

Mary's News *today*



*Education
for Life*

AUTUMN 2021

- Why Education for Life is so important
- How the Sisters of Saint Joseph's legacy in Timor-Leste is being honoured
- See how community projects in Australia are improving lives through education and more...

MARY MACKILLOP
today



Dear Friends and Supporters

This edition of our newsletter celebrates one of our core values – ‘Education for Life’. At every stage of the life cycle, it’s important to keep learning. It’s how we can continue to grow as healthy individuals and contributing members of our community.

This is why our programs focus on lifelong learning in many areas, ranging from traditional literacy and numeracy to broad life skills.

You can read more about why ‘Education for Life’ is important on page 3. I share some of my personal experiences as a teacher in Sydney and my time living in Timor Leste.

The inspiring transformations I witness every day are happening because of your support.

People like you are supporting women like Kini in Fiji, who was able to receive Women’s Leadership training for financial independence and emotional resilience (see this page for her story).

And you can find out about some of our latest projects right here in Australia, collaborating with First Nations communities and Sudanese refugees (page 6).

After a tough year battling the pandemic, I believe we can look to the life of Saint Mary MacKillop for inspiration. During her most difficult trials, Mary persevered to provide access to education for all.

Thank you for your kind generosity to keep Mary’s legacy alive!

With gratitude,

Jane Woolford

Chief Executive Officer

Kini’s Story of Women’s Leadership in Fiji

Kini is a young woman living in Fiji. She married young, has two children and is unemployed. Experiencing challenges in her marriage, Kini finds herself moving from house to house seeking support from others in her community.

When Kini joined our Women’s Leadership training, she learnt many crucial things – from knowing her rights to new skills like sewing, screen printing, and making bags and baskets.

Since participating in Human Rights training, she now is fully aware of her rights and the services available for her. Kini is now confident to speak out and express her feelings. She decided to go for counselling, and it was with this support that she could feel motivated to move on with life for the sake of her two children.

Today, Kini continues to grow in confidence and independence. She has started her own business where she makes traditional handicrafts including “salusalu” or traditional garlands, bags and baskets together with screen printed sulus. Her customer orders are coming in from



as far away as the hotels on Malolo Island. She has also started to sell her handicrafts at market days.

The young determined Kini didn’t stop there. She is now also the vice president of her local women’s club!

We are thrilled to share uplifting stories of empowering change – just like Kini’s. Your support makes these transformations possible!

Inspired by Australia’s first saint, Mary MacKillop Today empowers communities in Australia and overseas to realise their dignity through education, health, financial inclusion and livelihoods. All photos Mary MacKillop Today unless otherwise stated. When necessary, names have been changed for privacy. Front Cover: Teacher with students in Timor-Leste



Mary MacKillop Today acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of the land, past, present, and emerging, on which our offices are located.



Mary MacKillop Today is fully accredited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. To maintain accreditation, Mary MacKillop Today’s systems, policies and processes are rigorously reviewed by the Australian Government.



Mary MacKillop Today is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and complies with industry standards of good practice, transparency and accountability.



Mary MacKillop Today is a Registered Charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), the national regulator of charities.

Why 'Education for Life' is important

Education is one of the best investments a country can make to alleviate poverty. Through her time working with communities around the world, Mary MacKillop Today's CEO, Jane Woolford, has come to deeply appreciate the relationship between education and poverty. Jane shares why she believes 'Education for Life' is important.

"So often, children miss out on education because of poverty. When families are in hardship, it means their access to learning is compromised. That affects their ability to live a full, healthy life. Schooling is an opportunity to build skills, capabilities, wellbeing, and confidence. Missing out on school puts a person's chance of later gaining employment at risk. They won't be job-ready or money-wise.

The theme 'Education for Life' is about enabling access to education throughout the various stages of life. As humans, we never stop learning. To ignite a passion in the earliest years means opening windows to the world. This early learning builds our own

the areas of significant need for education – both in Australia and overseas.

"I think back to the first time I arrived in Timor Leste in 2001 to help rebuild communities after the conflict. I saw schools burnt down. The Sisters of St Joseph were there helping people to support the education system. Timor Leste has come a long way but there's still significant need – so I'm grateful to still be involved in developing literacy and life skills with young people, parents, and teachers in their own Tetun language. In the later stages of life as adults, education remains important.

I see increased vulnerability levels where people face a lack of literacy

supporters that makes our Education for Life programs possible around the world. Thank you for your support, especially during this time of increased vulnerability due to the pandemic.

Did you know?

