

clontarffoundation

# the QUARTERLY

October 2025



clontarf  
foundation



## Alumni Celebrated at NSW Parliament



## Community Unites For Ross Kelly Cup

## From Parliament to the Playing Field





Gerard with academy members in 2000, Clontarf's first year - marking the beginning of the Foundation's work to change young lives through engagement in education.

## FEATURE

Alumni Celebrated in NSW..... 5

## HIGHLIGHTS

From Parliament to Playing Field... 3

Woolworths Roll Up Sleeves..... 3

Pathways to Success..... 6

Clontarf Experiences..... 6

Ross Kelly Cup..... 7

Staff Profile – Joel Parsons..... 7

Tomorrow's Health Leaders..... 8

20 Year Broome Anniversary..... 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.

## Message From the CEO

*Welcome to the latest Quarterly for 2025. It has been a momentous quarter for the Foundation, one marked by new opportunities and the beginning of a significant personal transition for me.*



**After a rewarding 26-year journey establishing and growing the Foundation into the extraordinary organisation it is today, I have advised Chair Tom O'Leary and our Board of my intention to retire as CEO of the Clontarf Foundation in mid-2026**

It has been the greatest privilege of my life to work alongside so many incredible people to build Clontarf and to help improve the lives of thousands of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men across Australia. From our humble beginnings with a single academy in Perth in 2000, to the 162 academies we now operate nationwide, we have never lost sight of our purpose: to improve the outlook for young men and provide them with the same opportunities that many others take for granted.

Today, close to 12,000 academy members attend school regularly, participate in activities that build their confidence and skills, and work towards transitioning into employment or further study after Year 12. These outcomes are the result of countless staff, partners, schools and community members who believe in the program and the young men it supports.

While I will be stepping down as CEO and from the Board, I will continue to serve the Foundation in a part-time Founder role for a period, supporting the incoming CEO and leadership team to ensure a smooth transition. The Board has been working for some time on a detailed succession plan and will now commence a formal

recruitment process. I am confident this will secure Clontarf's long-term future and enable it to continue making a profound difference in the lives of young men across the country.

Reflecting on the term just gone, it has been an incredibly busy and rewarding period with many memorable events across Australia. In Brisbane, the Queensland Cup Carnival was launched at Queensland Parliament with the tremendous support of Treasurer David Janetzki MP and Trevor Watts MP.

In Sydney, an alumni celebration was held at New South Wales Parliament, hosted by Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty David Harris MP and Shadow Minister Felicity Wilson MP. The event was attended by supporters including Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Premier Chris Minns MP, Ministers, Members of Parliament, alumni, parents and friends of the Foundation.

Another highlight this quarter was the completion of an independent evaluation of our program by Social Ventures Australia (SVA), supported by long-time partner Rio Tinto. The evaluation provided outstanding findings and again confirmed the significant, positive impact Clontarf continues to have on the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. We are deeply grateful to SVA for their rigorous work and to Rio Tinto for making this project possible.

That's all from me for this edition. Thank you again for your continued support.



Boys from across Queensland were joined by Treasurer Hon. David Janetzki and Trevor Watts MP at Parliament House.

## From Parliament to the Playing Field - Queensland Cup

**More than 350 Clontarf academy members from across Queensland travelled to Brisbane in Term 3 for the annual Queensland Cup Rugby League Carnival.**

Two representatives from each academy visited Queensland Parliament for a special event hosted by Treasurer Hon. David Janetzki MP and Trevor Watts MP. The boys were welcomed on the Speaker's Green, heard from both parliamentarians, toured Parliament and met other members including Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Fiona Simpson MP. The visit also served as an early introduction to the Queensland Cup, offering insight into leadership and state-level decision making.

Meanwhile, the remaining academy members toured Queensland University of Technology, exploring facilities including the Esports space, participating in fitness testing, and learning about study pathways

and future career opportunities.

The following day, 23 academy teams competed in the Queensland Cup. Palm Beach Currumbin Academy claimed the Cup Final over Kirwan, while Goondiwindi won the Shield Final. For the first time, a representative fixture featured North Queensland against South Queensland, providing a high-standard showcase for some of the state's most talented academy footballers.

