The GIFT

PHILANTHROPY NEWS | OCTOBER 2026

How your generosity makes a difference



UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

INSIDE THIS EDITION

Community drives transformational change

Partnership for future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander STEM leaders

A legacy for leukaemia research

And so much more...

Together, we can REACH ONE MORE

For more than 60 years, donors have generously partnered with the University to help improve the lives of others. Our values of excellence, equity, engagement and sustainability continue to guide us as we work to create meaningful impact for the communities we serve.

Together, we are making higher education more attainable, advancing research that addresses urgent challenges and supporting initiatives that reach people when and where they need it most.

In this edition of The Gift, we hear from four inspiring students who share how generosity is changing their lives. With scholarship support, they are determined to complete their studies and use their education to make a difference in their communities across medicine, financial literacy, and the environment. Their stories demonstrate the ripple effect of your support: helping one student can, in turn, help many.

We also highlight the historic $36.6 million commitment from the Mark Hughes Foundation, the largest philanthropic gift in the University's history. This landmark gift will drive a transformative phase of research at the University to help improve the lives of people and families affected by brain cancer.

We share a new partnership with CSIRO, which has committed $1.5 million to establish scholarships that will create new opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, while ensuring Indigenous knowledge systems and perspectives are valued within Australia's energy transition sector.

I recently announced that I have decided to retire as Vice-Chancellor and President in February next year. Since I started in 2018, it has been a great privilege to lead our University. I have had a front-row seat to the incredible achievements of our staff, students and alumni, and it has been immensely rewarding to see the impact their work has had in our communities, across Australia and around the world. There are many highlights to choose from, but above all, I am proud of the people who make our University such a remarkable place - people like you.

As fellow donors, my wife Olga, a proud alumna of the University, and I look forward to remaining connected to the University and celebrating its successes in the years ahead. We are honoured to be part of the philanthropic community and grateful for your generosity and kindness, which are creating a better future for generations to come.





Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
Vice-Chancellor and President
The University of Newcastle

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The University of Newcastle acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands within our footprint areas: Awabakal, Darkinjung, Biripai, Worimi, Wonnarua, and Eora Nations. We also pay respect to the wisdom of our Elders past and present.

Cover: Jaymie Ferguson and her daughter, Isla, proudly wear their beanies at the NRL Beanie for Brain Cancer Round in memory of Jaymie's husband and Isla's dad, Scott Ferguson, and in support of the Mark Hughes Foundation.

NEW HOPE FOR TREATING INFLAMMATORY BOWEL DISEASE

People living with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) could one day benefit from a new generation of treatments thanks to groundbreaking research backed by philanthropic support.

Thanks to the generous support of the McCusker Charitable Foundation, researchers Professor Simon Keely and Associate Professor Gerard Kaiko, a University of Newcastle alumnus, are advancing a promising new approach to treating IBD, including Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

IBD affects more than seven million people worldwide and more than 100,000 Australians. The chronic conditions are characterised by recurring damage to the intestinal barrier, leading to inflammation and poor healing, which results in lifelong symptoms and often intestinal surgeries.

Rather than focusing solely on inflammatory pathways, the researchers are investigating how beneficial bacteria in the gut microbiome, and the molecules they produce, can be harnessed to repair the intestinal barrier and support long-term remission.

Thanks to the Foundation's generous support, the team has built what is believed to be the world's most comprehensive IBD microbiome resource and a novel drug discovery pipeline, bringing together Australian and international patient data to accelerate new treatment discoveries.

Professor Keely reflects on the Foundation's long-term commitment, which he highlights as instrumental in the progression of this research.

"This support allows us to advance our work by identifying both harmful and beneficial bacteria in the microbiome and assessing their contribution to disease. Together, we are reaching a new frontier in gut health and chronic disease treatment."

Tonya McCusker AM from the McCusker Charitable Foundation, reinforces how proud the Foundation is to support research with the potential to deliver meaningful outcomes for patients across the world.

