

clontarffoundation

# the QUARTERLY

January 2026



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foundation



## Clontarf Reaches New Heights in 2025



**Racing to the Finish Line at the Top End Billy Cart Derby**

**Ten Years of Clontarf at Endeavour**





Gerard headed to Cairns for Trinity Bay Academy's end of year awards night in November, joining family, friends to celebrate the graduation of a record number of Year 12 boys.

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## Message From the CEO



*Welcome to the first Quarterly for 2026. The end of 2025 concluded at a frenetic pace, with awards nights, end-of-year trips, academy anniversaries, carnivals and strong partner activity rounding out Term 4.*

**I had the privilege of attending several awards nights and academy anniversaries across the country. Each visit was a genuinely heartening experience. Spending time with academy members past and present, their families, alumni, Clontarf staff, teachers, principals and members of the wider community was both grounding and deeply rewarding.**

The term capped off a momentous year for the Foundation. We achieved record enrolments and record Year 12 completions. Engagement in employment reached its highest level for both graduates and current academy members. We also recorded our strongest results to date in driver's licence attainment, learner's permits and logbook progression, alongside our most active year of partner engagement.

These outcomes reflect the commitment and professionalism of our staff. They are the cornerstone of the Foundation and the reason young men choose to turn up, stay engaged and keep moving forward. I thank them sincerely for the standards they set every day.

And to the young men themselves, 2025 was an outstanding year. Their strong participation in the program and school reflected persistence, routine and growing confidence, and should be congratulated for their efforts.

Our academies were also supported by dedicated school communities. Teachers,

principals and support staff continued to back the program, welcomed our staff and partners and encouraged families and community members to be involved.

I also thank our partners nationwide, whose support allowed our organisation to continue to operate and grow. In particular, I acknowledge the Wesfarmers Board for visiting our Fremantle Academy in Term 4. Wesfarmers is the Foundation's longest-serving corporate partner, supporting Clontarf since 2001 and playing a pivotal role in our growth as a national organisation. I also recognise retiring Chair Michael Chaney AO, whose early support helped lay the foundations for our impact today.

2026 is shaping up to be another significant year, and we expect enrolments to reach around 12,500 including more than 1,100 Year 12 academy members.

As announced in 2025, 2026 will also mark a period of leadership transition for the Foundation, with my role shifting from Chief Executive Officer to Founder as we prepare to welcome Clontarf's next CEO. This is likely to be my final Message from the CEO, and I look forward to supporting the organisation through this next phase of its evolution. Thank you for reading Quarterly. I hope you continue to engage with it, as both the publication and the Foundation continue to develop and improve.

- Gerard Neesham OAM  
Chief Executive Officer and Founder

## 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.



Marquis Gela was one of 131 young men from Clontarf's Far North QLD region who graduated from high school this November.



## Historic Achievements Across Clontarf's Far North QLD Region

**A remarkable group of 131 young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men graduated Year 12 from schools across Far North Queensland in recent weeks, marking an outstanding milestone for the region.**

Far North Queensland is now Clontarf's largest region nationally, with seven academies supporting 1,041 academy members and 45 staff. Across November, families, schools and community members gathered at academy awards nights to recognise the achievements of the boys.

A major highlight was the Trinity Bay Academy ceremony, where 292 academy members and their families filled the school hall to celebrate the year and witness 41 Year 12 graduates cross the stage. Clontarf Foundation CEO and Founder Gerard Neesham travelled to Cairns to take part in the event and reflected on the atmosphere in the room.

"To see this hall filled with parents,

grandparents, siblings, teachers and community members all here for one reason — to celebrate these young men — was an incredible outcome. Whether a boy was graduating Year 12, receiving an award or simply seeing his hard work reflected back through the photos and stories of the year, every moment showed what belief, persistence and support can achieve. The pride in that room said everything."

That pride was echoed by the graduates themselves, including Terrance Davidson, who reflected on his time in Clontarf.

"I've been part of [Clontarf] since grade seven, but I first interacted with the program in grade six," he said. "The Clontarf program first came into my primary

school, they introduced themselves, talked about what they were, what they do. I was just astonished. And I've made tonnes of memories. I've been a part of a wonderful community that's developed me into a young man. And I'm able to share these experiences with Clontarf to the wider school community as well. I'm able to give back to my school, and that's helped me to achieve junior school captain, senior school captain, and without Clontarf, I don't know where I'd be today."

Terrance has been accepted into CQU to study engineering and aspires to become a naval officer with the ADF, a Clontarf partner.

Congratulations to Terrance and all the young men across FNQ!

