



**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY

# 2023 IMPACT REPORT



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Front cover photo: Dylan Wilson, Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong Scholarship in Medicine.

This page: Female Orphan School, Parramatta South campus



## ABOUT WESTERN

Western Sydney University is a world-class university with growing international reach and a reputation for academic excellence and impact-driven research.

Ranked in the Top 2% of universities in the world, we are globally focused and committed to making a positive impact at a regional, national and international level.

For the third year running, Western has been recognised as number one in the world in the prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) University Impact Rankings as measured against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This includes first in the world for SDG 5 Gender Equality, third in the world for SDG 15 Life on Land and fourth in the world for SDG 13 Climate Action, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production, and SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals.

Our University has over 46,000 students spread across 13 campuses and offers more than 600 courses across 100 disciplinary areas, carefully structured to meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, as well as the opportunities and challenges that are unique to our region.

We are committed to the success of our students, the impact of our research and the co-created transformation of our communities.





# MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR

**Professor Jennifer Westacott AO**  
Chancellor



At Western Sydney University, your philanthropy transforms lives.

Since I took up the role of Chancellor in 2023, I am continually impressed by our community of donors and supporters; your dedication to our students, researchers, and region makes an enormous difference.

Your commitment to this University and the positive impact that you make possible cannot be underestimated.

For the third year in a row, Western Sydney University has been named number one in the world for social, economic, and environmental impact in the 2024 Times Higher Education University Impact Rankings. This achievement reflects our collective dedication to making a positive difference globally.

It is through your support that we can ensure that education is the great equaliser, the great creator of opportunities, and the great leveller.

Our university - unlike any other in this country - lives and breathes this, and your contribution underpins it.

Your support helps us propel people forward; it unleashes their potential.

Last year, our Giving Day raised more than \$1.34 million for scholarships, student programs and research.

We are also incredibly grateful to the Blackmore Family Foundation for their remarkable \$10 million gift to our NICM Health Research Institute, Australia's leader in integrative and complementary medicine research and policy.

The generosity continued with the first donation of \$5 million to our new Indigenous Centre of Excellence from the Medich Foundation. This makes the Foundation our founding donor and continues Dr Roy Medich OAM's dedicated support of Western Sydney projects that make a difference.

I also want to recognise the visionary leadership of the late Lang Walker AO. Lang believed deeply in Western Sydney, and his philanthropy has helped elevate our region.

Thanks to his generosity and that of his family, many of our students have been able to fulfil their dreams and potential through education. His legacy lives on through the research and teaching at the Lang Walker AO Macarthur Medical Research Institute in Campbelltown and the Lang Walker Chair in Urban Transformation.

Every donation we receive opens the doors to opportunity. Scholarships help change the trajectory of someone's life, while our research helps solve some of the globe's most pressing problems.

Our University is a critical part of Western Sydney's economic, social, and cultural transformation as the nation's third-largest city economy goes through another period of remarkable change. The region is positioned to be a globally significant hub of industries, jobs, and innovation.

Our people, through their ingenuity, entrepreneurialism, and drive are behind this reinvention, and it is your support that makes it possible.

In partnership with you, we are helping to advance our communities, deliver impactful research, and drive student success. This all adds to the economic, cultural and intellectual life of Western Sydney.

Thank you for being with us every step of the way as we change lives for the better.



# FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

**Distinguished Professor George Williams AO**  
Vice-Chancellor and President



There is no other region in Australia with greater potential than Western Sydney, and no university is better placed than ours to help realise its ambition.

As a supporter of Western Sydney University, you are a valued part of our community. Your generosity and commitment help to change lives, broaden horizons and ensure our dynamic and diverse region can live up to its promise.

We thank you for your role in working with us to drive the positive economic, social and environmental transformation of Western Sydney, which strengthens our social fabric.

Through your support, Western Sydney University continues to be a university of the people, delivering a world-class education to all, leading research with positive impact, and promoting community and industry partnerships.

Our job has remained the same for the past 35 years. We exist to create a path that everyone - no matter their postcode or identity - can access to achieve their dreams, realise their ambitions, and fulfil their potential.

