



Sisters of Charity  
Foundation

# Heart of the Foundation

In the tradition of the Sisters of Charity

Newsletter Autumn 2026

## How you're helping Nate succeed



Mentor Support Network scholarships are helping young people in the NSW Hunter region – like would-be rocket scientist Nate – overcome financial barriers to study and pursue their academic and career goals.

"Last year I challenged myself to compete among the brilliant minds of Australia's youth in the Australian Science and Engineering Fair," says Nate, a Lake Macquarie high school student.

Nate spent 11 months working on an AI/robotics project aiming to make health care easier for people with disabilities. "In the times that I wasn't studying for school, I was working at a local fast-food restaurant to support my project. I had no outside

resources, no labs or workshops to work with and definitely no mentors to assist me with the technical side."

Nate was awarded a Mentor Support Network scholarship to help him complete the project. "I placed 11th in not only Australia, but New Zealand, many Pacific islands and international schools within the competition."

### Investing in young people

Mentor Support Network (MSN) provides educational scholarships of

up to \$2,000 to high school students entering Year 11, or vocational students starting the final years of their technical/vocational training in the Hunter.

"The scholarships are not necessarily awarded because of academic achievement, but rather because of a student's demonstrated desire to succeed," explains MSN Chair Julie Rich.

A recent Community Grant of \$20,000 helped MSN provide 51 educational scholarships to students in 2026.

"The successful group of students have already been using their scholarship funds to purchase personal computers, work-related tools and equipment, home study furniture, school uniforms and spectacles, among other items," says Julie.

### Building confidence and goal-setting

Julie says the program increases recipients' knowledge of training opportunities and further education and assists them to pursue those opportunities, leading to a greater chance of employment and advancement.

Nate is certainly one scholarship recipient with big goals! "My absolute dream is to go to the USA to study a degree in aerospace engineering – hopefully at MIT," he says. "Then I would strive for a doctorate, or find a job I enjoy in experimental propulsion aeronautics." ❖

### BECAUSE OF YOU...

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Nate is aiming for the stars

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Nga Kim is excelling in the classroom

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Vulnerable people find comfort in reading

# How you're helping educate the next generation



suddenly was financially draining – seeing her happy made me happy.”

### What's next

Nga Kim thinks she has a good chance of landing a permanent role at the school she's currently at. "I really love this school. The last few weeks I've been so happy," she says.



Nga Kim spoke to Foundation supporters about her journey in 2025.

"Teaching is so many different careers in one. I'm a teacher, I'm a friend, I'm a social worker, I'm a psychologist, I'm everything. I tie their shoelaces – even though they're in year 5 – and I do their hair. By the end of the day I always have to take a 30 minute nap because I've been so flat out!" ❖

"The scholarship was my light at the end of the tunnel. It was a really amazing thing that happened to me, I'm so grateful for the scholarship and all the donors that made it happen."

## The childhood classic *Matilda* inspired a love of teaching in scholarship recipient Nga Kim, who is finding her stride educating year 5 students.

Nga Kim was awarded a scholarship to study a Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Primary) at Western Sydney University, then went on to complete a Master of Teaching at the same university. She is set to graduate this year.

### Finding her style

Nga Kim says that while she found her first teaching placement quite difficult due to learning how to work with kids with behavioural issues, she's excelling in her current placement teaching year 5.

"Teaching has always been something that has been on my mind, ever since I watched the movie *Matilda*. I have a passion for teaching, and a really nurturing side," she says. "When it comes to teaching styles I'm kind of a mix between Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull – because you have to be firm!"

She's noticed that her class responds well to this firm side. "I

realised the kinder I am, the worse they are," explains Nga Kim. "But when I give them boundaries and consequences suddenly they're literally chasing me down at lunch wanting to talk to me."

### Winning a scholarship

Nga Kim applied for a tertiary scholarship at the insistence of a supportive high school teacher, and began her degree in 2022. "When I found out I won the scholarship I was actually really shocked, I was experiencing imposter syndrome," she remembers.

