

clontarffoundation

the QUARTERLY

December 2024



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Journeys to Remember: Year 12 End of Year Trips



**Celebrating 20
Years of Clontarf
in Geraldton**

**Rising Stars
Shine at Clontarf
State of Origin**





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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 football allows the Foundation to attract the boys to school. But it is not a sporting programme.

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 with young men from Butler College (WA), WA Minister for Education Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA and members of the Department of Education.

Message From the CEO

Welcome to the final Quarterly for 2024. It has been a whirlwind of a term, wrapping up what has been an extraordinary year for the Clontarf Foundation.



This term, the Foundation held several reunions, including one at Geraldton Academy, our third academy, which has been operating for over two decades. I was able to attend the 10 year reunion of our Mount Austin Academy (Wagga Wagga, NSW), and it was humbling to see the positive impact the program continues to have on our former academy members and their families. These reunions are a reminder of the enduring value of our work.

We also celebrated the announcement of Butler Academy (WA) at a special event led by the WA Minister for Education, Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA. Butler is one of five new academies set to open in the first term of 2025, and I'm thrilled to see our reach and impact continue to grow.

In November, I travelled to Canberra alongside James McNamee (recently appointed Chief Operations Officer) to meet with key government representatives. It was an incredibly productive experience. Beyond the formal discussions, the incidental meetings with various stakeholders reinforced the respect and recognition Clontarf holds nationally.

Speaking of government, I was moved by the South Australian Parliament's recent bipartisan discussion about Clontarf's achievements. Members from both sides spoke at length about the program, highlighting the tangible differences we're making in communities.

The acknowledgment we received in Canberra and Adelaide is a testament to the incredible outcomes our academies and staff are delivering locally across the country.

On a sad note, we recently lost one of our staff

members from Tweed River Academy (NSW), Bradley Smith. Brad had been with Clontarf for only a short time, starting in October this year. Despite this, he connected with the academy swiftly and developed strong bonds. He was passionate and enthusiastic about his work, and a big influence on the boys. Our thoughts are with Brad's family, friends and the Tweed River Academy community during this difficult time.

As we close out the year, it's worth taking a moment to reflect on the milestones we've reached together. In 2024, Clontarf marked record enrolments, expanded its footprint to more communities, and strengthened partnerships with schools, governments and partners. Most importantly, we saw thousands of academy members thrive - achieving personal and educational goals that lay the foundation for bright futures. These achievements are not just numbers; they represent stories of resilience, determination and success, and they belong to everyone who has been part of this journey.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are preparing for another year of growth, with new academies opening and a target enrolment of 12,500 boys by year's end. To make this a reality, we will need continued support and advocacy from our partners and champions. Your voices and efforts are critical to enabling Clontarf to expand and sustain its work in transforming lives. I hope we can count on your help as we take on the challenges and opportunities of the year ahead.

That's all from me for the year. Thank you for your ongoing support of Clontarf. I look forward to what we can achieve together in 2025.

- Gerard Neesham OAM, CEO



Inaugural members of the Midwest Academy (Geraldton, WA), family members and supporters gathered to celebrate 20 years of Clontarf in Geraldton.

Clontarf Celebrates 20 Years in Geraldton

The Clontarf academies in Geraldton recently marked an extraordinary milestone: 20 years of supporting young Aboriginal men in the community.

The celebration gathered alumni, partners and supporters for an inspiring evening, where attendees celebrated the profound impact Clontarf has made since its establishment in 2004.

Throughout the evening, heartfelt speeches underscored the invaluable role of partners and community partners who have been instrumental in this journey.

The event featured a formal dinner, allowing attendees to reconnect and reflect on their legacy and impact over the past two decades. Alumni, staff and key partners shared personal stories of how Clontarf's mentorship and opportunities have positively shaped lives and strengthened the community. A lively "On-the-Couch" session,

hosted by Geraldton Academy Director Justin Mallard, provided entertaining and insightful reflections from three alumni on their time at Clontarf, including memorable camp experiences, day-to-day support and the career and educational paths they pursued after graduation.