- Around 1 in every 5 children worldwide are not in school
- Girls are 1.5 times more likely to be excluded from primary education than boys
- Every additional year in school can increase a woman's earning by 10-20%

Source: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Here's how your support made Education for Life possible in 2020

- 547 teachers and 35 community educators were trained to provide literacy and early learning education benefiting 5,662 children
- 550 adults accessed informal life skills training, such as budgeting workshops
- 1,332 parents and caregivers developed skills to support their children's learning at home
- 75 First Nations students were supported in their tertiary studies

"Teaching showed me that the greatest impact you have is not necessarily the marks on paper – it's the stimulation and inspiration you provide around learning. It was exciting to see my students building a vision of their place in the world."

strengths so we can contribute to our community and develop compassion to help others. I think of Mary MacKillop's words – 'Find happiness in making others happy.'

Like Saint Mary MacKillop, Jane spent time as an educator in the classroom – teaching English at a secondary school in Western Sydney. She shared what a privilege it was to teach and build connections with students.

Having firsthand experience in teaching, Jane has come to see

skills, even here in Australia. There's a real need for training in life skills. That's why, for example, Mary MacKillop Today is running workshops in budgeting and financial literacy in Central Western NSW to give people economic independence and escape cycles of growing debt."

Saint Mary MacKillop was a teacher and saw education as a pathway out of poverty. Supporters like you are helping to carry on her legacy. It is the generosity and compassion of



Support life-changing work

by including Mary MacKillop Today in your will

A gift in your will, of any size, is a powerful way to leave a legacy for future generations. Your gift will help vulnerable communities and continue the vital work of Saint Mary MacKillop. Call Elizabeth on 02 8912 2712 to find out more.

Training teachers with skills for lifelong learning in Timor Leste

Timor Leste will celebrate 18 years of independence this year in May. We remember the humble beginnings of the work of the Sisters of St Joseph who walked alongside the Timorese throughout the years of the Indonesian occupation and after the 1999 post-referendum violence.

This turbulent time left schools destroyed and a severe lack of trained teachers to support young students



in their education. The Sisters remained determined to help in the face of hardship, building upon their Tetun literacy program so that children could enjoy stories in their own local language. Despite major improvements in education across Timor Leste, there is still a lot of work to do.

Anabela is a schoolteacher in Timor Leste. When we met her, she shared how difficult it was to teach because

she didn't have any resources, such as textbooks, and she struggled to find ways to improve the learning environment for her students. After joining our Tetun Literacy and Teacher Training program, Anabela told us about the impact on her teaching abilities.



This project receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) and Edmund Rice Foundation Australia.

“When I started the training, it increased my ability in terms of new approaches and methods for teaching. I received some resources such as history books, posters and stationery. I learned about classroom management, child development, child protection and inclusive education. I have become a self-confident teacher. I am guiding children's learning through games and music. I am always motivating and encouraging my students to be actively involved in lessons and present in school every day.” – Anabela, teacher in Timor Leste

Providing inclusive education in remote areas in Papua New Guinea

As part of our mission to provide Education for Life, we are doing everything we can to make sure no one is left behind. Unfortunately, children with disability can face significant challenges and barriers when it comes to accessing high quality education in Papua New Guinea – especially in remote areas.

Mary MacKillop Today, in partnership with the Callan Services National Unit, is working with the Vanimo Inclusive Education Resource Centre (IERC) on the volunteer-led 'Inclusive Communities' project in the Sandaun Province. Through this project, children with disability and their families are supported to access



specialised services as well as gain support to enter the mainstream schooling system.

Community-based rehabilitation volunteers are working with families and teachers to promote inclusive practices in schools and communities. The volunteers also advocate for, and create awareness

around, the rights of people with disability. Looking to the future, we are establishing a community-based approach to overcome both 'out-of-school' and 'in-school' barriers for children with disability.

A wonderful Graduation Day to celebrate!

In December, six children with disability graduated from the Edmund Rice Play Schools in Vanimo and are set to join the mainstream school system in 2021. A wonderful celebration was held to farewell the children and prepare them for a smooth transition to primary school.

This project receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Helping parents get involved in education in Peru

At Mary MacKillop Today, we believe education doesn't just happen within the classroom, but also in the home and within the community.

Positive parental engagement in formal learning gives students the best possible chance at succeeding at school and achieving brighter futures. Yet, in rural areas of Peru, parents are less likely to be involved in their children's education, which

can impede a child's ability to finish their schooling and realise their full potential.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, we are providing training workshops in partnership with local organisation, Centro de Educación, Organización y Promoción del Desarrollo de Ilo (Centre for Education, Organisation and the Promotion of Development, Ilo). To



date, we have run workshops for 86 teachers across 7 schools in Peru on how to strengthen the relationships between family, community, and teachers. These workshops have supported 600 parents to take an active role in their children's learning.

