

# Mary's News *today*



## WINTER 2024

Read how:

- you helped Tony and Lauren get back on their feet.
- your support is bringing economic empowerment to women in Fiji.
- thanks to you, Herminia is flourishing...

MARY MACKILLOP  
*today*



## Dear Friends & Supporters

### A message from our CEO

Welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of Mary's News Today where you can see the wonderful impact of your kind partnership.

I want to update you on Herminia, the inspiring grandmother in Timor-Leste whose story I shared over Christmas. Thanks to your generous support, she joined our Parents Training Project.

Herminia says:

*"Before attending the training, I couldn't read. But now, I know how to write and sign my name. I can go to the market to buy things and I don't get scammed anymore because I know how to count money. It's a big change for me."*

*"Thank you to the donors for helping me go back to school. I now enjoy teaching my children and grandchildren at home. I feel better knowing they will be able to write and read."*

We've selected more uplifting stories like Herminia's to share with you:

- Tony and Lauren in regional NSW – your support has enabled them to free themselves from years of financial stress (page 2).
- Belarmino in Timor-Leste, who has been part of our Volunteer Teacher Support Project thanks to you (page 3).
- An introduction to our newest work with women in Fiji (page 3).
- Meet a true hearted supporter, Darcy (page 4).

I hope you enjoy reading about the life-changing impact you make possible. Thank you.

With gratitude,

Jane Woolford  
Chief Executive Officer

## "We were able to get back on our feet."

**A serious motor vehicle accident put Tony\* in hospital for three years. His injuries meant he could no longer work — plunging his family into financial stress.**

Tony shares, *"It's been hard because I went from running successful businesses to having to live on a pension. Believe me, I was crying because we were in such a difficult situation."*

Fortunately, Tony and his wife, Lauren\*, came to Mary MacKillop Today to meet with Emma, our Financial Counsellor. Emma supported Tony and Lauren through

regular meetings to help improve their financial situation, such as managing a budget and financial planning.

Lauren says, *"Emma didn't make us feel like a failure. She had empathy. Emma helped us sort out things, like our electricity and gas bills and get some savings together for a decent car. We were able to get back on our feet. Now, we can afford more things. And we've got less debt. Less stress."*

Thank you for your support in helping people like Tony and Lauren turn their financial situation around.

*\*Names and images changed to protect privacy.*



Tony\* and his wife Lauren\*

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: Jaoquina, a Volunteer Teacher Support Project participant.



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## “Now I no longer feel heavy, because I have been trained.”

In Timor-Leste, a recent study showed that by the end of Grade 1, 70% of students could not read a single word presented to them. This is why Mary MacKillop Today's Volunteer Teacher Support Project provides mentoring and support to volunteer teachers from remote areas.

Belarmino has been teaching preschool children for 13 years.

*“Before I attended the training with Mary MacKillop Today, I was finding it very hard because there was no method for teaching children.”* said Belarmino.

After receiving his training, he states, *“I have learned how to teach in the classroom and teach children in ways that make them interested. Now I no longer feel heavy, because I have been trained, and have found a way to reach children.”*

Belarmino also speaks of the joy he has in the classroom now that he has support



Belarmino teaching preschool children.

*“I've continued teaching because I've been proud to see kids read, write, and learn. **Seeing them pick up their own books from Mary MacKillop Today makes me feel so proud...** I thank Mary MacKillop Today and the donors for the training*

*and support. May we continue this activity, especially in rural areas.”*

Thanks to kind people like you, teachers like Belarmino can continue their important work as educators for the next generation.

## Resilient mothers in Fiji set a new path for themselves.

In a rural community in Fiji, a group of single mothers facing psychosocial disabilities struggled to create a better life for themselves and their children. Burdened with the sole responsibility of raising children with no access to employment themselves, these women were desperate for change.

Generous people like you are helping to provide an opportunity to change the path these women face. One of Mary MacKillop Today's newest projects in Fiji is the Pathway to Economic Independence Project, led by our local partner, Psychiatric Survivors Association. This project aims to help people who are living with mental health issues in vulnerable situations, create financial independence.



Participant of Economic Empowerment Project

Women who participate in this project gain tangible skills like basket weaving, mat weaving, making wreaths for functions, jewellery making, and fabric art printing. Many of these women have come together to sell their products and earn an income collaboratively. Others have started their own screen printing and jewellery-making businesses.

During this training, women also learnt about the importance of mental health and emotional coping mechanisms to help them handle the stress of day-to-day life. Being a part of this project has become a safe space of life-changing transformation for the local Fijian women involved.

Thank you for your kind partnership to make projects like these possible.

# "I want to help keep Saint Mary's legacy alive well into the future."

Darcy's connection with Saint Mary MacKillop and the Josephite Sisters extends back to his childhood. Darcy explained, "The Sisters who taught me during my primary school years at St Joseph's in Numurkah (Victoria) laid the foundations of who I am today by their care, hard work, and enthusiasm."

Darcy has made the incredible decision to include a life-changing gift to Mary MacKillop Today in his Will. Thank you, Darcy, for your generosity and thoughtfulness to help people in need.

Darcy shared, "I think of the words of St Mary of the Cross: 'Never see a need without doing something about it.' We are blessed and extremely fortunate with the life that we can lead in Australia. Bequests enable Mary MacKillop Today to continue the work started by Saint Mary MacKillop on a larger stage. I want to help keep Mary's legacy alive well into the future."

**You can help transform the lives of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in our community by including a**



Darcy & Debbie, Darcy's wife

**gift to Mary MacKillop Today in your Will, just like Darcy. A gift in your Will, however large or small, can have a powerful and lasting impact for generations to come.**

To discuss how you can continue the life-changing work started by Saint Mary MacKillop, please call April de Haan on (02) 8912 2720, or email [april.dehaan@marymackilloptoday.org.au](mailto:april.dehaan@marymackilloptoday.org.au)

**STAY CONNECTED**

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## Yes, I want to help transform lives and continue Saint Mary's legacy.

**Step 1: Please use my gift where it is needed:**

**Step 2: I would like to donate by:**

- Cheque** made payable to Mary MacKillop Today
- Credit card:**  Visa  Mastercard  Amex

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**To donate online please scan**

- Please send my receipt via email.
- I'm interested in leaving a gift to Mary MacKillop Today in my Will.

