

Mary's News *today*



AUTUMN 2022

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- Meet Bridie, First Nations Scholarship recipient
- Sisters reaching those most in need in Peru
- Tetun storybooks bridging gap for Timorese children and more...

MARY MACKILLOP
today



Dear Friends and Supporters

I would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to each of you for the good wishes, prayers and thoughtful messages you send through to us each day. They are very special and continue to sustain us, just as your financial support continues to sustain those whose lives are being transformed through your generosity.


The theme of this issue is **Reaching the Margins**, a value inherent in all the wonderful work you make possible. From the grants programs you help fund in Australia, through to projects in some of the most remote and poor parts of the world, your support is providing marginalised children and adults with access to life-changing opportunities that empower them to improve their lives.

Sadly, however, the pandemic is taking its toll. There's hardship, illness, loss of jobs, income and education. In the vulnerable communities where we work, that impact is even greater – and your ongoing support is more appreciated than ever.

Thanks to you, children and adults at the margins are able to continue to build positive lives, even as the impacts of this terrible health crisis linger. Knowing the challenges so many face, my team and I are extremely grateful for your generosity. You are standing in solidarity with people in need through ensuring continued access to education, livelihoods and vital learning for life.

Thank you for your ongoing and generous support.

With gratitude,


Jane Woolford

Chief Executive Officer

NILS4Vehicles: no-interest car loans help job seekers

To help people living on the margins find and keep jobs, we have expanded our Financial Inclusion Program in Central West NSW to offer interest-free vehicle loans. Like the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS) for household items and services, NILS4Vehicles allows people on low incomes to borrow money without fees or interest to purchase a vehicle needed for employment.



Offered through our partnership with Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, eligible recipients can receive a loan of between \$2,000 and \$5,000 to be paid off over a 48-month period. The loans are designed to give those on low incomes the opportunity to more easily purchase a vehicle required for employment or to help them get to

and from job interviews. Our staff help applicants to develop a budget and repayment plan to ensure the loan does not cause financial stress.

Thanks to your support, we also offer recipients access to our literacy programs so they can learn to better manage their finances and break the cycle of poverty.

“I am very grateful to Mary MacKillop Today for the NILS4Vehicles loan. It provided me with the reliable, safe transport required to secure employment. There was no other reasonable way of getting a loan on my low income. Thank you for the support and trust in my ability,”

– Peta, NILS4Vehicles recipient.

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: Bridie, First Nations Scholarship recipient



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.

Tetun storybooks bridging gap for Timorese children

Our Tetun Literacy and Teacher Training Project in Timor-Leste is improving educational outcomes for children in remote and rural areas and revitalising the native Tetun language. The project's storybooks, developed and written by local Mary MacKillop Today staff, are also spreading important messages of inclusion, gender equality, health and hygiene, environmental sustainability, and disability rights to young readers across the country.

Almost 30 years ago, the Sisters of St Joseph began providing literacy and teaching resources to support students to learn and write in Tetun, which was banned during the decades of Indonesian occupation.

Responding to a call for help from the Catholic Church, the Sisters created a library of Tetun language resources and developed workshops to train teachers to use them. Mary MacKillop Today continues this important work in rural communities across Timor-Leste. Local staff collaborate with the Timorese Ministry of Education to develop the Tetun curriculum, deliver training workshops for teachers and parents, and create classroom resources including illustrated storybooks in Tetun. Our aim is to strengthen the efforts of hard-working teachers to improve educational outcomes for students.

In July 2020, with kind and generous support from the family of the late Diana Petersen, we were proud to launch two Tetun storybooks that explore the rights, challenges and dignity of children living with disability. Developed for pre-school and primary school students, the books were created in consultation with the Ministry of Education, local disability organisations, not-for-profit organisations and other key stakeholders, all of whom provided input and feedback on the content. Children affected by disability were also involved, sharing their experiences about the stigma and challenges of living with disability.

The books have been approved by the Ministry of Education for use across all schools in Timor-Leste and so far have been distributed to teachers and parents through our education projects in Dili, Ermera, Manufahi and Liquiçá.

Agnes Brites Maia, Program Manager and author of one of the disability storybooks, said the hard work



“We hope that with the production of these books, particularly the disability and gender equality storybooks, we can teach the community to understand about disability and gender rights in order to help each other live in a prosperous manner,” – Agnes said.

undertaken to develop the books has ensured a great outcome for all involved.