Reflecting on the experience, Woree Academy member Julian Addo said, "It makes me feel included, makes me feel more confident," while his Clontarf mentors highlighted his exceptional values and strong sense of mateship.

Clontarf partners attended to support the day, ensuring the carnival ran smoothly and demonstrating the strong relationships Clontarf maintains across Queensland.

Now a key fixture on the Queensland calendar, the Queensland Cup provides boys with sport, education, culture and leadership opportunities in one major event.



## Woolworths Team Rolls Up Their Sleeves for Give Back Day

**In early September, Clontarf academies across the country took part in Woolworths at Work's annual Give Back Day – a national initiative where Woolworths staff step away from their day-to-day roles to volunteer in the community.**

For Clontarf, it was an opportunity to highlight the positive impact of the program, while giving Woolworths employees the chance to connect directly with our boys.

At Tumbi Umbi Academy on the NSW Central Coast, Woolworths team members and academy members rolled up their sleeves for a morning of gardening, planting and revitalising the school grounds. By the end of the session, the campus had been given a well-deserved freshen-up, but the highlight was the conversations, laughter and teamwork that took place along the way.

At Lake Illawarra Academy (NSW), the Woolworths team joined staff and boys

in preparing and serving lunch for 100% attendance achievers, giving recognition to those who had committed fully to their education that week. Staff also had the chance to hear personal stories from participants, highlighting the program's role in shaping education and life pathways.

At Endeavour Academy (Caringbah, NSW), Woolworths team members helped clean shared spaces, organise storage areas, wash the academy bus and cook a barbecue lunch. Their hard work lifted the atmosphere and created a more welcoming environment for the boys. A camera crew was also on site, with several senior students proudly

stepping forward to be interviewed and share what Clontarf means to them.

Clontarf thanks Woolworths at Work and all their team members for the time, energy and enthusiasm they gave right across the country.





# Clontarf's New South Wales Alumni Celebrated at NSW Parliament

**New South Wales Governor Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, her husband Mr Dennis Wilson and Premier the Hon. Chris Minns MP were among the distinguished guests who attended a special event at NSW Parliament on Thursday 7 August celebrating the Clontarf Foundation's impact in New South Wales since 2012.**

Held in the iconic Fountain Court and co-hosted by Aboriginal Affairs Minister Hon. David Harris MP and Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ms Felicity Wilson MP, the event brought together more than 100 guests including parliamentarians, corporate partners, alumni, families and supporters from across the state.

Several people gave speeches including Acting Education Minister Hon. Courtney Houssos MLC (representing Premier Minns), Mr Harris, Ms Wilson, Clontarf Deputy CEO Craig Brierty and Kelly, mother of an Endeavour Academy member completing Year 12, who spoke on behalf of the other mothers in attendance.

"The positive changes I have witnessed in my son are profound," she told the audience. "He has developed resilience, confidence and a strong sense of direction. Clontarf has given him the tools to succeed and the mentoring he has received has been

both meaningful and reassuring. I know that many other parents across the state share this same sense of gratitude and pride.

"The impact also extends beyond our sons. Since Clontarf became part of Endeavour, the school and broader community have seen stronger relationships, greater understanding and a more positive environment for all. This is why I believe the program is so important – not just for individual young men, but for schools and communities across New South Wales."

The audience also heard from Narromine Academy alumnus, Jordan Itoya whose full speech can be found on page 5.

Clontarf Deputy CEO Craig Brierty was on hand to thank those who have supported the Foundation's growth and success across the state.

"We're so thankful for our relationship with Members of Parliament and the NSW Department of Education right across the state," Craig said. "We have tremendous bipartisan support and strong partnerships with schools and communities that make the program work.

"There is enormous demand for more Clontarf across the east coast. Every new academy means more young Aboriginal men staying in school, finishing Year 12 and

moving into meaningful employment. That's what drives us, and that's why the continued support of government, schools and partners is so important."

## New South Wales at a Glance

**4,570** NSW Academy members enrolled in 2025

**370** NSW Year 12s enrolled in 2025

**197** Clontarf staff members in NSW

**2,007** NSW academy members completed Year 12

**94%** NSW Year 12s achieved their graduation certificate



Jordan Itoya, pictured far right, addresses the audience at NSW Parliament alongside fellow Clontarf alumni from across the state.