As the evening came to a close, the excitement for Clontarf's future in Geraldton was undeniable. The mission to create lasting change for young Aboriginal men remains as strong as ever, with a commitment to inspiring and uplifting the next generation.

The staff and boys thank everyone who attended and supported this unforgettable milestone celebration.



Nhulunbuy Twins Setting the Standard

Luke and Charlie, twin brothers and senior students from the Nhulunbuy Academy (NT), are setting an inspiring example through their commitment to education, employment and future pathways.

Both students are active members of the Nhulunbuy community, balancing part-time roles at Woolworths with their academic responsibilities.

Luke has also taken on a school-based apprenticeship with a local building company, working two days a week while managing his other commitments.

"Juggling part-time work at Woolworths, an apprenticeship and school hasn't been easy," Luke said.

Despite the challenges, he has shown remarkable resilience and dedication. With support from his family, school and Clontarf, Luke has embraced the demands of his busy schedule.

Charlie has focused on maintaining a broad range of school subjects to keep his options open as he plans his post-Year 12 pathway. Although he remains undecided about his future, his commitment to his education ensures he will be well prepared for whatever direction he chooses. Like Luke, Charlie skilfully balances his part-time work with his school responsibilities, demonstrating strong time management and perseverance.

Both Luke and Charlie are exemplary role models within the academy. They consistently participate in activities, display positive attitudes and lead by example, inspiring those around them with their dedication and leadership.



Photo credit: Jason Ierace / Reload+co



Journeys to Remember: Year 12 End of Year Trips

Each year, Clontarf Foundation's 'End of Year Major Trips' become a pivotal moment for Year 12 students, providing a powerful incentive to maintain school attendance and stay engaged through to the end.

For many young men, these journeys mark the first time they have travelled interstate, turning the trips into more than just excursions - they are transformative experiences that broaden horizons and celebrate perseverance.

From exploring new cities to sharing stories and achievements with Clontarf's partners, these trips encapsulate both adventure and growth.

Encouraging Attendance and Completion

The journey to finishing Year 12 can be challenging for many students, with various social, economic and personal factors influencing their school experience. End of year trips provide a compelling reason for senior academy members to maintain consistent attendance and stay engaged through to completion. This tangible incentive supports Clontarf's broader mission of helping young men overcome obstacles and achieve educational milestones. By offering a clear and exciting goal to work towards, these trips create a sense of purpose and reinforce the value of seeing commitments through to the end.



Rewarding Engagement and Effort

Major trips are not just an incentive but a meaningful reward for dedication, hard work and resilience throughout the school year. Clontarf recognises that academy members put in significant effort to stay engaged in their education and extracurricular programs. Trips are a way of showing appreciation for their achievements, celebrating how far they have come, and acknowledging that their commitment has been noticed and valued. This positive reinforcement encourages younger boys to stay on a similar path and sets a precedent of hard work.

Expanding Horizons

For many students, especially those from remote or regional areas, interstate travel can be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Major trips offer a chance to experience life beyond their hometowns and comfort zones, broadening their worldviews and sparking curiosity about what lies beyond familiar borders. This exposure can be transformative, as students gain insights into different cultures, environments and ways of life. These experiences create a sense of wonder and inspire aspirations that might not have been considered before, reinforcing the idea that their futures can hold boundless opportunities.



Building Confidence and Connections

The trips are designed not just for exploration but for meaningful interaction. Academy members participate in a variety of activities that encourage them to step outside their comfort zones, whether through team challenges, outdoor excursions or presentations to partners. These moments build bolster self-confidence and teach important social skills. The connections made during the trip can lead to lasting relationships that provide support and encouragement well after the boys have completed their schooling. These experiences help academy members realise that they are part of a larger network that believes in their potential and celebrates their achievements.