## Clontarf Closing the Licence Gap With WA Regional Safety Award

**The Clontarf Foundation has been recognised at the 7 News Community Achievement Awards, winning the WA Regional Safety Award for its L-2-P Gap program.**

The award acknowledges organisations making an outstanding contribution to regional WA. This year marks the third consecutive year Clontarf has been nominated for the award and the first year the program has taken home the title.

Clontarf Employment Officer Ben Haeusler accepted the award on behalf of the Foundation, crediting the young Clontarf men across the state who'd worked hard to attain their learner's permits, build their log book hours and succeed in attaining their driver's licences.

"We are incredibly proud of them," Ben said. "A driver's licence is more than a

card in your wallet; it is independence, opportunity and responsibility. I want to thank the Road Safety Commission for their partnership and belief in this program. Together we are not only helping young men get on the road, we are helping them stay safe on the road and make positive choices that protect themselves, their families and their communities."

Delivered in partnership with the Road Safety Commission, the L-2-P Gap initiative addresses the long-standing licensing inequality faced by young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. The program operates across 33 Clontarf academies in

Western Australia and combines culturally appropriate road-safety education, professional driving lessons and structured mentoring to support academy members through every stage of the Graduated Licensing System.





# Clontarf Reaches New Heights in 2025

**2025 will be remembered as a standout year for Clontarf. Across the country, more young men than ever took part in the program, more seniors completed school, more graduates stepped into work and further study, and more academy members gained the skills and confidence that open doors beyond the classroom. From record enrolments to record employment outcomes, and from learner drivers to long-term careers, the year was defined by momentum, pride and plenty of reasons to celebrate.**

## Enrolment a New High

Clontarf reached its highest end of year enrolment in the organisation's history in 2025, with 11,233 academy members enrolled in December across 162 academies. This represents strong growth from 10,851 in 2024.

Growth was driven both by rising participation in existing academies and the opening of three new academies during the year. Many established academies reported increasing involvement across morning training, classroom engagement and after-school activities, supported by expanded staffing and strengthened relationships within schools.



## Senior Success

Clontarf celebrated its strongest Year 12 result on record in 2025, with 1,052 young men completing their final year of school. This marks a strong rise from 1,009 in 2024 and continues a long-term upward trend in senior completion across every state/territory.

Importantly, this year's result reflects sustained engagement through Years 10 to 12, with academy teams working closely with schools, families and partners to ensure senior boys remained focused on their goals throughout their final year.

We congratulate every young man who finished school in 2025!



## Graduates Excelling

The Year 12s who finished in 2024 have gone on to enjoy record success in their first year beyond the school gate. Of the 1,066 Year 12s, 898 (84%) are now engaged in work, training or further study, including the 67 young men who moved into employment during their final year and have continued to stay connected with Clontarf.

Many graduates have stepped into full-time roles or part-time jobs, while others have begun apprenticeships or taken up opportunities at TAFE. The group also includes 32 young men who commenced university studies in 2025.



## Record Year on the Road

Clontarf academy members recorded their highest-ever number of learner's permits (1,443) and driver's licences (421) among Year 11 and Year 12 boys in 2025.

These outcomes were achieved through strong partnerships with the Road Safety Commission (WA), Transport for NSW, Transport Accident Commission (VIC), Department of Transport and Main Roads (QLD), City of Townsville and Breakwater Island Limited.

Helping young men become safe, confident drivers supports independence and provides practical access to work, training and further education opportunities.



## Work Readiness on a National Scale

Clontarf recorded its strongest-ever participation in part-time and casual employment, work experience and school-based traineeships in 2025. A total of 1,716 boys were engaged in part-time or casual work, 147 completed work experience placements and 210 took part in school-based traineeships in December. Around 24% of these opportunities were with Clontarf partners.

Access to work while still at school helps build confidence, responsibility and practical skills, while supporting smoother transitions beyond school.



## The Team Behind the Results

In 2025, Clontarf's staff grew to a record 630 people working across academies, schools and communities nationwide. These teams are at the heart of every outcome achieved this year, providing consistent presence, guidance and encouragement for academy members every day.

Importantly, 45% of Clontarf staff identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, bringing strong cultural knowledge, lived experience and local connection into academies across the country. This representation strengthens relationships with young men and their families and reflects Clontarf's ongoing commitment to Indigenous leadership within the organisation.



## Doc Reardon Comes Full Circle

**Daniel "Doc" Reardon attended the inaugural Clontarf Academy in Waterford, WA, from 2000 to 2002 and is now Managing Director at D&S Group Australia.**

These days, Doc's time is split between overseeing major industrial projects - including the rebuild of massive dump trucks on site - managing the day-to-day operations of a growing business, and spending quality time with his family.

Running a business has brought plenty of challenges, but Doc takes pride in the strong, reliable team around him and the culture they've built together. One of his proudest milestones came in 2025, when D&S Group became the first alumnus-led company to partner with the Foundation - a full-circle moment that reflects how far he's come.