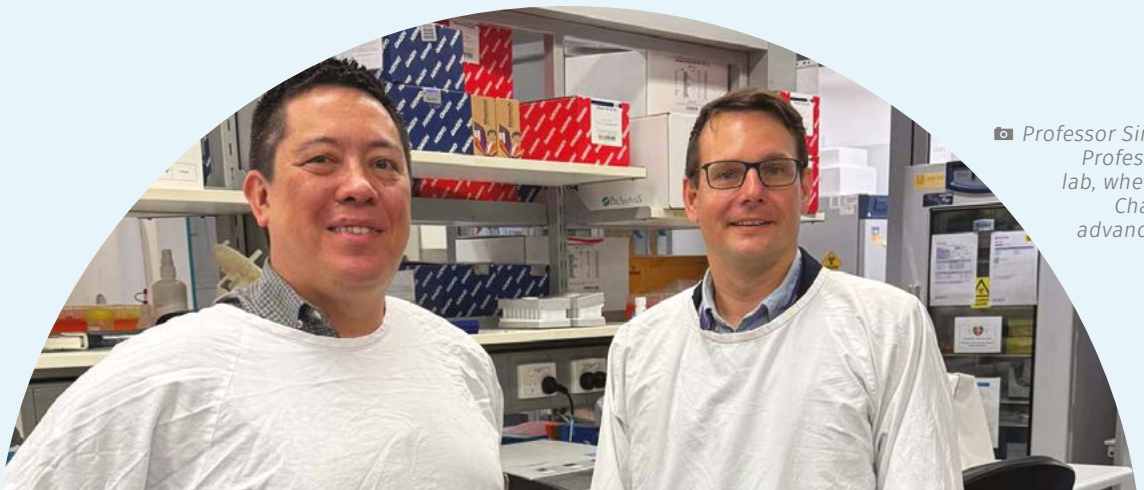
"The Foundation is committed to supporting world-leading research that can be translated into real-world impact, improving health and wellbeing for communities in Australia and beyond," Tonya says.

Highlighting the international significance of their research, Kaiko and Keely's work has recently been published in Signal Transduction and Targeted Therapy, one of the world's highest impact biomedical journals.

In this work, the team developed the first drug discovery pipeline to systematically identify proteins produced by healthy gut bacteria and test them as potential therapeutics. Using this approach, they discovered a new drug candidate that protects the intestinal lining from disease-related damage, opening a new avenue for treatment that goes beyond suppressing the immune system.

With continued philanthropic support, the researchers are now advancing the next phase of their work, bringing them closer to developing targeted microbiome-based therapies that could improve the lives of people living with IBD across Australia and around the world.

If you would like to support an area of research that is important to you and help improve lives, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au



Professor Simon Keely (left) and Associate Professor Gerard Kaiko (right) in the lab, where support from the McCusker Charitable Foundation is helping advance new approaches to treating inflammatory bowel disease.

SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTS RURAL HEALTHCARE

Tarun, a fourth-year student studying a Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine (Joint Medical Program), is determined to return to his hometown of Muswellbrook and serve his community as a doctor. Currently on placement at Tamworth Hospital, Tarun is working 10-hour days while balancing his studies.

"The long hours for placement make me really tired at the end of the day, which is challenging when I need to study after work," Tarun says.

As the cost of fuel continues to rise, living away from his family and support system has been challenging. Social isolation has also been difficult, as Tarun adjusts to a new routine and community.

The MACH Energy Rural Community Health Scholarship has significantly reduced the need for Tarun to undertake paid work alongside his placement. It has also helped cover essential costs, including travel, study resources, groceries, and accommodation.

"The scholarship supports me to commit myself to my studies and spend more time in the hospital while on placement, so I can become the best doctor I can be."

MACH Energy's support is helping Tarun work towards his goal of improving access to healthcare in the community he calls home. He hopes to return to Muswellbrook and work in a fracture clinic, allowing local patients to receive treatment closer to home.



"To be working in Muswellbrook as a doctor and giving back to my community would feel like a dream come true."

Tarun Nagaraj
MACH Energy Rural Community Health Scholarship Recipient
Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine (Joint Medical Program) Student

"I would love the opportunity to run an orthopaedics theatre in Muswellbrook, to reduce follow-up treatment travel costs for people with broken bones."

Tarun Nagaraj (second from right) celebrates with his proud parents and Professor Christopher Dayas (second from left), Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy, at the 2026 College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing Scholars' Ceremony.





Connor Thomson (middle) is pictured with generous donors, Emeritus Professor Gordon Boyce (left) and Evelyn Boyce (right), at the College of Human and Social Futures Scholars' Ceremony.

BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE

Connor, a first-year student studying a combined Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Commerce at the University's Gosford Central campus, is determined to use his education to build a better future and improve financial literacy within his Central Coast community.

"I grew up in government housing. We'd eat sausages for months at a time, eat Weet-Bix in the afternoons and couldn't go on holidays," Connor says.

Balancing his studies and a part-time job as a labourer in Sydney, Connor also cares for his mum who had her leg amputated and requires support with daily activities.

"Some days I've got to spend a few hours helping mum clean or taking her to appointments, and then still try to find time at the end of the day to approach uni with a clear mind."

The Boyce Family Scholarship has enabled Connor to reduce his work hours and dedicate more time to his studies. Without the scholarship, Connor says reducing his work hours would not have been possible. He has used the extra time to attend classes, work on assignments, and support his family.

On Monday nights, Connor volunteers at Kibble Park to help provide meals for people experiencing homelessness, and he regularly donates blood. Determined to become a positive role model for others, Connor hopes to use his education to shape better financial outcomes for his community by running financial literacy workshops.

The generosity of Emeritus Professor Gordon Boyce and Evelyn Boyce in establishing this scholarship is supporting Connor's ambition to share his knowledge with others.

"What I would like to do in the future is take the financial skills and education that I've received and be able to help the community."



"Knowing early on that life can be tough and it's not always easy, but if you work hard, and you're determined and push through, you will get to where you want to go."

Connor Thomson
Boyce Family Scholarship Recipient
Bachelor of Business / Bachelor of Commerce Student

Scholarships ensure students can thrive in education. If you are interested in establishing or supporting a scholarship, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au



Crystalbrook Kingsley Environmental Scholarship recipient Phoebe Carter-Swain (right) with scholarship supporters Hayley Seymour (left) and Carl Taranto (middle) at the 2026 College of Engineering, Science and Environment Scholars' Ceremony.

STAYING THE COURSE THROUGH COST PRESSURES

Phoebe is studying a Bachelor of Environmental Science and Management while doing everything she can to balance her studies with rising living expenses.

"I was at the point where I was looking at deferring my final year of study so I could work full time, save enough money to support myself and then return to complete my degree," Phoebe says.

Rising grocery prices are making it harder for Phoebe to afford food. She grows her own vegetables at home, swaps produce with growers at local farmers' markets and looks for other ways to reduce costs.

"I take as much of the discounted student food as possible, within reason, and I'm looking for ways to make food acquisition cheaper."

Thanks to the support of the Crystalbrook Kingsley Environmental Scholarship, Phoebe has been able to continue her education, cover essential living expenses, and have her car serviced. The scholarship has given Phoebe valuable financial breathing room as she works towards completing her degree.

"Crystalbrook Kingsley is doing a service to the environment by supporting future graduates with a scholarship in this area," Phoebe says.

As a leader in the Newcastle University Garden Society (NUGS), Phoebe also volunteers in the Community Garden at Callaghan campus. Leftover fruit and vegetables are donated to the University of Newcastle Students' Association's (UNSA) free food initiative, helping other students access fresh food.

Phoebe's contribution demonstrates the ripple effect of scholarship support: helping one student continue their education can help many others.

CEO of UNSA Mark Trevaskis agrees.

"Students supporting students is at the heart of Free Food Friday," Mark says.

"The contributions of fresh food from the NUGS mean there's less chance that students walk away empty-handed."

With the support of the scholarship, Phoebe is determined to complete her degree and use her skills to educate and empower others.

"Every environmental issue that we have is a cost-of-living issue as well, and if people are learning more, then they're more empowered to make change and inspire others," Phoebe says.

> "It can be challenging staying on top of rent, medical bills, buying food, and the upkeep of my car."
>
> **Phoebe Carter-Swain**
> Crystalbrook Kingsley Environmental Scholarship Recipient
> Bachelor of Environmental Science and Management Student





Associate Professor Danielle Verdon-Kidd, School of Science.

NEW DISCOVERIES IN TREE RING DATING

Every tree keeps a diary. One ring for every year to record exactly how the seasons play out. Current student and Patricia Jensen Science Scholarship recipient, Madeleine Hatfield, is learning how to analyse tree rings to understand seasonal changes over time, helping climate scientists read Australia's past.

Studying a Bachelor of Science (Advanced), Madeleine recently learnt the tools of dendrochronology under the supervision of alumna and researcher, Associate Professor Danielle Verdon-Kidd, finding a simpler way to count tree ring boundaries.