Showcasing Success and Stories

An integral part of these trips is the opportunity for participants to meet Clontarf partners and share presentations about their academies. These presentations highlight their achievements, both as individuals and as a group, showcasing personal stories of growth, resilience and success. By articulating their experiences and celebrating their progress in front of supportive audiences, the boys develop public speaking skills and confidence in their ability to represent themselves and their communities. This exchange is also vital for maintaining strong partnerships and illustrating the tangible impact of Clontarf's support.



A Taste of the Action

Eastern Goldfields and Girrawheen Academies (WA) celebrated their Year 12 graduates with an action-packed Gold Coast trip. Highlights included theme park rides, shopping, an AFLW game and a tour of the Gold Coast Suns facilities. The group also participated in beach clean-ups, trained with Tweed River Academy and presented to BCF staff, showcasing their professionalism and teamwork.

The adventure ended with a Story Bridge climb, offering stunning views of Brisbane - a perfect conclusion to an remarkable journey.



Tweed River and South Grafton Academies (NSW) enjoyed a vibrant nine-day trip to Perth. Highlights included snorkelling and cycling on Rottnest Island, exploring Fremantle's Prison Tunnels, and a Pinnacles tour featuring sand dunes and 4WD fun. The group swam with seals at Rockingham, toured Optus Stadium, tackled an escape room and trained with Fremantle Academy. Evenings were filled with bowling, karaoke and games, culminating in a grand buffet at the Crown's Atrium Restaurant. The trip was packed with valuable experiences, camaraderie and a glimpse into WA's beauty and culture.

Broken Hill, Endeavour and Matraville Academies (NSW) united for an epic Northern Territory trip. After arriving in Darwin, the group swam at Florence Falls in Litchfield National Park before camping in Katherine. Highlights included the Mataranka thermal pools and local hot springs, as well as bonding over shared meals and stories under the stars. In Jabiru, they connected with the local academy over games and laughter. A standout moment was cruising the East Alligator River and stepping onto Arnhem Land - a truly unforgettable experience for all.





Teams from across Australia united for the 2024 Clontarf State of Origin Series, showcasing their skills, leadership and educational achievements in a celebration of football and community.

Alumni: Richie Harte



Richie Harte joined the Newton Moore Academy (Bunbury, WA) in Year 10 and graduated in Year 12, describing his time in the program as transformative.

"The support I received while in the academy was incredible," Richie reflects.

"I had many personal issues during those years in school, and the mentors always supported me. It was nice to know that the academy and everyone involved were there to help us through life, not just school."

Clontarf also equipped Richie with valuable life skills, including public speaking, which he continues to use as an alumni guest speaker at Clontarf events.

Now a Trainer and Assessor at Qube in Bunbury, Richie loves the variety his role offers: "I operate the biggest and coolest machinery. I could be operating a ship loader one day, maybe one of our harbour cranes the day after, and even a forklift, excavator or bulldozer the next."

Richie's advice for current Clontarf members? "Live life to your full potential and treat people the way you want to be treated! Be engaged while in school and take in as much as you can, but don't forget to have fun. The academy is there to support you and help you succeed in life."

Rising Stars Shine at Clontarf State of Origin

The 2024 Clontarf Foundation State of Origin Series has been run and won.

Building on the success of the 2023 carnival, four teams from Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory were selected to represent their academies, schools, families and communities on the big stage in Melbourne.

All squad members had shown outstanding sporting prowess to make their respective teams, proving their footballing bona fides across the first three terms of 2024 in countless before-school training sessions and multiple local and regional selection matches.

Not one participant was selected on football prowess alone, however.

WA Operations Manager Tony Delaney, who travelled with the WA contingent, said the key to the selection process was engagement in education, including keeping positive attendance and behaviour records at school, as well as taking on active leadership roles within their academies.

