

# Mary's News *today*



## SPRING 2023

- New Project: Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural Peru
  - The next generation of leaders in the Kimberley
  - Sereki's legacy in rural Fiji
- ... and many more stories about the impact you make possible!

MARY MACKILLOP  
*today*



## Dear Friends and Supporters

### A message from our CEO

It's truly remarkable to witness the success of your kind support. That's why I'm delighted to share the impact you make possible in this newsletter. Read about the work of the **Josephite Sisters in the Kimberley** to help communities prepare their next generation of young leaders. Be inspired by Sereki's story and his **incredible community impact in Fiji**. You can also hear from our dedicated team member Tina — she has been working in our **Timor-Leste office** for the last 10 years!

Education has always been at the heart of what we do at Mary MacKillop Today. Saint Mary MacKillop knew the power of education to change the trajectory of a child's life. And thanks to you, her life-changing legacy is alive today through our vital work here in Australia and around the world.

This edition of Mary's News Today highlights an essential part of our approach to development — supporting communities to become **independent and self-sustaining**. At Mary MacKillop Today, we walk with people all the way — right up until communities have everything they need to reach their full potential **on their terms**.

Through your generosity, we can continue to accompany people towards a **better tomorrow**, just like Mary!

*Jane*

**Jane Woolford**  
Chief Executive Officer

## Financial literacy now and beyond

One of the best ways we can walk with people **towards financial independence** is to empower them with the skills they need **now** to stand on their own in the **long term**. This is the goal of our financial education workshops where people can learn how to make informed financial decisions, now and into the future.

Anita, our Financial Inclusion Team Leader, explains:

*"Many people take financial literacy for granted — thinking everyone knows things like how to read an energy bill, or what your rights are as a tenant."*

*So, our work is not just about financial literacy. It's life skills.*

*We are guided by our partners. We ask them, what do your clients need? Our partners are incredible, and some have been with us since our program started.*

*The biggest thing for my team is empowering people to work out what their own priorities are. It is very rewarding to see our participants embracing what they've learnt and making changes in their life.*

*By giving people these skills now, they can share their knowledge with family and friends. Over time, people build their financial resilience and become self-reliant."*

Thank you for your support to help people achieve financial freedom for a better tomorrow!



Anita and Julie raising awareness of financial literacy out in the community.

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: Education is building brighter futures for children 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.



# Self-sustaining communities drive their own change

Mary MacKillop Today's unique approach to development is built on locally led partnerships, working together towards self-sustaining communities for lasting impact.

Imagine what a community can achieve when people thrive independently to build a better future for themselves. Children, women and men can reach their full potential and flourish together!

This is why, at Mary MacKillop Today, **we value community-driven development**. Across all of our programs, there is a huge focus on working together with communities, listening to people, and creating space for them to voice their needs and solutions. That means we do not impose decisions but instead focus on supporting local communities to make their own choices.

Mary MacKillop Today's International Programs Group Leader, Tessa, explains, *"Our development approach is very much about empowering people and communities to make decisions for themselves. We walk alongside our partners and support the work they're doing. We are there as a co-pilot, not driving the plane. We're there for communities to assist if things go off course."*

When facing generational issues around poverty, access to education and limited livelihoods, the best way for communities to respond to their

own challenges in a way that truly lasts is to empower the community members.

Tessa adds, *"Everything we do at Mary MacKillop Today is targeted*

---

***"We are constantly learning. We learn about our own approach as well as how we learn within our projects. Development means working with communities to identify potential solutions and overcome challenges."***

---

*at empowering local communities, growing opportunities to access high quality education and fair livelihoods, and amplifying the voices of those who have been marginalised.*

Thanks to the generosity of our compassionate supporters like you, our work is grounded in creating long-term change in the communities we serve. You help us work together towards the ultimate goal of **empowering self-sustaining communities who drive their own change**.

In an ever-changing world, there is always room to learn. That's why we

have a development effectiveness and learning framework in place to make sure that our projects achieve the goals and meet the needs identified by communities. **We are always looking for ways to adapt and improve our work** based on the changing contexts and feedback from our partners.

One example of our approach in action is a project in Fiji that empowers young women in remote communities through leadership training, mentoring, and business support. We work closely with our local partner to design and implement the project, continuously learning and adapting to maximise its impact. The project has led to remarkable changes in the lives of the young women involved. Many of these women are gaining recognition at a community level for the very first time.

