

# Mary's News *today*



*Women at the heart*

**AUTUMN 2025**

Read how:

- You helped bring the love of learning to children like Juliana
  - Your support is funding communities in rural Australia
  - Thanks to you, Ranadi is thriving ...
- ... and many more stories about the impact you make possible.

MARY MACKILLOP  
*today*





Welcome to the 2025 Autumn edition of *Mary's News Today* where you can read about the impact of your kind partnership.

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our donor community. It is thanks to your kindness, care and compassion over the last 12 months that we have been able to provide:

- **1,269** loans for essentials to people experiencing financial hardship in Australia;
- equip **167** teachers and **57** schools in Timor-Leste with knowledge, skills, and resources to deliver quality education;
- train **30** women in leadership and political participation in Peru;
- assist **646** parents with the skills and resources to support their children's education at home in rural communities in Timor-Leste;
- support **38** students with First Nations Tertiary Scholarships;
- provide organic farming training for **108** vanilla farmers in Timor-Leste;
- empower **48** women through Business Basics & Bookkeeping Training in Fiji.

Your incredible generosity has helped reach thousands of individuals and communities this year, bringing the gift of hope. Thank you for making all the difference.

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

With gratitude,

Jane Woolford  
Chief Executive Officer

# The Beatification of Mary MacKillop – A Celebration for all Australians

On 19 January 2025, we celebrated the 30th anniversary of Saint Mary MacKillop's Beatification - a significant milestone that highlights Mary's enduring legacy as Australia's first saint.

Beatified on 19 January 1995, by Pope John Paul II, Mary MacKillop was recognised for her profound faith, compassion, and tireless dedication to education.

As co-founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, Mary established schools across Australia for the most marginalised children, and she played an important role in establishing universal education across Australia.

At Mary MacKillop Today we are dedicated to carrying on Mary's legacy, both in Australia and overseas, believing in the power of education to break the

cycle of poverty for young people.

Young people like nine-year-old Joaquim, from a remote village in Timor-Leste. His teacher attended our 5-day Teacher Training Project workshop, where she gained the skills and knowledge, she needed to ensure that her students receive a quality education in her classroom.

Joaquim has just gone into 3rd grade and he's happy with how motivated his teacher is for him to learn.

*"When I go home, I try and learn everything that I need to, for school the next day. I borrow books from my teacher and take them home so that I can study hard. My teacher is teaching us how to be good people and I really like her."*

Thank you for your support in bringing the love of learning to children like Joaquim.



Joaquim, learning to love school

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. Some content in this newsletter has been translated. Front Cover: Juliana is thriving through your gift of education.



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 NGO is accredited by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), responsible for managing Australia's development program. To maintain accreditation, Mary MacKillop Today's systems, policies and processes are rigorously reviewed by the Australian Government. Mary MacKillop Today receives support through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



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.

# Transforming lives through the power of education

Thanks to generous supporters like you, we raised over \$150,000 for our annual Christmas appeal which was a fantastic result. We really are so grateful for your kindness and compassion.

We wanted to update you on Juliana, the young girl in Timor-Leste whose story we shared with you recently. Thanks to your generosity, Juliana and her parents received support from our mobile learning centre team to help ensure she has access to a quality education.

We asked Juliana if she had a message for our wonderful supporters:

***“My mum is very happy about the support she received from the Mary MacKillop team about the importance of education. I now understand that what I learn in school helps to make me smart and means I can change my life.***

***When I grow up, I want to be a teacher or an astronaut. I love the idea of being an astronaut because I read about people going up to the moon and I love that! I know I must study hard, and that the teachers must be good at teaching so that I can get there,”*** shared Juliana.

From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for helping children like Juliana dream of a brighter future.