"Madeleine's contribution to this project was outstanding. Her work identifying the use of coloured chalk to improve the visibility of tree ring boundaries has the potential to make ring measurements more accurate and efficient, particularly in challenging samples," Associate Professor Verdon-Kidd says.

Improvements like Madeleine's can have a big impact, helping researchers build clearer records of Australia's past climate changes and strengthening the science that guides future environmental decisions.

"Providing students with opportunities to participate in research during their degree is incredibly important," Associate Professor Verdon-Kidd says.

"It allows them to apply their classroom learning to real-world problems, develop critical thinking skills and gain first-hand experience in the discovery process, hopefully sparking an interest in further research.

Scholarships play a vital role in making these opportunities accessible, particularly for students balancing study, work and other commitments."

Madeleine's future is bright and she is now thinking about further study after completing her degree. Grateful for the support of the Patricia Jensen Science Scholarship, the extra time and reduced financial pressure allowed Madeleine to focus more on her research and less on paid work.

It also helps her cover the costs of outdoor field trips, which are an essential part of her studies in Earth Science and Biodiversity Conservation.

"Working two jobs, attending classes and taking time out for field trips is a lot and it takes a toll on your mental health sometimes," Madeleine says.

"It really boosted my confidence knowing that someone understands my situation and wants to see me succeed.

I think it's important to stand up for what you believe in. The late Patricia Jensen was a teacher and very involved with politics and her community – exactly the kind of person I want to be. I hope she would be proud of what I have already been able to achieve during my studies," Madeleine says.

To receive a scholarship brochure, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au



Patricia Jensen Science Scholarship recipient Madeleine Hatfield, whose research into tree rings is helping scientists better understand Australia's past climate.





Mark Hughes Foundation volunteers sell beanies to the community at the NRL Beanie for Brain Cancer Round, helping raise vital funds for brain cancer research.

COMMUNITY DRIVES TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

Since 2021, the Mark Hughes Foundation (MHF) has transformed community generosity into one of Australia's most significant brain cancer care and research efforts.

From beanie day fundraisers to sporting campaigns to national recognition, the MHF is known for its incredible influence in rallying the community behind a cause.

The latest milestone is a commitment of $18.9 million over five years to the MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research at the University of Newcastle to accelerate research discoveries into clinical practice.



Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing Professor Lisa Wood (left); Kirralee (second from left) and Mark Hughes OAM (middle), MHF Co-Founders; Professor Mike Fay (second from right), MHF Chair in Brain Cancer and Centre Director; and University of Newcastle Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Alex Zelinsky AO (right).

A NATIONAL MOVEMENT BUILT BY COMMUNITY

This commitment brings the MHF's total contribution through the University to $36.6 million, making it one of the largest philanthropic investments in brain cancer research nationally and the largest donation in the University's history.

Behind this transformational commitment are thousands of individual acts of generosity from the community to help improve the lives of people and families affected by brain cancer.

Co-Founder Mark Hughes OAM reflects on the Foundation's inspirational progress.

"This commitment is a proud moment for everyone who has supported the Mark Hughes Foundation over the years. Every beanie sold, every donation made, every event attended and every person who has stood with us has contributed to this moment and is helping to change the future of brain cancer research in Australia," Mark says.

REAL IMPACT

Since the University's MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research was established in 2022, it has rapidly transformed Newcastle into a powerhouse of research and innovation.

Brain cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australian children and adults under 40, yet receives less than five per cent of federal cancer research funding, with survival outcomes largely unchanged for three decades.

By sharing tools and platforms, the MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research is reducing duplication and enabling a nationally connected research ecosystem. The renewed commitment will drive the next phase of research and support clinicians and partners across Australia working to tackle brain cancer and improve outcomes for patients.

RECOGNISING A DRIVING FORCE BEHIND NATIONAL EFFORTS TO TACKLE BRAIN CANCER

MHF Co-Founder and alumna, Kirralee Hughes, was awarded Cancer Australia's 2026 Jeannie Ferris Award in the Members of the Community category, in recognition of her extraordinary commitment to improving brain cancer care.

"This award reflects the many amazing people I've had the privilege to work with, especially my husband Mark, our amazing MHF team, and all the staff at the MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research at the University of Newcastle," Kirralee says.