## From Small Town Roots to Big City Dreams: Jordan Itoya's Story

2019 Narromine Academy alumnus Jordan Itoya was invited to speak at the NSW Parliament event on behalf of the more than 2,000 young men across New South Wales who have completed Year 12 while enrolled in the Clontarf program. Jordan shared his personal journey – from a quiet boy growing up in Narromine's small-town community to becoming a KPMG consultant and university graduate – and reflected on how Clontarf gave him the structure, belief and brotherhood to succeed.



"My name is Jordan Itoya, a Wiradjuri man from the small town of Narromine in the central west of NSW, and an alumni of the Clontarf Foundation.

I graduated from Narromine High School in 2019, moved to Sydney and began my studies at the University of New South Wales, graduating in 2023 with a Bachelor's of Social Research and Policy, majoring in Politics and International Relations.

While at university, I worked part-time as a student para planner at the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, and in my last year I began working as a research assistant under Professor Heidi Norman at the University of Technology Sydney.

I currently work as a consultant at KPMG Australia in their Indigenous Services department, while serving as a member of the inaugural ABC youth advisory committee, and the Canterbury-Bankstown Councils First People's advisory committee. None of this would have been possible without having an amazing support system.

As a young quiet black kid living in a small town, growing up all I ever wanted was to fit into the crowd. Being in a small town meant you know everyone and everyone knew you, which isn't always a good thing. Throughout my childhood and well into my teenage

years, racism and discrimination crept into being a big part of my life and one of my first life experiences on my journey to succeeding within, and for, myself.

I'd like to talk a little bit about my experience with the Clontarf Foundation and how they helped me excel at school, university and my professional career.

Before Clontarf, school wasn't a place I looked forward to going to every day. Like many Aboriginal boys before me, I didn't see school as something made for us, let alone a place where we could thrive and stand out with academic achievements. But everything changed for me in 2018 when Clontarf was introduced at Narromine High School.

***"Clontarf wasn't just a program. It became a second home."***

Through it, we found a reason to come to school every day. We found mentors who cared, mates who had our back and could relate to each others situations, and a structure that gave us purpose. Suddenly, school wasn't something we had to survive, it became a place where we could succeed.

Before Clontarf, it was rare to see Aboriginal boys finish Year 12. Many didn't even consider it. But with Clontarf, something

powerful changed. My whole school started showing up, working hard and planning for life after school. We weren't just ticking boxes – we were building our futures.

Our group stayed strong. We supported each other, challenged each other, and celebrated every win together. We didn't just finish school – we grew into young men ready to step into the world with confidence.

One of the biggest differences was the way the school community responded to us. Through Clontarf, we felt at home. We were respected. With the guidance of our mentors, teachers began to expect more from us because they believed in us, and that made us believe in ourselves.

We know Clontarf works, because we lived it, we are proof that Clontarf works. We saw the change not only in our own lives but in our entire school. Clontarf gave us structure, pride and identity. It gave us the tools to succeed, and the belief that we could. And we all have a lot in our lives to thank Clontarf for, especially me.

Every young Aboriginal man deserves that same chance. Every school should have a Clontarf academy. Because when young men are supported, believed in and given a place where they belong, there's no limit to what they can achieve."



Academy members from Christies Beach, Wirreanda and Woodville joined corporate partners on the Kangaroo Island Experience in South Australia.

## Pathways to Success



**In September, Year 12 academy members from Palmerston 10–12 Academy attended an employment forum camp at Charles Darwin University (CDU), connecting with more than 30 industry partners across sectors including construction, electrical, plumbing, retail and logistics.**

Across two days, the young men impressed with their confidence and professionalism – introducing themselves, asking thoughtful questions and engaging in meaningful conversations that showed their readiness for work.

The camp gave participants a firsthand look at career options and what employers value. Many exchanged contact details with business representatives, creating real opportunities for apprenticeships, traineeships and jobs in 2026.

Alongside professional insights, the experience strengthened key skills such as teamwork, adaptability and confidence.

The boys carried themselves with confidence and enthusiasm, showing genuine commitment to their education and a clear focus on what comes next.