"When I told my grandma it was the most special moment. She's always been really proud of me and wanted me to do better. I'd been living with her since I was in year 7. Just seeing her joy and her look of relief – when my siblings and I started living with her she was a pensioner, obviously taking care of three children so

# On the road with The Footpath Library



Sarah (right) at a recent Martin Place mobile library visit.

## A mobile library service is challenging misconceptions about homelessness and creating spaces where readers are seen, valued and inspired.

"There is a misconception that people experiencing homelessness are uneducated and don't read; in fact, many of them are highly educated, are voracious readers and are experiencing homelessness through no fault of their own," says The Footpath Library Founder and Managing Director Sarah Garnett. "A relationship breakdown, loss of a job or poor mental health can suddenly plunge someone into the precarious situation of being unhoused."

### A library on the move

The Footpath Library operates regular mobile library services to provide quality books, reading glasses, and opportunities for social connection and inclusion for people experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. The organisation received a Community Grant of \$20,000 in December 2025 to support the program.

Footpath Library vans visit around 25 regular locations across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, and give away more than 8,000 books every year.

### Building connections and community

Sarah explains that volunteers attend the same location on a regular basis so that readers get to know them and vice versa, leading to an atmosphere of safety and calm.

"Access to books gives people a distraction, an escape, a learning opportunity, something positive."

"And the social connection offered can lead to improved mental health and sometimes, the courage and confidence to enrol in a course or apply for a job. We had one woman several years ago come to us and say that her reconnection with reading had led to her completing her HSC, at the age of 40, and enrolling in university studies." ❖

## Books and beanies

"I come along and I love chatting to the volunteers about the books and other various community issues. I got *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* here, that was written in 23 languages, and it sold several million copies so without the volunteer bringing that to my attention, I wouldn't have read that book. They are interested to know what books I like to read.

I might mention authors I like – like Aldous Huxley – and they said they'd keep an eye out for me. But they might not be able to get them, so they suggest another book and sometimes I've taken them and really enjoyed them. They've been spot on.

The Footpath Library gives me the opportunity to read books I otherwise might not read. I like philosophical books and escaping from myself by reading. Reading is a form of escapism and relaxation.

The volunteers are very helpful in giving me beanies and reading glasses too."



# A word from Louise



the OOH space; that and word of mouth – thank you to our past graduates – saw a record number of applications submitted in January.

To put it in perspective, in 2025 we awarded 10 new scholarships and had 32 students enrolled in the program – so far this year our new

scholarship tally is at 25, bringing our current student cohort to 57!

The careers our new recipients have planned span a wide range of interests: we have one TAFE student set on becoming a dental assistant; another who will go into community services; a dancer enrolled in a four-year course at the Lee Academy – a dance and acrobatics school – who already performs at an extremely high level; and someone studying to be an occupational therapist at La Trobe University. Another young man from Western Australia is doing

“We can’t wait to watch our new students grow in confidence and capability – to see their hard work open doors, their dreams take shape, and their futures unfold in careers that reflect their talent, resilience and extraordinary potential.”

a Bachelor of Health Sciences, while another student has chosen medical science at the University of NSW.

A special mention to the Three Flips Foundation, The Scully Fund, the Grahame Mapp Family Foundation, the Waratah Education Foundation and the Snow Foundation who helped fund our 2026 scholarship round. ❖

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Burton".

Louise M Burton, CEO

Our Tertiary Scholarship Program for young people from out-of-home care backgrounds has reached new heights this year, with the provision of scholarships to 25 new students.

We are so pleased at the growth of the scholarship program – and 2026 deserves particular mention. Over the past few years we have reached out to many providers in

## Become a Changemaker

Join our community of regular givers who are helping make Australia a fairer, more equitable place.

When you pledge to give a monthly or regular donation, you allow us to respond quickly when desperate families and communities need help. Your commitment lets us engage in more impactful philanthropy, invest in longer-term solutions and run essential programs with more certainty.

If you are keen to join our Changemakers Regular Giving Program, or have any questions, please contact us on (02) 9367 1211 or [info@sistersofcharityfoundation.org.au](mailto:info@sistersofcharityfoundation.org.au).