"We like to look at the individuals in a holistic way and if the boys aren't at school, not doing the right things, they miss out on these big-ticket items, but we are really fortunate to have the best 22 players out there, having a real crack," he said.



The result was 100 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders coming together at Victoria Park for a high-level showcase of Clontarf football, and a very public celebration of their educational efforts in 2024.

Day one of the carnival saw a high volume of footy being played, as the teams sorted out their rankings through the round-robin fixtures.

Day two represented the finals matches, with Victoria taking on NT in the showdown for bronze, and WA and SA playing off for the trophy. Both games were broadcast back to communities thanks to Kayo/Fox Sports.

Congratulations to the WA team who came away eventual winners.

That afternoon, the group was taken through the Collingwood Football Club facilities by club legend, Leon Davis, before congregating for the All-Australian Presentation Dinner.

Many thanks to all of the Clontarf partners who volunteered their time across the carnival, and particularly to Woolworths who kept the teams fed the entire time.

Congratulations to all academy members who participated – we know the future is in good hands.





St Brendan's Academy (Yeppoon, QLD) member Evander Ghee's dream of playing basketball overseas is being made a reality with the support of his Clontarf academy peers.

Hoop Dreams and the Power of Community

At the start of Term 4, St Brendan's Academy (Yeppoon, QLD) member Evander Ghee received life-changing news - an invitation to join the Brian Kerle BK Basketball Taiwan Tour in December 2024 and the Strive Australia Tour to the United States in July 2025.

These prestigious opportunities reflect his unwavering commitment to basketball and his determination to excel on and off the court.

Evander's basketball journey began at age 12. Over the years, his strong work ethic, discipline and positive attitude have helped him thrive in a sport that demands resilience and teamwork. These traits have also earned him the respect of his peers and mentors. However, when the financial demands of participating in international tours became apparent, Evander realised he needed a practical solution to ensure his dream became a reality without placing undue pressure on his family.

In collaboration with Clontarf staff, Evander devised a fundraising plan. Together, they organised a school carwash and a Bunnings sausage sizzle. The carwash, held over five weeks, saw academy members wash more than 25 staff cars, raising \$1,000. The sausage sizzle was another major success, generating an additional \$1,000 to help cover the costs of the tours.

The fundraising initiatives achieved more than just financial results - they brought the school community together. Academy members volunteered their time, demonstrating the power of teamwork and the rewards of supporting a worthy cause. Through their efforts, participants gained valuable life skills, including responsibility, collaboration and empathy. The experience reinforced the importance of rallying behind one another to achieve shared goals.

Evander's story is a testament to the power of initiative, resilience and the strength of community support. It exemplifies the values of the Clontarf Foundation, where young people are empowered to strive for their best and reach new heights.

Clontarf is proud to support Evander's journey and hopes his story inspires others to aim high, work hard and embrace the transformative power of community. His success highlights what can be accomplished through dedication, collaboration and an unshakable belief in the pursuit of dreams.



Staff: Azariah Gutchen



Azariah has been part of the Clontarf Foundation for six and a half years, holding multiple roles.

He started as an Operations Officer at Trinity Bay Academy (Cairns, QLD) and later served as Associate Director and Director at Yarrabah, Woree and Palm Beach Currumbin Academies.

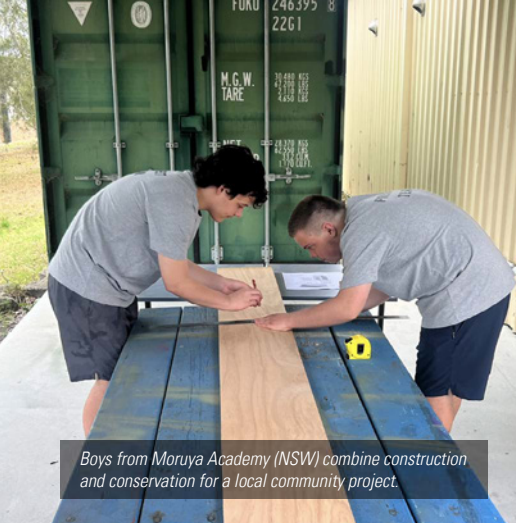
Now, as Recruitment Manager, he oversees recruitment in WA, NT, SA and VIC, working closely with Regional Managers to identify top candidates. His responsibilities include facilitating interviews, liaising with potential staff and connecting with key contacts to support future recruitment.