YOUR GENEROSITY IN ACTION

$36.6 million pledged by the Mark Hughes Foundation.

More than **160 Centre members** collaborating nationwide.

Access to the **WEHI BRAIN Registry**, containing data from more than 10,500 patients.

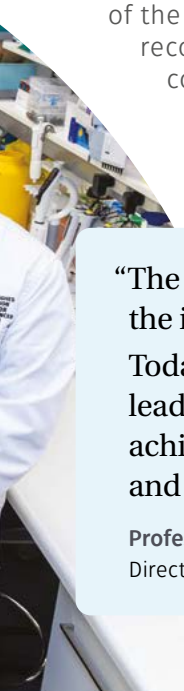
40 collaborating research institutes, hospitals and universities.

47 early career researchers at the Centre.

THANK YOU

Thank you to the Mark Hughes Foundation for its vision, generosity and unwavering commitment to transforming brain cancer research in Australia.

And thank you to the community. Every beanie, every fundraiser held, every dollar raised brings real hope to thousands of families across Australia.



"The first phase of the MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research focused on building the infrastructure – investing in people, equipment and partnerships.

Today, we have the expertise, technology, and strong relationships with the nation's leading researchers in brain cancer research. By working as one team, we're achieving far greater impact for people affected by brain cancer and their families than any of us could alone."

Professor Mike Fay
Director, MHF Centre for Brain Cancer Research





THROUGH COURAGE COMES CHANGE

Religious sisters have supported communities around the world, yet their experiences of sexual and gendered violence within religious institutions have largely gone unheard. A generous gift from the Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation is helping to change that.

Church communities play an important role in confronting the legacy of abuse, fostering understanding, and supporting recovery and change.

More than 650,000 religious sisters globally work in communities experiencing disadvantage, helping to shape education, healthcare and social services, yet many have silently carried harmful experiences throughout their lives.

With generous backing from the Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation, respected University of Newcastle sociologist and alumna, Dr Kathleen McPhillips, is leading a project to ensure the experiences of religious sisters affected by sexual and gendered violence within religious institutions are heard and documented.

The project, *Overcoming Silence: Working with Impacted Communities of Church-Based Sexual Abuse*, aims to build the first substantial Australian evidence base of the religious sisters' experiences.

The project builds on the 2023 International Survey of Catholic Women, authored by McEwan, McPhillips and Pepper, with 17,000 respondents worldwide. Among the responses were 800 from self-identified religious sisters describing their experiences of harm and abuse in answers to open-ended questions.

"For too long, these voices have remained unheard. This research is about creating safe, trauma-informed opportunities for religious sisters to share their stories, while generating the evidence needed to support meaningful institutional change," Dr McPhillips says.

The project will combine in-depth interviews, an anonymous international survey and an extensive review of Australian records, inquiries, memoirs and archival materials.

"With great power comes great responsibility. Powerful and influential institutions need to be held to account when they fall down on this responsibility. We at the Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation have a great deal of respect for the fearless research and actions of Dr Kath McPhillips and her team in holding religious institutions to account and effecting change in the way they operate. We know that it is difficult to find funding for such courageous work going up against powerful institutions. That's why we are backing this research being undertaken by Kath, her team and the University of Newcastle."



Tracy Norman
Founder and Chair of the Ian & Shirley Norman Foundation

If you would like to support a project that aligns with your values, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au



Dr Miriam Pepper (left), Dr Tracy McEwan (second from left), Dr Kathleen McPhillips (second from right) and Larney Peerenboom (right), researchers leading Overcoming Silence: Working with Impacted Communities of Church-Based Sexual Abuse.

A LEGACY FOR LEUKAEMIA RESEARCH

After losing her father to leukaemia, Ngaire Callaghan found a meaningful way to honour his memory.

For 15 years, Ngaire and her husband Bruce have raised funds for cancer research with the community at Bobbin Head Cruising Club. This is how Ngaire met University of Newcastle alumna and researcher Dr Heather Murray, who is working to discover more precise, individualised treatments to improve outcomes for people living with cancer.

"When I met Dr Murray in 2024, she spoke so personally about her blood cancer research, including how she views each patient sample not as a bunch of cells but as a person whose life has been turned upside down by cancer. That stayed with me," says Ngaire.

Following their meeting, Ngaire's father, Kevin, was sadly diagnosed with the same type of cancer Dr Murray studies. After Kevin's passing in October 2024, Ngaire made the decision to honour her father with a gift to support Dr Murray's research.