Our job is to open doors to the life-changing benefits of education, especially for those who may have never thought it was a possibility. Many of our students are the first in their families to go to university.

We remain a beacon of knowledge, discovery, research, and sustainability. A place where we lead on Indigenous self-determination, tolerance, and inclusion. A place of welcoming and belonging.

I look forward to continuing to partner with you in service of our people and this great region. Ours is a shared mission to increase access to education, improve equity, and set our students and the people of Western Sydney up for success for today and tomorrow.





# PHILANTHROPIC SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

For 16 years, Dr Roy Medich OAM, through the Medich Foundation, has supported the Western Sydney University's School of Medicine with ongoing funding of the Roy Medich Bachelor of Medical Research Scholarship.

His generous support has also extended to refugee and asylum seeker scholarships, funding for cancer research and many other areas across the University.



Dr Roy Medich OAM

## The Medich Foundation's significant gift will create the Dr Roy Medich OAM Endowment for Indigenous Arts, Culture and Education to support a range of Indigenous-led arts, culture and education initiatives associated with the Indigenous Centre of Excellence, including:

- The establishment of the 'Medich Indigenous Scholarships' to support Indigenous students studying Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, or Communications at Western Sydney University.
- The Indigenous Artist-in-Residence program, facilitating short or long-term visits by Indigenous artists to the University. This will create a pathway for emerging and established Indigenous artists, creative practitioners and creative researchers to collaborate with Western Sydney University students and staff and share knowledge.
- The establishment of an Indigenous Art Curator position to support the development and growth of the University's Indigenous art collections, with a particular emphasis on Western Sydney.

In 2023, Western Sydney University and Dr Medich were delighted to announce an additional \$5 million philanthropic donation from the Medich Foundation to the University's new Indigenous Centre of Excellence.

This donation has made the Medich Foundation the founding donor for the Centre, carrying on Dr Medich's pioneering support for areas of impact, important to Western Sydney.

The Centre has been created with the aim to strengthen Indigenous arts, culture and education in Western Sydney and will be based at the University's Parramatta South campus on Darug Land. The state-of-the-art building will serve as an important gathering place for the community to celebrate both the University's and the region's long-standing connection with Indigenous people and will provide a benchmark for Indigenous leadership, governance and education.

Dr Medich said that the establishment of the Centre was a practical way to educate, empower and assist the Indigenous communities of Western Sydney and beyond.

*"We are extremely proud to be involved with such a worthy cause and look forward to working with Western Sydney University as the project evolves."*

*"The Medich Foundation hopes that the Centre will have a profound generational impact on young Indigenous people by increasing their access to life changing opportunities and creating new pathways for our future leaders."*

At the announcement of the gift, former Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Barney Glover AO, acknowledged and thanked Dr Medich and the Medich Foundation for their philanthropic support and shared vision.

*"Dr Roy Medich has been a longstanding friend and donor to Western Sydney University, and we are delighted to partner with him and the Medich Foundation to help bring this landmark project to life and foster the next generation of Indigenous leaders,"* said Professor Glover.

*"This gift is an important investment in the future of our region. The Indigenous Centre of Excellence will be a vibrant gathering place for Indigenous education, research and engagement in the heart of Western Sydney. It will also help promote a more equitable future for First Nations' people and further build a sense of identity, cultural pride and social inclusion for local Indigenous communities."*

Western Sydney University Deputy Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Leadership, Professor Michelle Trudgett said the new Centre will play a key role in realising the intent of the University's Indigenous Strategy 2020-2025 and its ambition to be a national leader in Indigenous higher education.

The building will be accessible to the region's schools, residents and businesses and provide the opportunity for people to learn more about the rich Indigenous culture and heritage of the region, explore its arts and cultural collections, and attend performances, talks and screenings.

*"We are very excited by the opportunity to explore how the governance model of the Indigenous Centre of Excellence can embrace Indigenous self-determination. This will be a transformational place of research and inquiry, where tens of thousands of years of Indigenous knowledge and history will be celebrated throughout a state-of-the-art building, forging new horizons of Indigenous excellence and leadership,"* said Professor Trudgett.

