

# Mary's News *today*



## AUTUMN 2023

- Why does Mary MacKillop Today focus on partnerships?
- You're supporting new Australians at a crucial life stage
- "I am determined to get my degree and I will tell my children they can do it too!" - Santusa in Peru and more...

MARY MACKILLOP  
*today*



## Dear Friends and Supporters

A message from our CEO

The rising cost of living is pushing so many families to the margins. With the generosity of our supporters, we can respond with practical action and contribute to solutions. This is how we can flourish together.

Partnership is solidarity in action. It is working together to deliver real change where it's needed most. Our partners 'on the ground' provide us with vital local knowledge to strengthen our programs. They understand what their communities need to bring about change, justice, and improved livelihoods.

In this edition, you can read about our partner who is working with the South Sudanese community in Australia (page 4), our team supporting people in regional NSW to achieve financial freedom (page 6), and our work to provide tertiary education Scholarships (page 4).

You can also read about our team in Timor-Leste who are working with local partners to reach remote villages (page 5), or hear about Santusa in Peru who is now running her own business to support her family (page 6).

Thank you for supporting Mary MacKillop Today and our partners to help communities flourish and reach their full potential!!

With gratitude,

**Jane Woolford**

Chief Executive Officer

# Mary MacKillop Today programs working with wonderful partnerships

Here in Australia...

## Community Grants

working together with

**15**  
partners



**YAWARDANI JAN-GA**, meaning 'good feeling from horses' is our equine assisted learning program

Yawardani Jan-ga working with

**1 PRIMARY PARTNER**

plus many more partners 'on the ground'



## Financial Inclusion

working with a variety of partners across Central West NSW including Good Shepherd, community centres, job referral agencies, homelessness centres, and financial counselling services



## Scholarships

we are working together with 3 tertiary institution partners

And in our neighbouring countries...

Timor-Leste programs working together with more than

**7**

## local partners

mostly Timorese government departments



Plus our amazing team at the Mary MacKillop Today office in Timor-Leste

Peru programs working together with

**6**

## local partners



Fiji programs working with

**2**

## local partners

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 by Mary MacKillop Today unless otherwise stated. When necessary, names have been changed for privacy. Front Cover: Participant of the Women's Empowerment Project in Peru with CCAJO staff member



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 and how do we focus on partnerships?

**Tessa Henwood-Mitchell, our International Programs Group Leader at Mary MacKillop Today, works closely with our local in-country program partners. Tessa shared why and how we focus on partnerships for the success of our vital work with communities.**

I believe the most effective development responses are those that **emerge from within communities**. Partners who are embedded in communities provide huge value and often bring expertise to our projects that may not exist within Mary MacKillop Today. What I appreciate about Mary MacKillop Today is that we work together with our partners to foster genuine and respectful relationships, supporting each other towards achieving a shared goal of creating positive and sustainable change.

**All our partners are incredible organisations with such strong ties to their local communities.** It was truly remarkable to see this in person during some of my recent visits to meet our partners and project teams. I was fortunate to travel to Fiji with CEO Jane Woolford and Amita, our Programs Coordinator for Fiji and PNG. We visited one of the villages where our partner Ola Fou Fiji

delivers Project Talitha, a women's leadership training project for young women living in remote communities. It was incredible to see how strong, confident, and vocal these women were within this community, and how it has become also a partnership between Ola Fou Fiji, the young women and the entire community. The community leaders welcomed us and expressed their gratitude for the investment Mary MacKillop Today and Ola Fou Fiji are making in their young women.

When I travelled to Peru with Yesenia, our Programs Coordinator for Peru, it was a great chance to see our projects in action. We were able to gather feedback from our partners and identify together any needs for further support from us. **I was blown away by how well known and respected our partners are within their communities.** On our last day with CCAIJO, one of our partners in the region of Cusco, we met with

the Mayor, Libio Roque Ruiz, who expressed how important the work of CCAIJO is in their region for the local people, and the amazing impact their work has had.