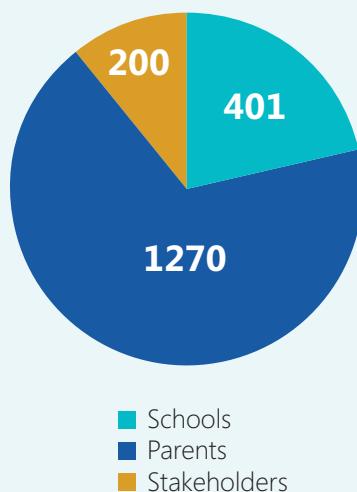
“Our objective was to increase the knowledge of teachers, their students and also the community so they can understand that children with disability have a right to get access to education,” she said.

“We have heard from disability organisations that they are very happy to see children with disability in the stories because it shows they have a right to participate.”

Following the success of the disability storybooks, our team in Timor-Leste has been working on several more thematic children's books in consultation with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders. Two additional titles focused on gender equality will be published and distributed in early 2022, and the team is in the early stages of developing content for more new titles about health and hygiene and environmental sustainability.

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

Books Distributed



Keeping children safe in Papua New Guinea

Thanks to your generosity, we were proud to work with our local partner in Papua New Guinea, Callan Services National Unit (Callan Services), to deliver a 'first-of-its-kind' workshop on child safeguarding for key decision-makers and executive managers from the National Department of Education (the Department).

Held over three days in October 2021, the workshop focused on raising awareness about the importance of effective child protection measures in learning environments, as well as discussing ways to support the Department to develop policies and practices to



“The drafting of an agreement and eventually a Safeguarding policy will go a long way in addressing Safeguarding concerns in schools across the country,” – Ms Embe said.

better ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. With over 75% of children in PNG estimated to experience violence at home, increased awareness in this area is vital for the protection of children's rights and dignity.

Positive outcomes from the workshop included the development of a new Working Committee endorsed by the Department and led in collaboration with Callan Services, to deliver effective Safeguarding policies and processes and create safe learning environments for children with disability. Alice Embe, Callan Services' Safeguarding Manager and workshop co-presenter, said the workshop was a “successful milestone” for both organisations.

“Donating regularly is a commitment I'm happy to make. I know it is being put to good use.”

Meet Lyall, one of our valued monthly donors...

“Mary MacKillop Today is a very compassionate organisation. I love all the work you do. I also admire Saint Mary MacKillop; she was very courageous and never gave up. She is such a great example to us all.

I'm retired and 87 years of age. I started supporting Mary MacKillop Today in 2020 when I signed up for a prayer book. It is wonderful knowing that I am supporting all areas of need.

Education is one area that is very important to me. I believe it can really help reduce poverty in the world. I am

interested in supporting First Nations scholarships. Providing Aboriginal students with scholarships allows them to focus on getting an education without having to worry about other things. I am also really interested in supporting Timorese people, particularly training the teachers to improve their skills so they can better help their students.

Although my monthly donation is small, I know donating regularly enables Mary MacKillop Today to plan and commit to helping those in need. I believe contributing a little is better than none ... and every cent helps!”



Calling all

INDEPENDENT SPIRITS Mary MacKillop Today's Monthly Giving Program

When Mary MacKillop saw a need, she acted. She believed in her vision of bringing charity to all people in need.

By joining our monthly giving program, you too will help transform the lives of the most marginalised people in the world.

Call Fiona on (02) 8912 2763 to find out more.



Meet Bridie, First Nations Scholarship recipient and Honours student

A proud Wiradjuri woman and self-confessed science nerd, Bridie always wanted to go to university to become a scientist. However, growing up with a single mother and three brothers, she knew attending university would be tough. Indigenous students like Bridie often face significant challenges in accessing and completing tertiary studies.



A First Nations Scholarship from Mary MacKillop Today has enabled Bridie to graduate with a Bachelor Degree in Human Biology and Biomedical

Science. She is currently completing her Honours with the hope of pursuing post-graduate research in Indigenous health and genomics. Receiving a First Nations Scholarship has been crucial in her success.

"I got involved with the scholarship in 2017, when I started my bachelor degree. I was living off Centrelink, and it wasn't really enough to cover my rent. The financial assistance gave me the opportunity to live on campus and buy necessities like food. [Without it], I don't know how I would have supported myself. My mentor [through the scholarship] has also

"I'm the first in my family to go to university. I have five nephews and I really want to show them that they can also go to university and do whatever they want to."

helped me a lot. She's always been able to offer me really good advice.