*"Western Sydney is home to the largest urban Indigenous population in the country, so it is only fitting that we create a place for Indigenous people to celebrate culture and connection to Country."*



# WILSON FOUNDATION MEDICINAL CANNABIS MAY BE KEY TO ENDOMETRIOSIS RELIEF

Endometriosis is a chronic inflammatory condition which affects around one in seven girls, women and people assigned female at birth in Australia. Tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows and can form lesions in other areas of the body, most commonly in the pelvis. This often results in significant pelvic pain on a daily or almost daily basis, as well as severe period pain, fatigue, digestive issues and a reduction in fertility.

*“It’s very common and has an incredibly negative impact on almost every aspect of people’s lives. It affects their abilities to study, to work, and can affect romantic and sexual relationships and friendships... often people with endometriosis rate their quality of life about the same as people who have breast cancer... despite being technically a benign condition, it is having these horrible impacts,”* says Associate Professor Mike Armour from NICM Health Research Institute at Western Sydney University.

Current treatments for endometriosis include surgical and medical management, which can be effective for some people but can be costly, have long waiting times and significant side effects. Painkillers such as opioids are prescribed but carry the risk of dependencies and risk of overdose.

Associate Professor Mike Armour is leading a study at NICM into the effectiveness of medicinal cannabis on the symptoms of endometriosis as well as on the size and progression of the lesions that underlie the condition. The study is funded by the Wilson Foundation.

According to Associate Professor Armour, the goal is to look at how effective it is, what symptoms it changes and to see if it might become a more mainstream treatment.

*“If it’s effective we are hoping this might be available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) in future, so people don’t have to pay large sums of money out of the pocket.”*

Involving 126 people with endometriosis living in Sydney, the trial will be the first of its kind in the world. Study participants will have a special type of ultrasound (sonovaginography) assessed by experts, identifying where the endometriosis tissue is located and its size. This will allow researchers to monitor if the treatment stops progression or shrinks the lesions, demonstrating if medicinal cannabis aids beyond pain and symptom relief.

*“If lesions can be stabilised or shrunk, then it’s likely people will have less ongoing costs in the future including for surgery or fertility treatments,”* said Associate Professor Armour.

The research will consist of three groups of participants. One group will consume a CBD (cannabidiol) -only product, and the other will take a balanced oil, which contains equal quantities of THC (delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD. The third will take a placebo containing terpenes, which gives cannabis its distinctive taste and smell. The oil is taken orally via a dropper and tastes like cannabis-flavoured coconut oil.

Associate Professor Armour says that the reason cannabis might work for pain relief is we have receptors for

these compounds in our body already, from our own internal system.

The study includes a ‘dose finding’ phase in the beginning. Participants commence on a low dosage, with the dose slowly increasing until they get pain relief they’re looking for, while managing potential side effects. Once the participant’s maximum dose is discovered, they can take up to the maximum, but may not need to take the oil every day and may decide to take less.

*“When we ask people with endometriosis what they want us to research, medicinal cannabis consistently comes up near the top,”* says Associate Professor Armour.

The study will take place over the next three years, consisting of six months of treatment and 12 months of follow up. This will allow researchers to observe the impact on lesions, what happens when participants stop taking the oil, and recognises that participants may not wish to take medicinal cannabis on a long-term basis.

“It’s great that the Wilson Foundation has funded not only the study looking at symptom reduction, but also trying to understand what’s going on, why it might be working – that’s so important as well to really get an understanding of how we might treat people (with endometriosis) in the future.”

“If we can figure out what’s happening underneath that not only potentially means improved cannabis treatments, but it might help us understand more how to treat endometriosis in general.”

Associate Professor  
Mike Armour, NICM





# PAUL RAMSAY FOUNDATION REWRITING THE ROLE OF FINISHING SCHOOL, WELL.

Ensuring disadvantage is not a barrier to education is at the core of Western Sydney University's DNA. Supporting this ethos is a new \$7 million grant from the Paul Ramsay Foundation (PRF), which has created a collaboration between Western, University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and the Department of Education (DoE) and is on course to ensure that research-backed work is enabling young Australians to finish school well through actionable data-driven and community-led innovation.

