

clontarffoundation

the QUARTERLY

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Powering Potential: How Our Annual PD Keeps Clontarf Moving Forward



Interstate Challenge Builds Bonds Beyond Borders

Employment Forums Inspiring the Next Generation





FEATURE

PD Powering Potential.....5

HIGHLIGHTS

NSW v QLD Interstate Challenge.....3

Cairns Employment Forum.....3

Alumni - Malakai Champion.....6

A Day on the Wharf.....6

NSW Table Tennis Tournament.....7

Staff Profile - Laura Peterson.....7

Clontarf Spirit Shines in Ceduna.....8

Early Detection, Lasting Impact.....8

About us

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and by doing so, equips them to participate more meaningfully in society.

Using the passion that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys have for sport allows the Foundation to attract the boys to school. But it is not a sporting program.

Each Clontarf academy, formed in partnership with the local school and community, is focused on encouraging behavioural change, developing positive attitudes, assisting students to complete school and secure employment.

Fundamental to this, is the development of values, skills and abilities that will help the boys to achieve positive life outcomes.

Since commencing with 25 participants in 2000, the Clontarf approach has proven to be very successful, not only in attracting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to school and retaining them, but also in having them embrace more disciplined, purposeful and healthy lifestyles.



Gerard addresses the audience at the Perth Employment Forum in June.

Message From the CEO

Welcome to the midyear Quarterly for 2025. Term 2 was a big one for Clontarf, and there's a lot to be proud of.



We kicked off the term with our annual professional development conference – an event that brought together more than 600 staff from across the country. It's always a highlight of the year, and this one was no exception.

Over two packed days, staff engaged in meaningful learning, took part in practical activities and reconnected with colleagues who share the same mission: improving the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. It was humbling to see so many passionate, committed people in one place.

We heard from Clontarf alumni who spoke about the lifelong impact of the program, and from expert external presenters who delivered content aimed at growing our capacity and sharpening our impact. It was a timely reminder that investing in our people is the best way to strengthen the program for our boys.

Our Employment Forums also returned in full force this term – a critical component of what makes the Clontarf model work. These events allow academy members to meet employers, build confidence, practise job-readiness skills and broaden their understanding of future pathways. They're also a chance for our partners to meet the next generation of leaders – young men who are respectful, capable and ready to make their mark.

Forums were held in Perth, Karratha, Cairns, Gold Coast, Yeppoon, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Tamworth and Melbourne. We'll hold another 10 across the country

in Term 3. If you're able to attend one, I highly encourage it – these events are a great way to see the program in action and understand the value of your support.

In May, we were incredibly honoured to have Her Excellency the Hon. Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, accept the role of Clontarf's Patron-in-Chief. Her Excellency is a longstanding advocate for education and opportunity, and we're grateful she has chosen to support Clontarf's work.

On a very sad note, we lost one of our own in June with the sudden passing of Mackay Academy Director Mena Tiubui. Mena was an outstanding mentor and a deeply valued member of the Clontarf family. His loss has been felt strongly in the school, the academy and the wider community. Our staff responded with great care to support those who were impacted, including ensuring support was available to our team. Mena's contribution and legacy will not be forgotten. Vale Mena.

Looking ahead to Term 3, we've got another busy stretch. Alongside the next round of Employment Forums, we'll host the Ross Kelly Cup rugby league carnival, and we'll celebrate our New South Wales outcomes with a special event at Parliament House in Sydney. These moments are important for our academy members and for those who support them – so thank you again for standing alongside us. We hope to see you at an event soon.

- Gerard Neesham OAM, CEO and Founder



Interstate Challenge Builds Bonds Beyond Borders

In June, more than 100 Clontarf academy members from across the East Coast gathered in Southeast Queensland and Northern New South Wales for the 2025 Interstate Challenge - a multi-day program combining sport, leadership, employment engagement and community experiences.

The trip began with a visit to the Gold Coast Titans rugby league team, where the boys toured the club's elite facilities, met current NRL players and watched the team's final training session ahead of their weekend match. The experience provided insight into the professionalism and discipline required at the highest levels of sport.

That evening, a jersey presentation dinner was held at the Currumbin RSL, attended by approximately 330 people, including Clontarf staff, families and corporate partners. The dinner recognised each participant's selection into their state side and acknowledged the commitment and effort that led them to be part of the program.

Academy members took part in a regional

Touch Football Carnival hosted in Northern NSW by the Mid North Coast region. The event brought together academies from the Mid North Coast, South East Queensland and North West NSW, giving the boys a chance to connect with peers from other regions in a friendly but competitive environment.

In addition to the sporting and social activities, a Clontarf Employment Forum was also held, offering boys the opportunity to meet with local and national employment partners.