**I'm so grateful for the generosity of our supporters because I have seen what an incredible impact you are making through our partners around the world. Thank you for helping so many communities to flourish!**

## **Our principles-based approach to partnerships:**

- **Transparency and accountability** – We are committed to operating in a transparent and accountable way, and to encouraging and supporting our partners to improve their accountability.
- **Respect and equity** – We acknowledge that there are innate power imbalances that can exist within a partnership, particularly where one party is responsible for providing funding, so we are committed to ensuring we build our partnerships on mutual respect and equitable decision-making, working alongside our partners in a way that is respectful of the cultural context.
- **Mutual benefit** – We seek to ensure our partnerships bring mutual benefit to all parties, clearly defining the 'value add' of Mary MacKillop Today and our partners.
- **Shared learning** – We are committed to the constant improvement of our development approach, whilst ensuring our partnerships strengthen and grow, defining and supporting key strengths and learning priorities of partners.
- **Fiscal responsibility** – We are committed to demonstrating best practice approaches to financial management, and we work to build the capacity of our partners to adopt these approaches.



Tessa with two previous participants of the Women's Leadership Project in Fiji (Project Talitha)

# Scholarships to help people flourish

We recently chatted with **Hannah Cameron** at James Cook University about our partnership to provide Scholarships to aspiring First Nations students.

Many James Cook University (JCU) students move hundreds of kilometres away from their support networks to access tertiary education. This often places financial strain on the individual as well as their family. The Mary MacKillop Today Scholarship allows students to engage fully with their studies and participate in activities they may not have been able to afford without support.

Whilst the Scholarship program is only in its third year in 2023, we've already seen some wonderful outcomes. This includes **Cody** who completed his Bachelor of Occupational Therapy with JCU and is now studying Dental Clinical Sciences in Brisbane. **Regan** was another of our very first Mary MacKillop Today scholars. Regan completed her Bachelor of Arts with majors in Criminology and Sociology whilst working as a Case Manager at Cairns Community Corrections and has recently taken up a graduate role with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. **Jessica** also completed her Bachelor of Information Technology and is now looking at creating an IT start-up.



Hannah Cameron, Alumni Relations and Development Specialist at JCU

The wonderful thing about our partnership with Mary MacKillop Today is our shared interest in supporting a student to achieve their goals no matter what those might be.

## Supporting new Australians at a crucial life stage

Sr Maria Sullivan and Tess Mulveney from the Josephite Refugee Mentor Support Project (JRMSP) shared how Mary MacKillop Today's partnership through Community Grants is impacting the emerging South Sudanese community in Australia.



Sr Maria and Tess with JRMSP Leadership Group

The JRMSP supports people who are new to Australia to gain access to education. Mentors are matched with students of refugee backgrounds who are transitioning from school to tertiary study. Since Mary MacKillop Today first provided a Community Grant to help start the program in 2018, the JRMSP has grown to have more than 80 students and 50 mentors.

Sr Maria explained, "The request for help came from the South Sudanese community, because so many of their young people were doing well in school – but when they left school, they would fall off the bridge." Tess added, "In a war-torn country, education is not a high priority. These young people are often the first in their family to receive an education. Our program is

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"The members of the JRMSP have changed my life and future for the better! During university, I was provided a mentor who supported both my academic and personal development... I was fortunate to receive financial aid which allowed me to purchase my first laptop."

– Adau, studying to become a Clinical Psychologist

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about providing the support of an Australian adult to stand beside a young person and believe in them."

Mentoring is a wonderful way of supporting young people with no one else in their life who has walked the path of education before them. Thank you for your generosity to allow us to partner with incredible initiatives like the JRMSP!



# Government partnerships paving the way in Timor-Leste

Alipio Baltazar, Country Director in Timor-Leste, shared how he sees the impact of Mary MacKillop Today's successful partnerships with the Timorese government.

Every day, I see how important it is for my team here in Timor-Leste to have a good working relationship with various government departments. Many of our education projects may not be possible without collaboration with the Timorese government. And where there is limited access to government services, especially for rural communities, Mary MacKillop Today can deliver the support. We now have a formalised government partnership for our Mobile Learning Centre, Tetun Literacy and Teacher Training, Parents Training, and Health Literacy projects. This allows us to easily coordinate with local authorities to implement our project activities.

We are all working together to achieve the same goals. Government support allows our work to benefit so many children, families and communities.

Whether we are increasing teachers' knowledge and skills, providing books and other learning resources, or facilities like toilets or library bookshelves — it all makes a big difference for communities experiencing disadvantage.