The collaboration, titled *Thrive: Finishing School Well*, is a multidisciplinary research program that combines the power of statistical machine learning, lived experience and community co-design.

Professor Rebekah Grace, Director Centre for Transforming early Education and Child Health (TeEACH) at Western, says she believes her Western Sydney University team were chosen as part of the collaboration due to their experience and track record of excellence in qualitative research and community co-design.

*"We are based in a region that includes areas characterised by significant levels of socio-economic disadvantage and a very diverse population. Research at Western is known for engagement with our region, and for working alongside community members and organisations to support equity and opportunity,"* said Professor Grace.

It is already known from research and anecdotal evidence that currently too many young people do not have the support they need to achieve their potential. This is due to the complex interplay between environmental and systemic factors. *Thrive* seeks to apply a data-driven and community consultation approach to the persistent challenge of how best to support youth in New South Wales facing adversity.

Professor Grace said that the broader project team was well equipped to ensure the research is of the highest quality, with the UTS team bringing expertise in data analytics, Artificial Intelligence and Bayesian inference.

*"My team then brings expertise in qualitative research, including exploring the lived experiences of a diverse range of stakeholders – such as young people, parents, community members, teachers and community partnership in the co-design of new initiatives,"* she said.

*"The project is about bringing these two important sides of the coin (quantitative and qualitative) together to look carefully at and identify key issues. We will then move into a co-design phase where we will be designing and piloting initiatives with diverse communities."*

Professor Grace said although socio-economic vulnerability can play a role in young people not finishing their school education, there are many other reasons for why young people disengage with education, including mental and physical health challenges, disability, caring responsibilities and accessibility issues, particularly in remote areas.

*"There are also groups of young people who feel school is not a safe place for them and so they disengage from these environments. There is another group of young people who struggle with the school environment which then manifests in behavioural issues, leading to suspensions and other forms of imposed exclusions. We are keen to tease out the complexity that surrounds school engagement."*

As a first step, Professor Grace's team is conducting focus groups with a broad array of community-led groups including representatives from parent groups, disability service organisations, mental health professionals, and service providers who work in the Out-of-Home Care sector and with young people from migrant and CALD backgrounds. They are also gathering data directly from young people in focus groups, individual interviews and in a national survey.

*"We are not going to solve all the problems in a three-year project, but we will be able to identify key areas in which there is opportunity for positive change. This project will provide a strong foundation for innovation, advocacy and potential scale up of community-led approaches designed to support all young people to "thrive,"* says Professor Grace.

**Professor Rebekah Grace,**  
Director, Centre for Transforming  
early Education and Child Health  
(TeEACH)  
Western Sydney University



# THE MAGIC OF PHILANTHROPY – PROGRESSING THE “TRICKY MIDDLE” OF RESEARCH

Associate Professor Michael O'Connor works closely with patient advocacy groups, so he understands the human impact of vision, gut and neurodegenerative diseases – both on the mental and physical health of millions of people in Australia and worldwide. These diseases currently have no cure and treatments are limited. That is why he does the work that he does at Western's School of Medicine.

Previously, Dr O'Connor worked with human stem cells to study ways he and his team could create impact for retinal diseases. However, they were only able to produce around 10,000 of the human retinal cells they needed and had no simple way to upscale to the millions of cells required for drug development studies.

At the same time, colleagues working on gut diseases like Gastroparesis were facing a similar problem – their inability to access sufficient human stomach pacemaker cells for drug studies.

Dr O'Connor decided to face the problem head on. He pivoted his research group to start pursuing a powerful, complex and ambitious technology – direct cell reprogramming – that, if successful, can directly convert large numbers of human stem cells into adult cell types.

Consequently, Dr O'Connor said that the last two years have been focused on taking a step back to identify how direct cell reprogramming might create the retinal and stomach cells they need, with the longer-term aim of future drug development research for retinal and gut diseases.