He credits Clontarf with helping him find direction after school, providing guidance and encouragement that continues to influence him.

"Originally I just went there to go for a kick of the footy and ended up graduating from school," Doc said.

Looking back on his academy years, Doc recalls lifelong friendships, memorable Melbourne footy trips and back-to-back premierships with fondness.

His advice to current academy members is simple: "Choose the path that benefits you and your family, and surround yourself with great people."





NT Chief Minister Hon. Lia Finocchiaro and fellow parliamentarians joined Clontarf academy members, staff and partners at the 2025 Top End Billy Cart Derby at Bunnings Palmerston.

## OzTag Another Hit



**The eighth Fox Sports Clontarf Oztag Carnival brought together 24 academies from across New South Wales, with more than 200 academy members and partners taking part.**

The event promoted teamwork, strengthened peer relationships and gave the boys the opportunity to spend meaningful time with supporters who play an important role in their school and post-school journeys.

Cranebrook/Goodman and Hunter River/Jaybro advanced to the final after strong semi-final performances, with Hunter River/Jaybro winning and also taking out the 100m sprint - a memorable double that capped off the day.

A partner session hosted by Foxtel CEO Patrick Delany and emceed by Fox Sports presenter Jake Duke featured insights from Clontarf leadership and Tamworth Academy representatives, who spoke about how the program has shaped school engagement, confidence and future pathways.

Rugby league greats Nathan Hindmarsh and Bryan Fletcher joined the carnival, spending time with the boys, swapping stories and helping celebrate their achievements and hard work.

## Racing to the Finish Line at Billy Cart Derby

**The underground car park of Bunnings Palmerston was transformed into a racetrack in late October as more than 20 Clontarf academy members from six Darwin academies raced their custom-built billy carts in the 2025 Top End Billy Cart Derby.**

Teams from Dripstone, Sanderson, Nightcliff, Palmerston, Taminmin and Haileybury Academies put months of teamwork, creativity and craftsmanship to the test as they raced for bragging rights — and this year, a Halloween-themed trophy that went to the boys from Taminmin Academy.

The event attracted strong community support, with special guests Chief Minister Hon. Lia Finocchiaro MLA, Hon. Marie-Clare Boothby MLA, Matthew Kerle MLA and Clinton Howe MLA joining the fun and cheering from the sidelines. Clontarf's corporate and community partners, including Bunnings, Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation, Woolworths, Big W and Barpa, were also in attendance, underscoring the strength of local partnerships that make these hands-on learning experiences possible.

In the weeks leading up to the race, Clontarf members visited Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation's Holtze workshop, where Ironbark supervisors Sal, Lee and Andrew guided them through the design, construction and decoration of their karts

using materials supplied by Bunnings. Back at their academies, the boys added finishing touches, incorporating spooky decorations and creative designs that reflected their teamwork and sense of fun.

Nightcliff Academy member Isak Schroeder told The NT News in its coverage of the event, "Making the billy carts brings everyone together, all the partners come down, everyone has a feed, it's just a good community event."

The annual derby has become a highlight of the Top End Clontarf calendar, growing each year since its inception three years ago. Inspired by a similar initiative that began in Alice Springs over 10 years ago, the event blends practical skills with friendly competition and community spirit — showing how teamwork and creativity can drive positive engagement both in and out of the classroom.

The Foundation would like to thank Bunnings and Ironbark Aboriginal Corporation for supporting the event, and all spectators who cheered on the boys across the finish line.





## Duel Celebration at Endeavour

**Endeavour Academy (Caringbah, NSW) marked a major milestone on Friday evening, combining its annual End of Year Awards Night with its 10-year anniversary celebration at Tradies Gymea, a long-standing Clontarf partner.**

More than 100 guests filled the venue, including academy members and their families, school staff, partners and alumni. Special guests on the night included Clontarf CEO and Founder Gerard Neesham, Sutherland Shire Mayor Jack Boyd, Tradies President Dennis McHugh, and Cronulla Sharks NRL player and Clontarf alumnus Will Kennedy. The night recognised the growth and achievements of the 49 young men currently involved in the program, including ten Year 12 graduates who completed school this year.

The event featured a strong representation of the academy's history. Inaugural Endeavour Academy Director and renowned NRL Indigenous player Jeff Hardy returned to reflect on the academy's beginnings in 2015 and the decade that followed. Hardy opened the evening with a didgeridoo performance and later addressed the audience.

"I returned home and said to my wife, 'I've seen an amazing program in Alice Springs that would be great here at Endeavour'," Hardy said, recalling the moment he first found Clontarf while on a trip to the NT.

"Being the Clontarf director at one of the first Clontarf academies on the East Coast, coaching kids in footy and in life... that was, and still is, my career highlight."