Juliana with her mum and sister at home

Below are some messages for Juliana from our generous supporters:

- *“I hope your dream to be a teacher comes true. I love the sound of your learning bus. Wishing you love, joy and peace.”* – Stella
- *“Wow! You are a ‘Mary MacKillop Girl’ just as I was in South Australia. Do keep up with your schoolwork.”* – Virginia
- *“When I was 6 years old my mother taught me to read - the greatest gift anyone ever gave me - it will last forever. Good luck!”* – Renate
- *“So proud that you are seeking education as a wonderful pathway to your future. God bless you and your family abundantly.”* – Pat

## Carrying on the mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service - Highways & Byways

We are pleased to announce that as of the beginning of December 2024, Highways & Byways (a small grants program begun by the Missionary Sisters of Service) has become a part of Mary MacKillop Today.

There has been a strong friendship between the Missionary Sisters of Service and the Sisters of Saint Joseph for many years, which led to Mary MacKillop Today providing recent funding support for Highways & Byways longer-term projects.

Following this collaboration, both Highways & Byways and Mary MacKillop Today have agreed to work together as one entity. We are excited to bring the strengths of each organisation together, which will enable us to respond more effectively to the needs of marginalised communities across Australia.

We look forward to sharing stories with you of the exciting work that is being realised through the Mary MacKillop Today Highways & Byways Small Grants Program in rural Australia.



Gwynmac Landcare team – one of the 2024 Small Grants recipients – training farmers in Inverell, NSW



# Maurine is supporting life-changing work

**Maurine has been a committed and dedicated Josephite Companion for 16 years.**

During this time, she has been on more than seven 'In the Footsteps of Mary MacKillop' – the Australian National Pilgrimage that visits many places associated with Saint Mary MacKillop's life and she has thoroughly enjoyed every step of the pilgrimages!

Maurine is inspired by the life of Mary and the great example that she set for everyone she met.

***"I am a retired teacher and like Saint Mary, I believe in the***

***power of education to change lives. Saint Mary changed the lives of the most destitute and helped young people follow their dreams. These are the reasons I donate to and (plan to) leave a legacy to Mary MacKillop Today."***

Maurine's generous gift to Mary MacKillop Today will impact so many lives of people living on the margins, now and well into the future.

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



Maurine

## When women and girls are uplifted, their families and whole communities' flourish.

**International Women's Day, held annually on the 8th of March, is a global day that recognises the resilience and strength of women across the world. Acknowledging this important day allows Mary MacKillop Today to reflect on the invaluable contributions of women within the communities we support.**

Through our work, we seek to promote the voice and participation of women in spaces where they have been typically excluded. We witness firsthand the transformative power of women and girls in their communities when they are empowered.

Like in Fiji, where our Women's Leadership program – Project Talitha – run in partnership with Ola Fou Fiji, is providing training to young women to increase their confidence and achieve financial security to grow as leaders in their communities.

Ranadi is a young single mum who has been challenging traditional norms surrounding women through her participation in Project Talitha.

***"When I was pregnant while studying at university, I feared what people would***

***think of me. Last year, I joined Project Talitha, attending every training session. The empowerment training really stood out to me. It helped me face my fears of being judged and feeling alone. Now, I have the confidence to speak up and share my story. I'm helping my mum with our coconut business and dream of returning to***

***university, finding a job, and one day running my own business to support my son,"*** Ranadi shared.

We are proud to continue the pioneering work of Saint Mary MacKillop and the Sisters of St Joseph in transforming the lives of women and girls like Ranadi through learning for life, so that all may thrive.



Ranadi, a Project Talitha participant

# “Saint Mary MacKillop was a phenomenal person. She is what we should all aspire to be.”

Thanks to Jane’s kindness and compassion, she has been making regular monthly donations to support our work since 2012.