*“These are diseases that have no cures, that greatly affect quality of life and there is a bottleneck in developing cures – because we don't have access to the amount of human tissue we need to work on drug discovery and development.*

*Therefore, attempting direct cell reprogramming to bypass the tissue availability problem, by making our own cells, is the enabler step. It is incredibly important, but it takes time, energy and money to make it happen. It's not the discovery step, but without this step we won't get there,”* says Dr O'Connor.

*“We can make a billion human stem cells if we need them – but they are not the cells that we want to look at. We have focused on investigating how direct cell reprogramming can be used to try and make both retinal cells and stomach pacemaker cells. There is a lot of background information and years of preparatory research needed to understand exactly how to make the technique work.”*

*“Direct cell reprogramming is challenging and needs advanced technologies. We use viruses to carry the reprogramming instructions (DNA for transcription factors) and deliver them to the stem cells. There are many possible combinations of transcription factors and delivering each factor needs its own virus. The process of designing the viruses and making sure they are safe takes time and we have been progressing this with the stomach cells first while also looking at what we need to do for the retina cells.”*

This work has enabled the establishment of a new collaboration between Western's School of Medicine and Associate Professor Leszek Lisowski, who heads the Translational Vectorology Group at the Children's Medical Research Institute at Westmead.

*“Dr Lisowski is helping us create the viruses that will be tested for reprogramming stem cells and we expect the reprogramming tests to start from about May to end of the year for stomach pacemaker. Then in 2025 we'll investigate reprogramming to create the retinal cells,”* said Dr O'Connor.

*“This timeline shows why multi-year funding has been so important for our team and why we are so grateful to our anonymous donors for their ongoing support. Our first grant with them was four years and our second grant was for funding for another four years.”*

*“Without this, we would not have been able to progress to where we are now. This work takes time. We are in an area of very long term, multi-year, complex work to get us to a place where we can even start drug discovery.”*

The team working on this project are a collaborative, multi-disciplinary team including clinicians, surgeons, virus experts, molecular biology, stem cells experts and patient advocates.



*“The philanthropic funding we have received has also allowed us to create this collaboration with so many specialists, headed here at Western.”*

*“This is where the magic of philanthropy comes into it. We couldn't do it without the donors who have supported us for so many years.”*

Associate Professor  
Michael O'Connor,  
School of Medicine



# BAXTER HEALTHCARE ELEVATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF INDIGENOUS NURSING PROFESSIONALS

Celeste Arnold-Davis says receiving a scholarship has been life-changing.

*“After moving out of home and becoming completely independent, I was forced to find a place of my own and use my minimum income to support myself. Readjusting to this major life event, whilst adjusting to the university study load on top of a new job proved to be extremely mentally exhausting. I was experiencing breakdowns which were traumatic and brought on unnecessary levels of stress and anxiety.”*

In 2020, Baxter Healthcare renewed their support for the Baxter Healthcare Indigenous Scholarships in Nursing at Western

with the vision of empowering the next generation of aspiring First Nations nurses. Four Indigenous Australian nursing students have received scholarships to date, including Celeste, providing much needed encouragement and alleviating some of the pressures that come with a rising cost of living.

*“Thank you, Baxter Healthcare, for this amazing opportunity, not just for myself but for past and future recipients who may be struggling with unimaginable misfortune. We are all so lucky to be given such an incredible form of support that could completely change lives.”*

Baxter Healthcare has been a leading manufacturer and supplier of healthcare related needs for over 85 years. The company supplies hospitals and critical care providers across Australia and the Oceania region and has proudly had Western Sydney based manufacturing operations for more than 45 years.

Baxter Healthcare has an unwavering belief in the power of education - the unlimited potential within every one of Western Sydney University’s First Nations nursing students. In 2023, they generously opened the door for two more passionate Indigenous students to pursue their nursing dreams.



Baxter Healthcare General Manager (Australia and NZ), Mr Brendan Cummins; Director of Indigenous Futures at Western Sydney University, Ms Fiona Towney; Baxter Healthcare 2023 scholarship recipients and Dean for the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Professor Deborah Hatcher.

# ANTHONY COWLEY A LEGACY OF RESPECT AND OPPORTUNITY



Western Sydney resident, Anthony Cowley, ensured that his last gift would be an enduring one leaving a bequest to Western Sydney University.