*"Uplifting communities through education goes back to the way Mary and the Sisters of St Joseph worked. We have their history behind us and Mary's life-changing legacy to continue."*

**Thank you for supporting communities in their journey towards self-sufficiency, so they can create lasting positive change!**



Litia, a participant of our Fiji Women's Leadership project

# The next generation of leaders in the Kimberley

Just as Mary MacKillop travelled to some of Australia's most remote communities, the Josephite Sisters continue to live and work amongst incredible communities in the Kimberley.

An essential part of Mary MacKillop Today's development model to build self-sustaining communities is our Community Grants program. Thanks to your kind support, we recently partnered with the inspiring initiative 'Education and Formation of Future Leaders' which is run by Sister Alma in remote, predominantly Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley. The program aims to prepare the next generation to step up and lead their community.



Sharing singing and stories at the Pentecost gathering

Sister Alma shares:

**"This program is about learning through participation. Group meetings are organised where people can feel confident enough to share about what's happening**

*in their community, and the issues they're facing. It's wonderful because the younger group members are encouraged by older ones to speak. It means something to hear their voices in public.*

*At our recent meeting during Pentecost, a key discussion point was the experience of not having a voice — and where voices need to be heard now. We spoke about the Australian Indigenous Voice Referendum, a planning and advisory group to voice the needs of the people to the future leadership of the local Catholic diocese, and so much more."*

Thank you for supporting community-driven work like this, where young leaders are prepared to build strong communities into the future!

## "I'd like to think I'm honouring my wife's wishes."

As a young boy in the 1950s, John dreamed of joining the armed forces.

*"The recruiting officer asked me to fill in a form but I couldn't do it. I didn't know how to read or write. I couldn't join unless I had an education.*

*I started going to the YMCA every Saturday afternoon and three nights a week after working my job at the factory. I dedicated every spare minute I had."*

At 21 years old, John's studying finally paid off when he was admitted to the Navy. He served 12 years before coming home to run the family farm. A few years later, he met the love of his life, Dorothy. John and Dorothy married

and welcomed sixteen children into their family through foster care and adoption. When they wanted to show their children how to care for those in need, the family began donating the money they earned rearing and selling calves to Mary MacKillop Today.

Sadly, after many wonderful years together, Dorothy passed away. John decided to remember Dorothy by including a gift to Mary MacKillop Today in his Will.

**"I'd like to think I'm honouring my wife's wishes. Dorothy was a beautiful woman in every way and she felt a special connection with Mary MacKillop. There's joy in this for me**



John with Alipio, Timor-Leste Country Director

*too. My time in the Navy kept me in touch with the human side of life. It's so important to be part of Mary MacKillop Today's work and it can't happen without support."*

Thank you, John, for your incredibly kind gesture!

If you'd like to include a gift to Mary MacKillop Today in your Will, please contact April on 02 8912 2720.



## 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 April on 02 8912 2720 to find out more.



# Tina's decade of dedication

Tina has been a passionate member of our Timor-Leste team for 10 years!

*"I was very excited to join Mary MacKillop Today in 2013 as a Literacy Trainer. I later became the Parents Project Coordinator. Many of the parents were illiterate when they started our training but can now read, write and count numbers. These have been some of my proudest moments.*

*I am now the Programs Manager overseeing all our projects in Timor-Leste where I witness the impact of our work in lots of ways.*

*Many of the schools that Mary MacKillop Today supports now have their own mini-library filled with books in our language. The children are so happy because they have fun books to read. Teachers feel more equipped and confident to follow the National Curriculum after our training. And I have seen parents change positively to get more involved in their children's education.*

*I have learned so much from Mary MacKillop Today over the last 10 years and my own knowledge of literacy is growing. I love Saint Mary MacKillop and I love the projects that I get to be part of to carry on her legacy."*

**Thank you Tina for your incredible dedication to serving communities in Timor-Leste!**



Tina, Programs Manager in Timor-Leste

## Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural Peru

With your kind support, our new Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural Peru project is set to help young people reach their full potential and drive change in their communities.

Together with our local partner **CEOP Ilo**, the project aims to develop skills in students so they can come up with creative solutions for community-based problems. It also targets students facing challenges in their academic and personal lives, providing them with alternative ways to improve their living conditions through entrepreneurship.