To advance her research, Dr Murray needed a new plate reader, which is a vital piece of equipment that allows researchers to test how cancer cells respond to potential treatments. Ngaire generously donated a plate reader to Dr Murray's research, with her father's name proudly engraved on a memorial plaque as a heartfelt tribute to his life.

That plate reader is now being used to test new treatments for patients living with many types of cancer, including leukaemia, brain and breast cancer.

"We are so grateful to Ngaire for her generosity and the powerful example of how personal legacy can contribute to research that will benefit many families affected by cancer," Dr Murray says.

Dr Murray's team has framed a booklet from Kevin's funeral service and displayed it near the new plate reader, in memory of the man whose legacy will help improve the lives of others.



"Every new treatment we want to test, this is how we do it. We can test hundreds of drugs and drug combinations in a single experiment, looking for what works and why some cancers stop responding. Ultimately the goal is to overcome treatment resistance and deliver more targeted treatments to people sooner."

Dr Heather Murray
Lecturer / Postdoctoral Researcher
School of Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy

To learn how you or your business can support an area of research you're passionate about, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au



Ngaire (middle) and Bruce Callaghan (right) with Dr Heather Murray (left) and the plate reader equipment they generously donated.



Dr John Ward, CSIRO Research Director for Energy Systems.

PARTNERSHIP CREATES PATHWAYS

A partnership between CSIRO and the University of Newcastle is creating new opportunities to value the knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within Australia's future energy transition sector.

CSIRO has committed $1.5 million to establish the CSIRO Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Energy Transition Scholarship. Recipients can receive up to $75,000 over the course of their degree, along with valuable mentoring and work-integrated learning opportunities, opening doors to future careers in disciplines that contribute to Australia's sustainable energy future.

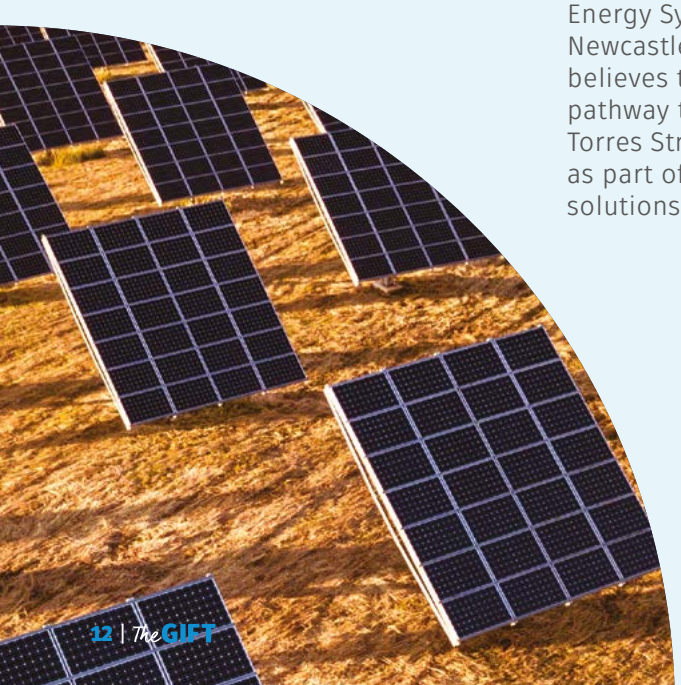
Open to students across engineering, environmental science, mathematics, data science and policy, the scholarships are designed to reduce financial barriers and open pathways to high-growth STEM and clean energy fields, while recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems alongside scientific and technical expertise.

CSIRO Research Director for Energy Systems and University of Newcastle alumnus, Dr John Ward, believes the investment creates a pathway to respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives as part of Australia's energy solutions.

"The energy sector is undergoing rapid change and people across Australia are taking greater ownership of how they generate and use power. We need voices from every corner of Australia to inform those discussions around energy and how we use the land so we can create solutions that work for all Australians," Dr Ward says.

The new partnership with CSIRO is a powerful demonstration of the University of Newcastle's approach to philanthropy, as outlined in the recent co-authored paper *Philanthropy, Our Way.*

If you or your business would like to partner to support students through scholarships, please contact our team on 02 4921 8612 or email donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au





PHILANTHROPY, OUR WAY IN PRACTICE



Lindsay Hardy, Stakeholder Manager at the Wollotuka Institute.