Teacher Juliana with her students on the Mobile Learning Centre bus

**"When the Mobile Learning Centre was introduced to our school, it awakened our spirit of teaching. When children go into the bus to get books to read, it is exciting for both student and teacher. As a teacher, I discover new things through the MLC program and gain new insights. My students are motivated to come to class and learn, because they see teachers are motivated to teach."**

— Juliana, school teacher in a remote village in Timor-Leste

## Your vital role in our partnership with the Sisters of St Joseph

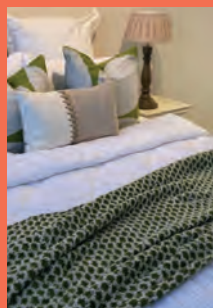
Sr Clare Conaglen spoke with us about Mary MacKillop Today's partnership with the Sisters of St Joseph, and the important role of our generous supporters.

I believe the partnership between the Sisters of St Joseph and Mary MacKillop Today is successful because it grew out of the Sisters living with and working 'on the ground' with the people — sharing both their hopes and challenges. Mary MacKillop Today continues this through many projects, relating to each person with dignity and respect. **In 1899, Saint Mary wrote, "God wants us by**

**every means possible to lead others to life."** People who donate to Mary MacKillop Today respond to Mary's desire to lead others to life, through the assurance that their donation leads to greater quality of life for people. Through the generosity of donors, the Sisters' works have been able to continue and go far beyond the initial vision of our founders, Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods.

I worked in Peru for 16 years where I saw and used your 'donations in action' every day. Be assured that your support makes a difference to others' lives. **I have seen that difference each time a child came from therapy with a smile on their face, each time an older person enjoyed friendship, each time a woman received her personal income from the crafts she had made.** Thank you!

*ethica*  
feels good



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give a gift with meaning!*

*Buy now to ensure your ethica gift can  
get to your mum — no matter where in the  
world she is!*



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# Santusa is breaking the cycle of poverty, thanks to your support!

Kind supporters like you are empowering women and young people living in rural and remote communities to overcome disadvantage.

Through our local partners CCAIJO and the Quispicanchi Centre for Technical Productive Education (CETPRO), the 'Vocational Training for Women and Young People in Rural Communities' project offers people accredited training to build their skills for better employment opportunities or to create a small business.

Santusa, mum of four children, grew up without education opportunities. When she heard about our training courses, she was eager to build an education for herself. We were thrilled to have Santusa enrol in a course studying Hospitality and Tourism. She is already using her new skills to build a hospitality business hosting tourists in her home.

**"My training makes me feel safer and I love myself more because I can speak at the meetings of my community. I believe that women have the ability to represent and lead our communities, not only doing house chores, taking care of the children and raising animals like our grandmothers or mothers. I am determined to get my degree and I will tell my children that they can do it too!"**

**- Santusa, participant in Vocational Training for Women and Young People in Rural Communities in Peru**

*The Vocational Training for Women and Young People in Rural Communities receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).*



**Since joining our vocational training program in rural Peru, Santusa is reaching her full potential with newfound skills. She is flourishing, thanks to your support!**

## Helping people achieve financial freedom

**Anita Van Dartel from our Financial Inclusion team shared how partnership plays an important role in helping people improve their financial wellbeing.**

With the cost of living going up, it is getting extremely difficult for so many people to keep up with day to day living expenses. Our Financial Inclusion program is about helping people

across regional NSW to break the cycle of debt by providing access to basic financial services at an affordable cost — whether it's through our No Interest Loan Scheme (NILS) or our Financial Literacy workshops.







**The partnership with people starts from the moment they make contact with us.** Then, once a person pays one loan off, they often come back for support to tackle the next thing. It might start out with immediate support for something like a loan for a computer or a washing machine. And as our partnerships grows, we can offer long-term financial literacy support, like helping people budget and make changes for better financial management. One person I know has been coming to us for about 5 years for loan support to pay their car registration each year. But this year, they proudly told me they had managed to save the money up themselves to pay for their registration. So, this time, they were able to use

the money to purchase a new fridge they needed instead.

**A big focus this year is our partnership with local community organisations, such as employment agencies.** Working together through this local approach has helped us to reach more people in need of our support. And partnering with these organisations allows us to get a deeper understanding of a person's situation. It's so rewarding to see people take control of their life, build a better future for themselves, and flourish.



### STAY CONNECTED

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