The feature match of the week, the Interstate Challenge, drew a large crowd of family members and members of the public, showcasing the talent and sportsmanship of academy members representing their state-based teams. Congratulations to the NSW

team who went home with the trophy.

After the game, students and families remained at the venue to watch the NRL fixture between the Titans and the Sea Eagles.

Congratulations to all the boys who participated. We can't wait for next year!



Inspiring the Next Generation at the Cairns Employment Forum

In May, over 100 Year 12 Clontarf academy members from the Far North Queensland region gathered in Cairns for the annual FNQ Clontarf Employment Forum - a day designed to inspire, connect and prepare young men for life after school.

With support from 17 incredible Clontarf partners, the forum returned in its popular expo-style format, featuring interactive employer booths, career-focused workshops and engaging presentations.

The day was hosted confidently by Trinity Bay Academy members Terrance Davidson and Shaun Wright, with a moving Acknowledgement of Country by Yarrabah's Jarred Fourmile. Participants also enjoyed a Q&A with Woolworths Assistant Manager and Bentley Park alumnus Yagan Jacob, who shared his post-school journey.

A surprise visit from NRL legend Matty

Bowen, attending as a Civil Safety ambassador, was a highlight - offering encouragement and plenty of photo opportunities.

Throughout the day, academy members rotated through four structured sessions, including a presentation from Rio Tinto, a Clontarf alumni-led workshop and time at hands-on employer booths. The day ended with a fun Clontarf Spirit Award raffle, with seven boys winning driving lesson packages, plus giveaways for all.

The forum was a fantastic success, showcasing the confidence and curiosity

of our boys and the commitment of our partners. A big thank you to all who made the day possible!



Powering Potential: How Our Annual PD Keeps Clontarf Moving Forward

In June, more than 600 Clontarf staff from across the country gathered on Queensland's Sunshine Coast for the Foundation's biggest internal event of the year – the National Professional Development (PD) Conference.

Why Annual PD?

Held every year, this two-day event brings together staff from academies, regional offices and national support teams to reconnect, learn, share ideas and build momentum for the year ahead.

With close to 12,000 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men taking part in the Clontarf program nationally, investing in our staff is one of the most important things we can do.

The annual PD is about more than skills. It's about staying grounded in our purpose, learning from each other and finding new ways to do the everyday work even better. It's also a chance for staff - many of whom work in remote or regional areas - to spend time with the wider Clontarf team and return re-energised and connected.

Key Aims

Raise capability - share best practice and new insights.

Reaffirm purpose - reconnect with Clontarf's mission and values.

Reinforce culture - build "One Clontarf" cohesion across roles and regions.

Recharge wellbeing - equip staff to manage the emotional load of their work.

"You don't rise to the occasion. You fall to your level of preparation."

- Simon Black, Brownlow Medallist

Leadership and Purpose

The event opened with sessions focused on leadership - not just for those in senior roles, but for anyone guiding young people. Staff were encouraged to think about how their actions, words and attitude can shape the experiences of the boys in their care. From quiet strength to leading by example, these sessions reminded staff that being consistent, clear and calm can have a lasting impact. Sessions were delivered by external leadership experts, including former SAS commander and politician Hon. Peter Tinley, Brownlow Medallist Simon Black and AFL great Craig Lambert.

Getting the Basics Right

Workshops revisited the day-to-day routines that sit at the heart of Clontarf - training, after-school activities, camps and time spent in the academy room. These sessions gave staff the space to reflect on what's working well, what could be improved and how to make the most of their time with the boys. The message was simple: if the basics are strong, everything else tends to follow.



600 Clontarf men and women attended the Foundation's annual professional development conference in June.



Looking After Ourselves and Each Other

Acknowledging the emotional demands of the work, several sessions focused on vicarious trauma, personal wellbeing and sustainable practice. Tools and frameworks were introduced to help staff monitor their energy levels, maintain professional boundaries and support their own recovery alongside that of their colleagues.

This content is especially important given the relational intensity of Clontarf's model. When staff are well-supported and balanced, they are better able to support the young men in their care.

'One Clontarf'

A highlight of the PD was a series of sessions on workplace culture and team cohesion. Rather than prescribing behaviours, these workshops encouraged honest discussion about what it means to live Clontarf's values across different regions and roles. They reinforced staff pride, belonging and shared ownership of the Foundation's direction.

Using real examples, they showed that Clontarf's culture is shaped not by rules but by relationships - daily actions, high standards and support. Staff left with a stronger sense of their impact and a renewed focus on positivity.



Youth Safety and Mental Health

A critical session addressed the realities of self-harm and suicide among young people, and what staff can do to prevent tragedy. With a strong emphasis on early intervention and trusting relationships, the session outlined key warning signs, response strategies and the pathways available for professional support.

Staff gained practical knowledge, confidence and language to approach difficult conversations with care, compassion and appropriate action.



