometimes struggle – but then I would think – **these people believe in me: I cannot let them down.**”

Stewart, who completed his degree last year, continues to work in an inspirational role as TAFE NSW Aboriginal Student Support Team Leader at TAFE NSW Riverina Institute.



MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

EXCITING TIMES AHEAD

As you will read on the reverse of this newsletter, **we are on the cusp of an historic moment**, as our Foundation moves to join with Mary MacKillop International and the Josephite Foundation to form **a powerful single ministry: Mary MacKillop Today**.

These are exciting times for all who are committed to continuing the works of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in the tradition of Australia's first Saint.

As our new ministry launches on 1 July, this will be the **last edition of the "Inspire" Newsletter in its current form**. I take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for your contribution to the Foundation's work and I urge you to continue to make a difference to the lives of those most in need by supporting our new ministry.

I am immensely grateful to the Sisters for their confidence in me. During my time as CEO of this most wonderful Foundation, **I have been touched in turn by the generosity of our supporters, the commitment of our staff, and the humility of those we have been privileged to serve.**

I have so enjoyed and been inspired by your kindness and willingness to support marginalised and vulnerable people through education. Mary MacKillop's spirit lives on in so many of you. **I am especially grateful for the opportunity this role has given me to understand more deeply the challenges many people in Australia face every day**, and I am thankful that I had the opportunity to offer hope through your generosity.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Maree Whybourne
CEO

INVESTING IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE KIMBERLEY

The Kimberley region is a remote and vast area roughly twice the size of Victoria. Aboriginal people comprise more than 40% of the population, and they face significant challenges, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and health. Thanks to the support of the Foundation by **a generous private donor**, young people in this region will have better access to education through our new partnership with the University of Notre Dame, Broome Campus.

The Foundation has provided a \$170,000 grant to the University to help remove some of the many barriers to education for young people in the region. The funding has provided a critical boost to the University's capacity to engage Aboriginal youth in tertiary education.

The two-year partnership will fund a range of programs and services that have the potential to **transform young lives by providing greater access to tertiary education**.

The funding will allow the Broome campus to extend its **Student Support Outreach in Kununurra**.

While courses are based online, students require intensive wrap-around support and there are challenges in reaching remote areas. For example, it's a 12 hour drive from Broome to Kununurra, and the wet season often makes areas inaccessible. A trainer based in Kununurra will provide students in these remote

communities greater support that will improve retention and graduation rates, as well as employment opportunities.

The University will also use the grant to purchase a **4WD vehicle to provide face-to-face support** for students in remote communities.

Students will also benefit from the development of **e-learning modules** for the Certificate III and Certificate IV in Education Support courses for Aboriginal Teaching Assistants, and the integration of these modules into their existing online learning platform.

Professor Juli Coffin, the University's Head of Aboriginal Research Programs and Partnerships, said the two-year partnership with Mary MacKillop Foundation had **the capacity to transform the lives of many young Aboriginal people**.

*"Many Aboriginal students are not able to access adequate educational opportunities in the West Kimberley region, due to social determinants such as transport and technology. Education is for every Australian and can be the catalyst needed to **help families and communities out of the cycle of poverty**," Prof Coffin said.*

"We are enormously grateful to the Foundation, and its supporters, for this funding and for the way the Foundation has worked with us to ensure we invest their funding where it will have maximum impact for Aboriginal youth in the region."



Latarney Johnson, Jean O'Reeri and Zanika Gordon in the new St Joseph's Wyndham study nook.



Maree Whybourne enjoying her time with the staff and students at the school in Warmun.

CEO TOURS KIMBERLEY PROJECTS

Last November, our CEO, Maree Whybourne, visited Western Australia to meet with some of our Indigenous tertiary scholarship recipients and check on the progress of projects supported through Foundation Community Grants.

Maree was particularly inspired by one scholarship recipient, currently completing a degree in Medicine. This young man, who had been a policeman for 15 years, has a young family and is making huge sacrifices to follow his dream. Growing up in Central Australia, **he knows only too well the health challenges faced by people living in remote areas** and will be a wonderful asset to medicine.