## Shared Experiences, Lasting Impact

**From the rugged coastlines of Kangaroo Island to the red heart of Central Australia, these multi-day adventures connected partners, staff and academy members through shared experiences of culture, community and challenge.**

This year, Clontarf's immersive Experiences once again gave corporate partners a firsthand look at the Foundation's impact across Australia. So far, 78 partners have taken part in trips around the country, with two still to come, up from 64 last year, reflecting the growing enthusiasm among supporters to connect directly with academy members.

In Far North Queensland, guests joined the Western Cape Academy boys in Weipa and Mapoon for training sessions, cultural tours and an unforgettable night of camping at Cullen Point. The journey ended in Cairns with an alumni dinner and a spirited mental health fun run along the Esplanade.

The East Kimberley Experience showcased the beauty of the north, with guests camping at El Questro Station, swimming in Zebedee Springs, cruising Lake Argyle and casting a line for barramundi. Days began with training alongside the Kununurra Academy boys, while evenings were spent sharing stories around the campfire under starlit skies.

In Central Australia, participants travelled from Alice Springs to Kings Canyon and Uluru, taking in the region's breathtaking landscapes and rich cultural heritage. A highlight was the Kings Canyon Rim Walk, followed by a sunset over Uluru — a fitting and inspiring conclusion to the journey.

The Gascoyne Ningaloo Experience took partners north to Carnarvon and Quobba Station for a mix of ocean adventures and teamwork challenges. Snorkelling, surfing and beachside cooking competitions made

for a fun-filled few days that reflected the spirit of the Clontarf program.

Back over on the east coast, the Northern NSW and South Coast Experiences offered unique windows into regional academies, combining stunning natural backdrops with meaningful engagement. Whether hiking through national parks, meeting Elders or sharing a meal with alumni, participants left with a deeper appreciation of the environments the young men grow up in.

Further south, the Kangaroo Island Experience brought together academy members from Christies Beach, Wirreanda and Woodville with 14 corporate partners for a week of adventure, teamwork and leadership. From camp cooking and cultural activities to exploring the island's rugged coastline, the group built strong new friendships and lasting memories.

Clontarf would like to thank all attendees for their genuine energy and enthusiasm throughout the trip.

***"I came into this experience thinking I knew what the Foundation did. I left with so much more knowledge and gratitude of the work the Clontarf staff do for the boys choosing to be a part of this family. The genuine respect and energy these boys have, for their peers, staff and partners is truly remarkable."***

Sarina Hobson, Head of Quality  
- Compliance and Sustainability,  
Blackwoods



Clontarf alumni Mustafa Al-Badre and Marty Jeffrey address the audience during the Ross Kelly Cup Dinner in Sydney.



## Community Unites For Ross Kelly Cup

**More than 1,150 people packed the ballroom for the 2025 Ross Kelly Cup Dinner – Clontarf’s biggest event of the year – held on the eve of the annual NSW carnival.**

The night brought together academy members, staff, alumni and supporters from across the country to acknowledge the achievements of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and recognise the partnerships that make Clontarf’s work possible.

Now in its 13th year, the Ross Kelly Cup Dinner is a key moment on the Clontarf calendar. It celebrates the young men participating in the carnival while showcasing the impact of the program across schools and communities nationwide.

This year’s dinner was the largest to date, with more than 850 academy members, 150 staff and 150 partners in attendance.

The evening was opened by Bidwill Academy members Connor McWhinney and Robert Owens-Driscoll with a moving Acknowledgement of Country, followed by a warm welcome from Masters of Ceremonies Mustafa Al-Badre and Marty Jeffrey. Both young men are proud Clontarf alumni and played a central role in guiding the audience through the night.

Clontarf board member William ‘Smiley’ Johnstone reflected on his pivotal role in bringing Clontarf to New South Wales, emphasising the program’s growth, the importance of shared responsibility, and the impact it continues to have on young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men across the country.

“The Clontarf program is a good example that if we all pull together as Aussies, we can make positive change for Aboriginal

lives, families and our country,” Smiley said.

Deputy CEO Craig Brierty delivered the closing address, expressing his gratitude to everyone in the room and the many more who continue to support Clontarf’s mission around the country.

The night concluded with a live performance by country music legend, Col Hardy.

Many of Clontarf’s long-standing partners were also in the room to meet academy members, share stories and offer encouragement. Suzi Hannan from Qantas said the event left a lasting impression.