“The parents education project that has been implemented in our school is strengthening the capacities of teachers and tutors especially. We try to emotionally support the students in these situations so that they also feel strengthened and more resilient. Parents are responding well too, they are supporting their children a lot.

This is very important for students and their development as well.”

- Hugo Castillo Rojas, Director of Mariscal Domingo Nieto School, Peru

“I think it's important that we try to help in any way we can”



Meet Christine, one of our valued supporters

“When I retired, I wanted to give back. I already knew about Saint Mary MacKillop, and that she was a woman of strong convictions. She didn't have it easy – it was hard enough to start a movement to provide education, let alone doing it as a woman during the 1800s. I chose to support Mary MacKillop Today because of its focus on education. I know the Sisters of St Joseph are still doing so much to keep Mary's work going.

I think it's important that we try to help in any way we can. I recently signed up to donate monthly. I've been sending in stamps for a while now too – I was astounded that such a simple act could make a difference. I'm also a happy ethica* customer. I like that the money from what I buy can help women in Peru to make their own income.

For anyone thinking about becoming a supporter, I want to say that it's not a hard thing to do. Every dollar counts, it doesn't have to be a large amount. But it gives you the satisfaction of knowing you're helping someone with less.”

**ethica is the fair-trade company of Mary MacKillop Today. Visit at ethica.org.au*

We are so thankful for the generosity of our supporters!

Together, we follow in the footsteps of Saint Mary MacKillop and break down cycles of disadvantage.

One of our passionate donors, Christine, recently shared why and how she supports Mary MacKillop Today.



A simple way to support Education for Life is to collect new or used stamps and send them to:

Mary MacKillop Today
Reply Paid 88663,
North Sydney 2059

No stamp required!

The impact of Community Grants in Australia

Our Community Grants program has invested in over 600 life-changing projects across the country since 1995. We partner with organisations who empower Australia's most marginalised people to improve their lives through education. Here are some recent examples of Learning for Life in action – projects funded by Community Grants!

The Children's Dreaming Project

The Children's Dreaming Project, **Tjitjiku Tjukurpa**, is developing a collection of tri-lingual educational resources to preserve local languages and pass on cultural knowledge to future generations of young Aboriginal people in South Australia. Under the guidance of cultural custodians, Tjitjiku Tjukurpa is working with children to teach and record ancient Inma (song, dance and drawings) in Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages, through the exploration of the culturally significant Seven Sisters Dreaming. The collection of educational resources includes two stop-motion animations telling the Dreaming story of how the Seven Sisters came to be. A two-week residency saw children working with renowned Claymation artist, Jonathan Daw, to recreate the Seven Sisters Dreaming as a contemporary children's animation.

Students took these ancient stories of magic and desire, hot pursuit and escape, and the power of family ties – and transformed them into Claymation films of their imagining. The students were involved in the

whole animation process from creating the Claymation versions of the Seven Sisters characters, to building the backdrops and set design, and recording Foley sound effects for the animation.

An online learning platform was built to host the newly created collection of digital resources and to assist educators across Australia in teaching Aboriginal content in the classroom – something students and families can also access at home.

Tjitjiku Tjukurpa was an initiative of Carclew – a South Australia cultural organisation dedicated to artistic outcomes by and for young people – and delivered in partnership with Lee-Ann Buckskin & Associates.



Josephite Refugee Mentor Support

The Josephite Refugee Mentor Support program assists people who are new to Australia to gain access to education. Mentors are matched with students of disadvantaged refugee backgrounds who are transitioning from school to tertiary study.

The program was started by Sr Maria Sullivan, a Sister of Saint Joseph, in the 1980s. Over the years, Sr Maria has worked with countless refugees – growing and adapting the program to support their unique needs for building meaningful careers that break the cycle of poverty.

In 2020, nine young women were supported with personalised mentorship through the project. Although there is currently a focus on supporting Sudanese students, these incredible women had come from a variety of places around the world including Sudan, Iraq and Kenya – and many were born in refugee camps.

The supportive mentorship has assisted students to overcome barriers like unemployment, lack of education, and intergenerational trauma – to study for tertiary qualifications in a number of areas that will help secure a brighter future, such as nursing, teaching, and social science.



Photographic Stills from Seven Sisters Claymation, created by students from Pukatja (Ernabella) Anangu School with lead artist, Jonathan Daw.

STAY CONNECTED

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