Our goal is to provide **420 young people** with training in entrepreneurship through high-school programs. This includes training **10 teachers in entrepreneurship skills**, conducting awareness campaigns for **420 parents to support their children** in entrepreneurial initiatives, and forming relationships with local entrepreneurial institutions.

CEOP Ilo Project Coordinator, Anselma, shares, *"Many people have*



Students learning skills in food preparation and delivery

*the technical knowledge to operate their business, but they lack the needed entrepreneurship skills to be innovative and adapt to the changing market. Those skills should be taught at school, when a person is more open to learning, so they can cultivate these skills throughout their life."*

**When young students gain vital skills, they can grow up to be independent and flourish for life. What an incredible impact you make possible — thank you!**

Youth Entrepreneurship in Rural Peru receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

# Towards best practice in sustainability

Mary MacKillop Today recently hosted our second Partner Learning Forum in Fiji where representatives from our partner organisations in Fiji and Peru came together with our staff from Timor-Leste and Australia.

It was an incredible chance to strengthen our connections with our partners, understand their work better, and encourage collaboration for the future.

*"A good partnership is about being open. Open to sharing what we do know and what we don't know. This Partner Learning Forum is an opportunity for many of us to come together from different countries to share ideas and experiences."*

**- Gianfranco Dulanto, from ODP in Peru**

This Partner Learning Forum focused on **'Best Practice in Sustainability.'** Over five days, participants engaged in



All our wonderful partners at the Partner Learning Forum in Fiji

inspiring discussions and workshops. We explored topics like financial sustainability, strategic planning, working with governments, and measuring impact. We also spent a day visiting our partner Ola Fou Fiji's project site for Project Talitha which provides women's empowerment training.

*"It's so important to have partners with similar goals. We can share resources. I believe we can do much more by*

*working together. We are a young organisation so we appreciate having a well-established organisation like Mary MacKillop Today to partner with."*

**- Tema Waqa, from Ola Fou in Fiji**

The Partner Learning Forum was a wonderful example of the power of working together for sustainable development — **where local communities are empowered to build better futures for themselves.**

## Sereki's legacy in rural Fiji

Let us celebrate the life of Joshua Sereki Korocowiri, founder of Mary MacKillop Today's partner, Ola Fou Fiji.

Since 2017, Sereki has been an integral part of Mary MacKillop Today's partnership with Ola Fou Fiji. We were deeply saddened when Sereki passed away earlier this year.

**Amani, Country Manager for Ola Fou Fiji,** reminisces, *"Sereki was a person that displayed characteristics of creativity, determination, and passion. A man of vision who had the ability to imagine a better future for our young people and inspired others to join him on that journey."*

Our Women's Leadership Project in Rural Fiji, in partnership with Ola Fou Fiji, aims to empower young women — particularly where traditional community structures don't offer women active decision-making roles. Graduates of Ola Fou's Youth Work program play a pivotal role in the project's workshops



Sereki at our first Partner Learning Forum held in Timor-Leste

where young women build skills in leadership, mentoring, and financial literacy. **Through Ola Fou's impact, participating communities are now**

**valuing the contribution of young women.**

Amani adds, *"Sereki's legacy would be the young lives who are now adults that God called him to minister to. Those lives which are now impacting other lives creating a ripple effect of change for vulnerable families."*

As we remember Sereki's incredible dedication, Mary MacKillop Today and Ola Fou Fiji continue to **honour his memory by lifting up young people to create long-lasting positive change in their communities.**

The Women's Leadership Project in Rural Fiji receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

### STAY CONNECTED

- 📍 L5, 12 Mount Street North Sydney NSW 2060
- ☎ 02 8912 2777 9am – 5pm AEST Mon-Fri
- ✉ [hello@marymackilloptoday.org.au](mailto:hello@marymackilloptoday.org.au)
- 🌐 [www.marymackilloptoday.org.au](http://www.marymackilloptoday.org.au)
- 🐦 [twitter.com/MacKillopToday](https://twitter.com/MacKillopToday)
- 📘 [facebook.com/MaryMacKillopToday](https://facebook.com/MaryMacKillopToday)
- 📺 [Youtube.com/marymackilloptoday](https://Youtube.com/marymackilloptoday)
- 📷 [instagram.com/MaryMacKillopToday](https://instagram.com/MaryMacKillopToday)