Philanthropy, Our Way is a co-authored paper that offers practical guidance for donors and institutions who want to do better, moving beyond transactional funding and towards genuine partnership.

It explores how we can work to support long-term partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prioritise equity, justice and self-determination.

Lindsay Hardy, a proud Bidjara Gunggari Mhurdi and Stakeholder Manager at the Wollotuka Institute at the University of Newcastle, explains how these principles guide our philanthropic partnerships, including conversations that helped facilitate the new CSIRO Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Energy Transition Scholarships.

"We ask partners to sit down with us and explore our shared goals and what meaningful impact for communities really looks like," Lindsay says.

"That process takes time. It requires trust. It's not one conversation but many.

These scholarships target fields including engineering and the sciences where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation remains low. They're also designed to reach students in their critical early years of university, which can be particularly challenging for students from regional and remote communities.

This donation will change the course of so many lives and create the conditions where the next generation can see themselves leading and shaping the future of these industries."

For Lindsay, success is the student who writes to tell him how the opportunity changed their life, what it means for their family and their community.

That's a view shared by the University of Newcastle's Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Leadership) and Head of the Wollotuka Institute, Loren Collyer.



"When you invest in Indigenous-led initiatives, you are supporting more than access to learning – you are enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead their own futures, define success on their own terms, and generate solutions with far-reaching social and economic impact."

Loren Collyer
Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Leadership) and Head of the Wollotuka Institute

Philanthropy, Our Way Collaborative Artwork (2025–2026). The Philanthropy, Our Way artwork was co-created through a collaborative workshop, bringing together University of Newcastle staff, Noble Ambition staff, researchers, project partners, and community.



To learn more about Philanthropy, Our Way, please visit newcastle.edu.au/philanthropy-our-way



Ma & Morley Scholars pictured on their China immersion tour.

APPROACHING A DECADE OF DIFFERENCE

The Ma & Morley Scholarship Program has become a launchpad for students to live extraordinary lives. As it approaches its 10th anniversary, we reflect on what makes the Program so transformational and the possibilities still to come.

TWO FRIENDS, ONE IDEA, GENERATIONS OF IMPACT

From a chance encounter between Jack Ma and the Morley family in Hangzhou, China, to an enduring friendship and a lasting scholarship legacy, the Ma & Morley Scholarship Program has always been about connection. The Program, just shy of its 10th anniversary, has shown what's possible when values, opportunity and support align.

Since its launch, the Program has opened hearts and minds for hundreds of Scholars and continues to foster meaningful opportunities. Scholars from diverse backgrounds are accessing and staying at university, succeeding in their studies and developing a clearer sense of who they are and how they want to contribute to society through their future careers.

By reducing financial pressure, building community and offering experiences that stretch perspectives, the Program is shaping confident, values-led leaders with humility, global awareness and a strong commitment to giving back.

Every Scholar's journey is unique, and their stories are eye-opening. Throughout 2027, we will share their stories and achievements, celebrating how Scholars carry the Program's ethos beyond the University and create ripples of innovation, equity and opportunity across communities in Australia and beyond.

We are grateful to the Jack Ma Foundation, whose transformational gift made the Program possible, and to the Morley family for their ongoing involvement and support. We look forward to celebrating 10 years of impact in 2027.

To find out more about the Ma & Morley Scholarship Program, please visit newcastle.edu.au/ma-morley

IMPACT BY NUMBERS

254 Scholars
9 cohorts
116 Ambassadors
2,326 Program applications

REAL-WORLD IMPACTS

151 Action Projects
9 Scholars awarded prestigious New Colombo Plan Scholarships
$57,000 raised by Scholars for youth homelessness

PROGRAM SUCCESS

9 out of 10 Scholars stay at university
9 out of 10 Scholars complete their degree
Scholars consistently achieve high academic results



"The Program felt like a companion to me. It keeps reminding me of why I do what I do, and that there are other people working towards the same goals."

Georgia Young,
2018 Ma & Morley Scholar
Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) Student



A LIFETIME OF GIVING BACK

In July 2026, John Dugas marked 50 years of service at the University of Newcastle – a milestone reflecting his lifelong commitment to teaching, curiosity and giving back.

John Dugas (left), bequest and scholarship donor, with former student and alumna Julie Thomas-Bailey (right).