Jane tells us *“I grew up as the eldest of six children in Shepparton. Growing up in a large household meant that I learnt about the importance of taking care of other people besides myself from a very early age. I’m sure this has influenced my decision to give regular donations to Mary MacKillop Today.*

*When I was at school, I learnt a lot about social justice leaders – people who stood up for their communities, no matter what the consequences. Saint Mary MacKillop really stood out for me as she looked after people that everyone else had walked away from. Mary just believed that is what we should all do.*

*Back in 2000, I was involved in a fundraising project with a*



*colleague, selling coffee to raise funds for an education project run in a village in Timor-Leste. This experience sparked an interest in how I could further support education in the country. I had heard about the educational work that Mary MacKillop Today was doing in Timor-Leste and with the connection to Saint Mary, it felt like the right cause to support.*

*I continue to be inspired by the history of the Sisters of Saint Joseph who developed educational resources and programs in Timor-Leste*

*back in the ‘90s. They worked in partnership with local communities who had no support or resources, and I believe that Mary MacKillop Today is continuing this vital work with those who are most in need.*

*I am happy to keep giving monthly donations as it means I have a really considered way of contributing to Mary MacKillop Today’s work. Knowing that my donations allow the organisation to plan its projects properly is a great feeling.”*

Regular, monthly donations like Jane’s help transform lives through education in Australia and around the world, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

If you would like to join our ‘Independent Spirits’ family of monthly supporters, helping to create a better world, please visit <https://www.marymackilloptoday.org.au/how-you-can-help/give-regularly/>. Your generosity will help to transform lives.

## Give the Gift of Education

Did you know that you can help transform lives through education in Australia and around the world by donating to Mary MacKillop Today on a regular basis?

By making regular, monthly donations, you can help children access books through our Mobile Learning Bus which travels to remote communities to visit schools, bringing fun and creative tools to help children learn.

- \$25 per month: can help supply schools with locally produced story books written in the local language to help children read and write

- \$50 per month: can buy much needed hygiene products for schools to ensure clean and healthy environments.
- \$105 per month: can buy resource packs for classrooms including storybooks, notebooks, pencils, colour pencils, rulers, and other items to support the children’s educational journey.

Join our powerful community of supporters today and help children access education and break the cycle of poverty. By making a monthly gift today, you will help transform lives.

Scan here





# Travels through Peru – a field trip update

Yesenia Romano, our Programs Coordinator for Peru, recently spent 10 days in Peru with our partners and program participants to learn about the impact of the work that you are supporting through your generous donations.

While on her trip, Yesenia had the opportunity to visit participants of the 'Enhancing Women's Civil Participation in Rural Peru' project run in partnership with CCAIJO, in the Quispicanchi Cusco province to learn about their experiences of learning to be leaders in their communities. This project provides training to elected female councillors and leaders, helping them perform their duties more efficiently and boosting their confidence to actively participate in decision-making spaces.

***"It is always inspiring to hear from women who are often shy and previously overlooked speak out and share how the training and experiences gained from the project are transforming many aspects of their lives,"*** shared Yesenia.

While speaking with the female participants, Yesenia heard how one woman felt embarrassed about attending the workshops as she could not read or write. The team from



Yesenia with participants of the Enhancing Women's Civil Participation in Rural Peru Project.

CCAIJO assured her that ***"those who cannot read or write still know how to think and speak"*** and that was all she needed to hear to sign up for the rest of the project.

Another participant shared that she was inspired to join the project after witnessing how her mother was treated by her community. ***"I joined the project because I saw that my mother was not allowed to participate in the community assemblies. Was my mother so worthless that they wouldn't let her participate? Everything I learn, I share in the radio program that I'm involved in as part of the project."***

We wish all the women involved in this project the best of luck in finding their voice.

*Enhancing Women's Civil Participation in Rural Peru receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).*

## STAY CONNECTED

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## Yes, I want to provide life-changing opportunities to people in need.

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\$25  \$50  \$100  My choice \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### My contact details\*:

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Surname: \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

### I would like to make an ongoing impact with a monthly gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please debit the credit card below.  
(You can change or cancel at any time)

Please contact me to set up direct debit.

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Cheque made payable to Mary MacKillop Today OR

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Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

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