Azariah is motivated by the positive work Clontarf does in communities, and to help maintain its high standards, he works hard to the right staff, through managing expressions of interest and connecting with industries that can support recruitment.

In his role, he values strong communication, organisation, initiative, forward-thinking and a growth mindset.

Some of his most memorable Clontarf moments include helping boys achieve milestones, like driver's licenses and first jobs, and family barbecues.

He holds a Bachelor of Sport and Exercise Science and enjoys the gym, beach, reading and spending time with family and friends.



Boys from Moruya Academy (NSW) combine construction and conservation for a local community project.



Moruya Boys Thrive in Conservation Project

Moruya Academy (NSW) has launched the Thrive program, an initiative combining environmental conservation with skill development.

Led by the school's construction teacher, Mr Edwards, the program sees Clontarf boys building nesting boxes for endangered local wildlife, including possums and bird species.

Running for half a day each fortnight, Thrive provides hands-on construction experience while teaching the importance of supporting local ecosystems. The nesting boxes will be placed in strategic locations across the Eurobodalla area, creating safe habitats for animals facing threats like habitat loss and environmental changes.

Mr Edwards praised the program, saying, "This is a fantastic opportunity for our students to apply their skills while making a real difference in the community."

The project aligns with Clontarf Foundation's focus on practical learning and community engagement, encouraging academy members to take pride in their contributions.

In addition to technical skills, the boys are developing teamwork, problem-solving abilities and a deeper appreciation for conservation. They also gain confidence in working on projects with real-world impact, setting the stage for broader aspirations and a sense of responsibility for their community.

With enthusiasm running high after the first session, the Thrive program is set to make a lasting impact on local wildlife, the environment and the personal growth of its participants.

Clontarf 101 - Academy Awards Nights

Academy Awards nights celebrate academy members' achievements throughout the year, with categories focusing on school attendance, Clontarf engagement and accomplishments in sport and employment.

These nights bring the community together, showcasing academy members in front of family, the school community and corporate partners. Though formal in presentation, with academy members dressed to the nines, these events are filled with acknowledgement, reflection, congratulations and fun.

Farewelling the graduating class is always a highlight, often an emotionally charged moment for families, academy members, school staff and Clontarf staff alike. Academy members play a key role in the event, serving as MCs and performers, and giving tours of academy facilities, while also handling behind-the-scenes tasks like setup, food

preparation and promotion.

As well as highlighting achievements, these nights allow academy staff to thank the many individuals, groups and organisations who collaborate to support academy members' educational, sporting, and employment journeys.



Thank you for your support

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

- AngloGold Ashanti
- Arc Infrastructure
- Austin Engineering
- Bellevue Gold
- BMD Group
- Citic Pacific Mining, Sino Iron Ore Project
- City of Bunbury
- Elemera
- Engenco
- Hawaiian Group
- Jadestone Energy
- Lycopodium
- Mount Gibson Mining
- New Town Toyota
- Pipeline Technics
- PPE Group
- SeaLink Marine & Tourism
- Stadiacorp Facility Services
- Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
- The PPE Group
- Topdrill
- Transit Systems
- Tronox Management PTY LTD
- Tronox Pigment Bunbury LTD
- Westug
- Woodside

Donations & Workplace Giving

There are a significant number of individuals who support the Clontarf Foundation through donations and workplace giving programs.

We are very appreciative and thank you for your ongoing support. If you would like to donate directly, please [follow this link](#)

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