Anthony was a retired Tax Agent who ran his own accounting practice, sadly passing away in April 2023.

In his Will, he included a gift to the University of \$1 million to establish scholarships for students studying Accounting and Medicine. As a mark of respect and love, the scholarships are to be named for Anthony’s wife, Margaret June Cowley, who passed away in 2013 after almost 66 years of marriage.



Anthony and Margaret, or Peggy as she was affectionately known, are survived by their son Paul and their late daughter Barbara’s children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.

Anthony’s generous gift will form an endowment whose funds will ensure that generations of Accounting and Medical students will receive life-changing scholarships in perpetuity.

Including a gift in your Will is a profound way to support Western Sydney University beyond your lifetime. Your legacy can foster knowledge, discovery and positive change for generations of students, staff and academics.

Your bequest can shape lives through scholarships, support research, inspire students by helping us appoint world-class academics, inspire Indigenous students, reward high-achieving students, aid those from low socio-economic or refugee backgrounds, expand the University’s art collection, or enhance the region with new teaching and learning facilities.

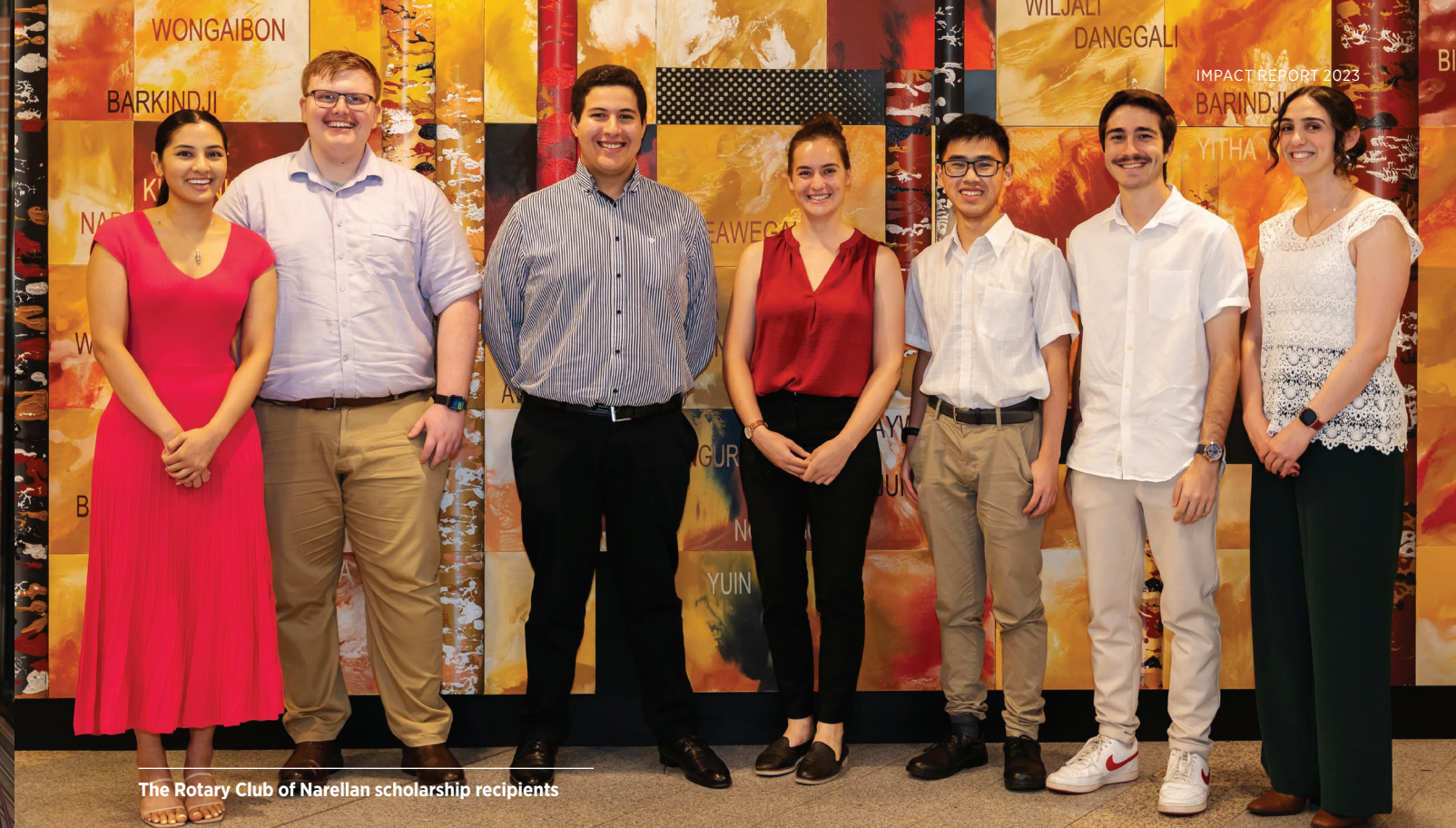
Alternatively, you may choose to provide an untied gift, allowing the University to address evolving priorities over time.