"I want to give Mary MacKillop Today supporters a humongous thank you, and tell them that their money is making a huge difference to Indigenous peoples."

Your donations are helping vulnerable women upskill in Sydney

Thanks to generous support from people like you, each year we fund community initiatives across Australia that provide life-changing outcomes for adults and children impacted by marginalisation.

In 2020-21, we were delighted to support The Marmalade Foundation to run first aid training at Lou's Place, a daytime refuge in Sydney for women in crisis.

Aimed at marginalised women in the community, including women sleeping rough and those with mental health and addiction issues, the training program reached 16 participants in the first half of 2021. Lou's Place arranged for the two-day training program to be delivered by a

certified St John's Ambulance trainer. Staff also requested the course be tailored to the needs of participants, with a focus on elements of first aid related to drug and alcohol use.

Staff reported that participants enjoyed the training and felt their new skills would be helpful for them and those around them.

For one participant, Sarah*, the training provided the chance to learn important first aid skills that have helped to strengthen her application



to have her children returned to her care. After completing the training, Sarah said that the content was engaging, informative and up-to-date and that she would recommend the course to other women.

Thank you for your ongoing support of our Community Grants program!



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.

Call Elizabeth on 02 8912 2712 to find out more.

With your support, the Sisters are reaching those most in need in Peru

In Peru, we are proud to work with the Sisters of St Joseph to improve quality of life for children and adults living in some of the most remote parts of the country. We spoke with two Sisters about their experiences working on the margins in one of world's poorest and most underdeveloped countries.

Sister Charo Zurita is the Project Coordinator of our School Agricultural Project, which is teaching young students how to grow vegetables and raise small livestock. She divides her time between Macarí, located 4,000 metres above sea level in the Peruvian Andes, and San Juan del Oro, a district in the jungle. Both places are extremely remote and hard to access. Basic necessities such as fresh vegetables are hard to find and there are limited opportunities for work.

“In these communities, fresh produce and protein for a healthy diet are not available. We realised however, it was possible to give children access to a healthy diet by teaching them about growing vegetables and farming at school,” **Sister Charo explained.**

Thanks to your support, Sister Charo and our local partner, Fe y Alegría, have established vegetable gardens



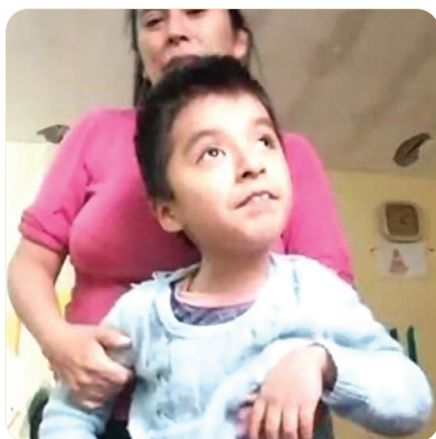
at schools and homes, and taught students about caring for small livestock such as guinea pigs and chickens.

Now in its final year, Sister Charo says your support for the program has made a life-changing difference.

Eight years ago, Sister Clare Conaglen established the Mary MacKillop Hausi Centre in response to the urgent and

“The project is helping everybody in the community. We have seen how it is possible – despite hardships - to help these communities have a healthy diet by growing their own vegetables and raising guinea pigs. Students, teachers and families are able to be more responsible with their own health. They have noticed a healthy diet adds benefits into their daily life.”

unmet need for therapy services for children and youth with disability living on the outskirts of Lima. Today, the centre provides multidisciplinary therapy services, educational and social support to children and families who would otherwise have no access to services or may be excluded from the community.



With the support of Mary MacKillop Today, the Sisters of St Joseph have built dedicated therapy rooms on the grounds of the Parroquia (Parish Church) Nuestra Señora de La Paz in a marginalised, but fast growing community. With professional therapists providing subsidised one-on-one sessions, the centre has grown to support more than 90 children and



their families.

The pandemic has brought significant challenges for the centre, but also created the opportunity to engage more deeply with family members. Sister Clare says fundraising support from Mary MacKillop Today has been critical in ensuring the centre has remained open, particularly in this challenging time.

“There's an important need, a huge need [for disability services] in countries like Peru where they have all the right ideas, but not always the personnel or the money to be able to support people with disabilities. Your support is what has kept us going over the years.”

STAY CONNECTED

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