“You created a space where everyone felt connected, proud and reminded of why we do this work,” she said.

“It was more than just a dinner – it was a celebration of the relationships that have been built, and the incredible impact the Clontarf program continues to have.”

The Ross Kelly Cup is named in honour of inaugural Chairman, Ross Kelly AM who retired in 2023 after 23 years of service to the Foundation and community.



## Staff: Joel Parsons



**“Every day we’re at work, we’re improving the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men around the country.”**

Joel’s Clontarf journey began in 2016 as Academy Director at Singleton Academy, where his passion for helping young men realise their potential quickly became evident. Since then, he has advanced through roles including Development Officer, Greater Sydney Regional Manager and NSW Operations Manager, before stepping into his current position as General Manager – Development.

In this role, Joel works with schools, education departments and communities interested in establishing new academies, ensuring each one is founded on strong partnerships and a shared commitment to improving outcomes.

“Knowing and understanding that you are part of something much bigger than what’s happening in your own community is very empowering,” he said. “It reminds you why we do what we do.”

Before joining Clontarf, Joel spent a decade in the NSW Police Force as a Youth Case Manager, where he developed a deep understanding of the challenges facing young people and the importance of consistent guidance and support.

Outside of work, he enjoys spending time with family, relaxing at the beach, watching live sport and cheering on his favourite footy team.



Left to Right: Tommy Brown, Jaxson Wyman, Max Bowman-Conlon and Nate Muller from St Brendan's Academy (Yeppoon, QLD).

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.

## Tomorrow's Health Leaders

Four proud St Brendan's Clontarf Academy (Yeppoon, QLD) members are preparing to enter the health sector after graduation.

Jaxson Wyman, this year's boarding captain, is admired for his calm presence and natural leadership and is aiming to become an Occupational Therapist. His ability to connect with others and lead with humility marks him as a future health professional who will make a real difference.

Max Bowman Conlon, inspired by the positive influence of social workers in his own life, plans to pursue a career in social work to support others through life's challenges.

"Clontarf has taught us to be leaders and role models. We want to bring that back home," said Max.

Nate Muller, with outstanding academic

results, is heading to Townsville to study physiotherapy, combining his love of health, sport and conversation, although if he can't stop yarning at the end of each session, he'll be paying patients instead of charging them!

Tommy Brown, from the Woorabinda community, hopes to become a nurse and with a grin 'so infectious it might need its own PPE', his future patients are in for a treat.

Together, Max, Tommy, Nate and Jaxson will become vital Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian health professionals, helping fill gaps in male representation and giving back to the communities they call home.

## Thank you for your support

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

- Aggreko
- Arafura Rare Earths Limited
- BAE Systems
- Bank of Queensland
- Barmingo
- BHP Copper SA
- Blacktown Workers Club
- Brian & Virginia McNamee Foundation
- CCIWA
- City of Mandurah
- Clublinks
- DCI Group
- Facilitate Corp
- Fortescue
- High Grade Mechanical
- Inland Rail
- NSW ClubGRANTS
- Roshana Care Group
- SEE Civil
- South32
- Sutherland District Trade Union Club
- TGI Sport
- Wesfarmers
- Western Rock Lobster Council
- Whitehaven Coal

## Broome Academy 20 Year Anniversary

Broome and St Mary's Academies marked their 20-year anniversary with a celebration in September.

More than 40 alumni from 2007 to 2023 attended, alongside community members, past staff and corporate partners including Rio Tinto, Woolworths, Reece Group and Mt Gibson Iron.

Guests included Member for Durack Hon. Melissa Price MP, Member for Kimberley Ms Davina D'Anna MLA, and the principals of Broome SHS and St Mary's College.

The night featured a moving keynote from 2016 alumnus Khan John, now a Woodside engineer and business owner, who shared how Clontarf's support shaped his journey. Three alumni joined an 'on the couch' session, reflecting on the program's legacy, while a video montage of photos and messages from former staff and principals proved a highlight.



**Clontarf Foundation Central Office**  
 McKay Street,  
 Bentley WA 6102  
 (08) 9356 2500  
[contact@clontarffoundation.com.au](mailto:contact@clontarffoundation.com.au)  
[www.clontarf.org.au](http://www.clontarf.org.au)