In Hall's Creek, Maree met the inimitable Sr Alma: a much-loved figure in the town and surrounding communities. Together, they travelled to Warmun, a small community where **Maree spent some days making herself useful in the only school for miles**. A flood ten years ago ravaged the school buildings and **a Community Grant from the Foundation re-stocked their library**. Thanks to your support for Mary MacKillop Foundation, reading is hugely popular with the children and their parents.

Maree is incredibly grateful for her time in Western Australia and to those who shared her experiences. She was stunned by the beauty, richer for the knowledge she gained and excited by the work being done in partnership with your support. Long may it continue!



COMMUNITY GRANTS UPDATE

Grassroots community organisations that have significant impact on the lives of vulnerable and marginalised people resemble the compassionate way **Mary alleviated suffering and brought hope to the poorest of the poor in 19th century Australia**. Here are just two of the 688 life-changing projects funded by the Mary MacKillop Foundation since 1995; one for which funding concluded in 2017 and another with whom we are commencing our support in 2018.



HOW THEY HAVE FLOURISHED!

A community grant from our Foundation was the inaugural funding for **Cooloom HeARTS**: a new organisation with **a vision to provide access to the arts for the most marginalised of people in the local community**. Cooloom HeARTs has flourished during our three-year partnership: from delivering one art class per week to 12 people, to three classes per week for more than 130 grateful participants.



EDUCATION ACCESS FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

We recently entered into a partnership with **Monash Health** to provide education and employment opportunities **for refugees and asylum seekers** in the Dandenong region.

The funding will enable Monash Health to support 18 migrant volunteers to undertake courses through local TAFE providers. By providing these education pathways for asylum seekers and refugees, Monash Health aims to equip them with training to secure sustained, paid employment.

SPECIAL THANKS

ST AIDAN'S!

We are indebted to the school community of St Aidan's Primary at Maroubra Junction in Sydney for their **enthusiastic support for the Mary MacKillop Foundation**. This school of just over 200 students has been the **top school contributor out of all our supporting schools across Australia for the past two years**. At their Awards Ceremony in November last year, one of our tertiary scholarship recipients, Harry Reuben, was invited to address the students. Harry shared the story of how, when he was growing up on Palm Island, he dreamed of going to University but thought he never would.

Harry thanked the school community for their amazing fundraising efforts that have **given him, and many other Indigenous people, the opportunity to transform their future** through our tertiary scholarship scheme.



Leonie Palmer
(principal of St
Aidan's), Harry
Reuben (Tertiary
Scholar) and
Kingsley Edwards

If your school would like to host a fundraiser on behalf of the Foundation, please contact Donor Development Manager, Kingsley Edwards, on 02 8912 2748 or email Kingsley.Edwards@mackillopfoundation.org.au.

Pray with us for Saint Mary's blessings on the transformational change ahead.

COUNTDOWN... OUR SINGLE MINISTRY

**We are on the cusp
of an historic moment.**

On 1 July 2018, the Mary MacKillop Foundation will join with Mary MacKillop International and the Josephite Foundation to **form a powerful single ministry**: Mary MacKillop Today.

The coming together of these three ministries into one is the culmination of **many years of prayerful deliberation and planning**. It will intensify the impact of each outreach by reducing administrative overheads and **concentrating resources** where they can best meet the needs of the poorest of the poor.

As a single ministry proudly continuing the works of the Sisters of Saint Joseph in the spirit of Australia's first Saint, Mary MacKillop

Today will support our existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tertiary Scholarships and Community Grants, along with international aid programs for local communities throughout Timor-Leste, Peru and Papua New Guinea, as well as No Interest Loan Schemes in regional New South Wales.

Rest assured that your personal support will continue to be directed specifically to the areas of need that you know and love.

DONATE TODAY

Three ways to give quickly & easily

1 MAIL
the enclosed
coupon

2 PHONE
02-8912 2720

3 ONLINE
www.mackillopfoundation.org.au



**Mary MacKillop
Foundation**

Donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible. From 1 July 2018, Mary MacKillop Foundation will join with two other proud ministries – built on the legacy of Saint Mary MacKillop – to become Mary MacKillop Today. If you do not wish to receive communication from Mary MacKillop Today, please phone 02-8912 2720 or email info@mackillopfoundation.org.au. (See coupon for additional opt out.)