Sport and Camaraderie

To wrap up the conference, staff made the most of the Sunshine Coast setting with an afternoon of beach sport. Dodgeball and touch football in the sand offered a welcome break after two full days of learning, bringing plenty of laughs, friendly rivalry and team spirit. With no pressure and nothing at stake, the games gave staff a chance to relax, have fun and enjoy each other's company outside the usual work setting. It was a fitting way to round out the conference and head home recharged.



Clontarf boys from Palmerston, Taminmin and Darwin were treated to a 'day on the wharf' at Darwin Port, thanks to Clontarf partners Programmed, Svitzer and Landbridge.

Malakai a Champion



Malakai Champion's dream came true when he made his AFL debut for the West Coast Eagles in July.

The Cecil Andrews Academy (Perth, WA) alumnus had long aimed to play football at the highest level. His talent, drive and maturity helped him make the bold decision to move to Perth in pursuit of that goal.

"I moved down to Perth to play WAFL footy for Subiaco and obviously try out for the AFL," Malakai said. "Sometimes you've got to make a sacrifice and it could end up being the best choice you've ever made. Moving to Perth was one of the best choices I've made."

After finishing Year 12 in 2023, Malakai was picked up by West Coast as a rookie through their Next Generation Academy. He impressed with strong, consistent WAFL form and earned an AFL call-up in Round 17 against Greater Western Sydney. Coming on as the sub, his speed, pressure and defensive work were widely praised.

While at Clontarf, Malakai was the consummate academy member - dedicated, humble and a natural leader. Now, as an AFL player, he inspires the next generation of young men coming through Clontarf academies across Australia.

Darwin Boys Experience a Day On the Wharf

30 Year 10 boys from Clontarf academies in Palmerston, Taminmin and Darwin recently traded the classroom for the coastline during an immersive 'Day on the Wharf' at Darwin Port.

The day was delivered in partnership with Darwin Port/Landbridge, Programmed and Svitzer Australia, and aimed to expose young Clontarf men to the exciting and varied career opportunities available within the maritime industry.

The event gave the group a behind-the-scenes look at one of Australia's busiest working ports, featuring a tour of the maintenance workshop, meet-and-greets with tug and pilot boat crews, and – undoubtedly the highlight – stepping aboard vessels to experience port operations in action.

Throughout the visit, academy members engaged directly with professionals in roles ranging from deckhands and tug operators to marine engineers and logistics coordinators. These one-on-one conversations gave the boys a genuine insight into what maritime careers involve, where no two days are the same and the ocean becomes your office.

A key announcement on the day was the introduction of two new school-based

apprenticeships in partnership with Darwin Port, Programmed and Svitzer. These opportunities will allow selected academy members to begin working towards a formal maritime qualification while still at school. Upon completion, they will also gain their Coxswain's Certificate – an essential step for anyone seeking to operate commercial vessels and pursue a long-term career in the sector.

"These experiences are so important for helping our academy members discover career paths that align with their interests and strengths," said Cameron Ilett, Clontarf Partnerships Manager in the NT.

"Thanks to strong partnerships like this one, our boys are being equipped with real skills and real opportunities."

The day reinforced the value of hands-on learning and early exposure to industry. It also served as a reminder that with the right guidance and support, career pathways once thought out of reach can become realistic and achievable goals.





Focused and fast: Academy members go head-to-head during the NSW Clontarf Table Tennis Tournament at Sydney Olympic Park.

Table Tennis Tournament More Than a Game

The annual NSW Clontarf Table Tennis Tournament served up fast-paced action and fierce but friendly competition, bringing together 130 Clontarf boys from across the state, along with several proud alumni and over 60 enthusiastic partners.

Held at Sydney Olympic Park in May, the event transformed the venue into a hub of energy and excitement, with 31 tables in constant play. Students from 14 different Clontarf academies stretching from Shoalhaven in the South to Toronto in the North converged for what has become one of the most anticipated events on the NSW Clontarf calendar.

Each table featured a mix of four players of Clontarf boys and partners competing in round-robin matches to secure their place in the knockout rounds. The top two from each table advanced to a 64-player elimination bracket, which whittled down to 32, 16, 8, 4, and finally, the grand final showdown.

Among the standout players were Jaydon Rooke from the Matraville Academy coming in at first place, followed by Bailey Coxon from The Entrance Academy and equal third both Carson Blacksmith from Endeavour and Robbie Sims from Matraville.

Jaydon's composure under pressure and pinpoint accuracy saw him take the top spot, but it was the sportsmanship and camaraderie on display that truly stole the show.

Beyond the rallies and returns, the day captured the Clontarf spirit – mateship, self-belief and a strong sense of belonging. Partners didn't just spectate, they rolled up their sleeves to play alongside the boys, cheer from the sidelines, and lend a hand with food preparation, reinforcing the

vital role they play in the broader Clontarf network.