For a confidential discussion about including a gift in your Will or to learn about our Bequest Society, please contact Ross Newton at 02 9685 9892 or [giving@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:giving@westernsydney.edu.au).





Associate Professor David Mahns with a member of the Rotary Club of Narellan, School of Medicine colleagues, and two PhD students.



The Rotary Club of Narellan scholarship recipients

# ROTARY CLUB OF NARELLAN COMMUNITY SUPPORT LEADING RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The Rotary Club of Narellan has supported Western's School of Medicine since its inception in 1997 and has donated over \$1.2 million to research and scholarships in this time.

In 2023, the Club and its members donated \$25,000 to support Multiple Sclerosis research at the School, and \$30,000 to support one undergraduate student throughout their degree.

Associate Professor David Mahns, who heads the research work funded by the Rotary Club of Narellan said the ongoing and long-term investment has allowed him to leverage the funding in many ways.

*"Having support from the Rotary Club of Narellan year in and year out has meant that we have been able to use these funds to leverage even more research dollars."*

*"In 2023, their donation allowed us to apply for additional funding from the University for infrastructure as*

*well as to another philanthropic foundation the Ian Potter Trust, to create even more impact."*

Together, the funding has meant the School of Medicine has been able to invest in Flow Cytometry technology, which allows the research team to measure and look at the activity of immune cells derived from patients in a more detailed manner.

Associate Professor Mahns said that the funding has also had other positive knock-on effects.

*"Being able to take on two PhD students, thanks to the Club's funding, meant that they have been able to approach the suppliers of the equipment that we purchased and generate internship opportunities.*

*In turn, the internship allows us to work with the company to develop new ways of measuring levels in patients with MS."*

Western's Executive Director of Advancement, Christian Burden, said it was so encouraging to see how long-term philanthropic support can make such huge ripples, over many years.

*"We are so grateful to the many members of the Club, over many years, who have supported their local community through their donations to Western. Their support has meant huge things for research into MS that not only make impact here, but across Australia and the world."*