A musical moment became one of the night's most memorable highlights when Jeff's father, respected guitarist Col Hardy, took the stage before being joined by academy members and staff.

Looking back across the past decade, Endeavour Academy carries a distinct place in Clontarf's history. As the first Clontarf academy established in Greater Sydney, it demonstrated that the program could thrive in a metropolitan setting and helped lay the groundwork for the region's continued growth. Today, multiple academies now operate across Sydney with the same focus on school engagement, confidence and post-school pathways.

Across 10 years, Endeavour has supported hundreds of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to strengthen their education, wellbeing and transition into employment or other positive pathways. Friday's celebration showcased that legacy while also looking at what lies ahead.



## Staff: Joel Marama



**Joel Marama has worked for the Clontarf Foundation for eight years, starting as an Operations Officer at Bentley Park**

**Academy in Cairns before moving into his current role as Director of the Western Cape College Academy in Weipa.**

As a proud Indigenous man from Boigu Island in the Torres Strait, Joel's lived experience strongly informs his work with academy members. He remembers the importance of support during his own high school years and says this drives him to ensure boys today have every opportunity to succeed.

"I've seen what a lack of support can do," he said.

"Some of my peers still carry the challenges from those school years. That's what motivates me every day — to make sure our boys don't face that same struggle."

Working in a remote community brings challenges, particularly around attendance. Joel and his team focus on strong relationships with students and families to build trust and maintain connection. His favourite moment each year is watching the Year 12s graduate, and he is energised by the program's growth across Australia. Outside of work, he enjoys fishing, hunting, playing guitar and spending time with his family. Seeing the boys smile is always the highlight of his day.



Boys from the NT and WA contest a mark during the annual Clontarf Interstate Challenge in Melbourne.



## Interstate Challenge Strengthens Ambition

Clontarf's annual Australian Rules Interstate Challenge returned to Melbourne's Victoria Park in November, bringing together 100 academy members from WA, Victoria, SA and the NT for three days of sport and leadership.

Players were selected not only for their ability, but for strong school attendance, attitude and participation in academy activities. Matches were played in strong Clontarf spirit — hard, fair and with every participant given an opportunity to contribute — supported by 150 volunteers from 20 corporate partners.

Western Australia claimed victory for the second consecutive year, defeating Victoria in a competitive Grand Final. Esperance Academy's Keenan Rymer was awarded Best on Ground after leading from the front as captain. He travelled home the next day to sit an

exam, determined to finish the school year strongly. "I wanted to do my family, myself, my friends and community proud. I feel like I've achieved something really special and it's the next big step for me." Keenan, who will move to Perth in 2026 to pursue Colts football, said the dream remains to be drafted.

Off the field, boys took part in a welcome event at AFL Max, a recovery session at Northcote Aquatic and Recreation Centre, and the All-Australian Dinner at Collingwood's AIA Vitality Centre, where major awards were presented and guest speakers inspired the group.

## Thank you for your support

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

- BAE Systems
- Deutsche Bank AG
- Engenco
- Fredon
- Hawaiian Group
- Lycopodium
- On Tap Services
- Port Waratah Coal Services
- Stadiacorp Facility Services
- SunRice
- TGI Sport
- The University of Sydney
- Tronox Management
- UBS
- United Forklift and Access Solutions
- Wallis Drilling
- Westgold Resources
- Westug

## Visit From the PM's Right-hand Man

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister and for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Hon. Pat Gorman MP, was joined by the Member for Swan, Zaneta Mascarenhas MP, for a visit to Clontarf's central office in October.

The visit provided an opportunity for Mr Gorman and Ms Mascarenhas to see the Foundation's operations first-hand and meet the staff who keep the organisation running smoothly. Team members discussed their roles and how their work contributes to Clontarf's national impact.

The guests also met three alumni — Beau Manson-Roworth, Denzel Thorne and Phillip Angelhand — who took time out of their busy schedules to share how Clontarf helped shape their lives and careers.

A long-time supporter of the Foundation, Mr Gorman has previously visited several academies in Port Hedland during a

regional cabinet meeting, delivered the keynote address at the Clontarf Cup Breakfast, and attended the Speaker's Courtyard alumni event in Canberra.

Clontarf thanks Mr Gorman and Ms Mascarenhas for their ongoing interest and support.



### Donations and Workplace Giving

Many individuals support the Clontarf Foundation through personal donations and workplace giving programs, providing steady support across schools and communities nationwide. These contributions help sustain academies and support staff on the ground. We are grateful for this ongoing support.

To donate directly or learn more about workplace giving, visit: [clontarf.org.au/donate](https://clontarf.org.au/donate)

### 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](https://www.clontarf.org.au)



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