Jannelle Lucht from Bullivants summed up the day beautifully:

"Thank you so much for letting us be part of your Table Tennis Tournament yesterday. My team and I enjoyed attending and being able to help out. Always well organised and great to see everyone enjoying themselves. We will have to sharpen our table tennis skills for next year!"

A unique feature of Clontarf's engagement strategy is that every academy has its own table tennis table. These aren't just for sport – they're important tools for socialisation, movement breaks, good sportsmanship and skill-building away from desks. Whether it's a quick lunchtime game or a friendly challenge with a partner, table tennis continues to bring energy and engagement to our academies every day. It's a simple but effective way to encourage interaction, build rapport and create a positive, inclusive environment.



Staff: Laura Peterson



Since joining Clontarf in 2012, Laura has played a key role in the central office team, helping coordinate logistics, administration and support for staff right across the country.

What drives her is clear: "It's meeting our academy members and knowing that what we do genuinely makes a difference in their lives and communities. It's incredibly rewarding to be part of something so meaningful."

The role can be fast-paced, especially during relocation periods. "There's a lot of coordination involved, but staying organised and having a great team around me makes it all manageable," she said.

A highlight so far has been attending the Wadjemup Cup on Rottnest Island. "Watching the students play footy and getting to meet them in that setting was really special."

Looking ahead, Laura is optimistic. "I'm looking forward to seeing how many more boys we can support and the continued impact we'll have in communities across the country."

Outside work, she enjoys camping, travelling and, right now, preparing for a new adventure: "I'll soon be heading off on maternity leave and can't wait to spend some special time with our new arrival."



Fishing, footy, friends and food - the trip to Ceduna had it all for the boys from our South Australian academies.



Clontarf Spirit Shines in Ceduna

Academy members from across South Australia recently converged on Ceduna for an unforgettable experience that went far beyond football.

The historic Koonibba Community Football Field may have hosted the games, but it was everything around the footy that left the biggest impression.

Boys from across the state began their trip with a long drive across country, arriving to a warm welcome from Ceduna Academy members and the local community. The opening night set the tone, with a barbecue dinner at the Koonibba Football Club and a screening about the club's 120-year history – the oldest surviving Aboriginal football club in Australia.

Carnival day included not just footy, but activities like preparing bush medicine, cooking kangaroo tail and damper, and engaging in health education. Younger students from the Koonibba School also joined in for a footy-themed clinic,

adding to the energy of the day.

The following day gave participants the chance to explore the West Coast's natural beauty. The boys visited Point Sinclair and Cactus Beach, cast fishing lines off the jetty, climbed sand dunes and heard from park rangers about the area's environmental significance.

The trip wrapped up with a presentation dinner at the Ceduna Sailing Club where the Clontarf Spirit Award recognised leadership and mateship.

The long drive home was filled with music, laughter and the kind of stories that stick.

More than just a carnival, the Ceduna trip gave young men the chance to meet new friends from different regions, experience new places and grow together.

Early Detection, Lasting Impact

For the fifth year in a row, Katherine Academy has partnered with Sonic Healthcare and Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service to deliver comprehensive Health Checks for academy members.

Designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, these checks play a vital role in the early detection, diagnosis and management of both physical and mental health conditions. It also helps identify chronic disease risk factors – making it a key step in closing the health gap for young Indigenous men.

Over three days this year, 61 of the Academy's 91 members – ranging from Years 7 to 12 – completed their checks. Work continues with Wurli-Wurlinjang

to ensure the remaining participants are seen before year's end.



Thank you for your support

Clontarf would like to acknowledge the following organisations for their recent commitment to support the Foundation:

- ASCA Education Foundation
- Callida Indigenous Consulting
- D & X Williamson Family Charitable Fund
- Dalara Foundation
- Evans Family Foundation
- J&M Wright Foundation
- Mick & Lyndall McCormack
- Peta & John Day
- Ray & Margaret Wilson Foundation
- RobMeree Foundation
- Samuel Watkins
- Spinifex Trust
- Sundberg Family Foundation
- The Bass Family Foundation
- The Corio Foundation
- The Gillam Family
- Bant Street Foundation
- Bellevue Gold
- BHP Mitsubishi Alliance (BMA)
- DHL Global Forwarding
- Essential Energy
- Fell Foundation
- Freight Lines Group
- FuelFix
- Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation
- John Laing Charitable Trust
- Max Services
- Protech
- Qantas Airways
- Steel Blue
- The University of Sydney
- United Forklift and Access Solutions
- Wally & Kerry Edwards
- Water Corporation
- Webuild Group
- Western Power
- Yancoal Australia
- Cargill
- D & S Group
- Facilitate Corp
- Konecranes
- Nexon Asia Pacific
- Regional Asset Maintenance Services (RAMS)
- Service Stream
- Wren Oil

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