Throughout his career, John has taught across Education, Architecture, Engineering and the Newcastle Business School, as well as internationally in Wuhan, China and Chandigarh, India.

"If you don't love what you're doing, you don't stick around for 50 years," John says. "For me, teaching is about curiosity. That's when the real learning starts."

After growing up in the rural town of Gloucester, NSW, John seized an opportunity to complete high school in Sydney before receiving a Commonwealth scholarship to study at the University of Newcastle. He completed a Bachelor of Arts in 1971 and a Diploma in Education in 1972, before working abroad and returning to Newcastle. In 1985, he completed a Master of Education at the University of Newcastle.

What started as a casual academic position at the University grew into a fulfilling career and a commitment to bring education within reach of more students.

"At the end of the day, education is about people. I've always asked, 'How can I facilitate the best possible learning experience for students?'

That philosophy extends to giving. Even a small contribution, pooled with others, can give several students their start," John says.

For years, John has donated to support scholarships because he understands how even a modest gift can help ease the burden of rising study costs for students experiencing financial hardship and disadvantage.

Growing up in a rural town and benefiting from a scholarship himself, John understands the opportunities education can create. Now, he has chosen to leave a gift in his Will to support scholarships for students from regional communities, helping future generations access those same opportunities.

"Giving back is an act of gratitude," he says. "Someone gave me a leg up, and it only seems reasonable to do the same for someone else."

For 50 years, John's commitment to education and generosity have helped transform lives. That is a legacy to truly be proud of.

> "Education is utterly transformative. It creates a capability that gives you choices and options in life. Through my gift in my Will, I hope to help students achieve things they otherwise might not have attained."
>
> **John Dugas**
> Newcastle Business School,
> College of Human and Social Futures

To find out how you can make a lasting impact beyond your lifetime through a gift in your Will, please contact Catherine for a confidential discussion on 02 4921 8612 or email bequests@newcastle.edu.au



WHY I DONATE

Alumnus, Lachlan King, was searching for a meaningful way to give back when he discovered the joy of supporting students to achieve their dreams. Having established two Shaping Futures Scholarships and leaving a gift to the University of Newcastle in his Will, he reflects on what it means to be part of our community.

For Lachlan King, supporting Shaping Futures Scholarships and including a gift in his Will are meaningful ways to give back and help students achieve their goals.

"I feel a lot of joy when I find out who my scholarships have been awarded to. It's one of the happiest moments of my year. It's exciting to learn what they're studying and hear about their journey to this point.

I'd been searching for a way to give back for a while. I tried volunteering for a community organisation and initially set up a prize at the University. While I enjoyed both, they helped me realise I wanted to create something with a lasting impact.

Then in 2019, I attended a supporter event at the University and heard a student talk about what receiving a scholarship had meant to her. It really struck a chord with me, and I knew straight away what I wanted to do.

Since setting up my first scholarship in 2020, the whole experience has become a self-reinforcing cycle. Seeing the difference it makes to a person's life, following their story and sharing the experience with other like-minded people inspired me to establish a second scholarship and continues to make me want to do more.

Students today face so many challenges. I admire their courage and resilience. The one thing I continue to hear from recipients is how powerful it is to know someone believes in you. Someone who doesn't even know you but is willing to support your dreams. I want to keep offering that for as long as I can.

Giving is something I've mostly done quietly. But it's worth talking about. It might be exactly what inspires someone else to give back in their own way." **Lachlan King**

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Everyone has a unique story about why they donate through the University of Newcastle, and we would love to hear yours!

Please call 02 4921 8612 or email **donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au**

HOW TO MAKE A GIFT

DONATE ONLINE
At our secure website:
newcastle.edu.au/donate

EMAIL
Contact us at:
donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au

TELEPHONE
Call us on: **+61 2 4921 8612**

MAIL YOUR CHEQUE TO:
Office of Philanthropy
The University of Newcastle
130 University Drive
CALLAGHAN NSW 2308

IF YOU WOULD PREFER TO RECEIVE THE GIFT BY EMAIL
Please contact us at
donor-relations@newcastle.edu.au

Tax deductibility: Donations of $2 or more to the University of Newcastle may be eligible deductions for income tax purposes under the Income Tax Act 1997.
Privacy: The University of Newcastle complies with the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. Your personal information will be securely stored.

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