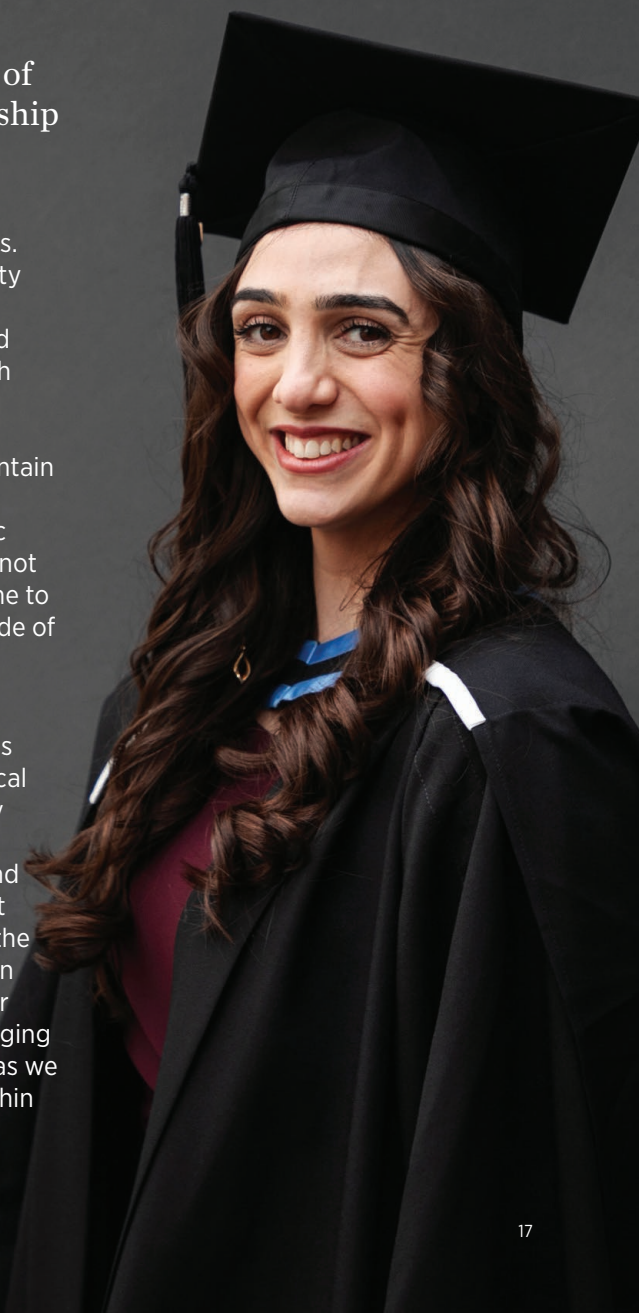
Josephine Canceri is a past recipient of the Rotary Cub of Narellan scholarship. Here, she details why the scholarship has been so important to her.

The impact of my scholarship and the continued support of the Rotary Club of Narellan has been indelible and far-reaching. First and foremost, the financial assistance enabled me to pursue my application for the Bathurst Rural Clinical School, allowing me to afford my accommodation and living costs for the year of my rural studies. Attending the rural clinical school was a goal of mine since our initial introduction to the rural education program during our first-year orientation, and my scholarship funds allowed it to become a reality. This rural immersion provided invaluable experience of the socio-medical context of regional Australia and demonstrated to me what serving a rural community's healthcare needs entails.

The financial assistance provided by the scholarship also enabled me to ensure that my medical studies remained my priority. Through alleviating the pressure of needing to secure additional casual employment whilst managing a full-time clinical

workload, I was able to devote considerable time to my studies. It also facilitated my opportunity to be accepted to present my research project at national and international conferences which were enriching and insightful experiences. Furthermore, the scholarship enabled me to maintain extracurricular activities such as bootcamp classes and music lessons. The benefit of this cannot be understated, as it allowed me to maintain my personhood outside of my tertiary commitments.

The importance and benefit of financial assistance for students during the completion of medical studies is significant. The study workload and clinical demands can often make it difficult to find employment. Such options that may be able to accommodate the nature of our schedule are often very limited, especially with our study requirements often changing even from rotation to rotation as we enter our clinical education within the hospital environment.





# HALL & WILCOX HONOURING A COLLEAGUE AND FRIEND

William Orule fled South Sudan as a refugee, arriving in Australia in late 2003. Settling in Western Sydney, William attended Evans Intensive English Centre and then Patrician Brothers College in Blacktown earning the role of School Captain and obtaining his High School Certificate in 2006. Determined to fulfil his educational dreams, William worked multiple jobs, mostly after hours, whilst completing high school and subsequently supporting himself through NSW TAFE and university studies.



William graduated from Western Sydney University’s School of Law in 2019 and was admitted as a lawyer in April 2021. In early 2018, he had begun working at Hall & Wilcox Lawyers and was looking forward to a career as a legal practitioner.

William tragically died in 2021, before many of his dreams and potential could be realised.

William was a beloved brother, father and friend who dedicated himself to the service of others. He was a passionate advocate for the emerging communities, particularly amongst his local Sudanese community.

William was the former chairperson of the Equatoria Community Association in NSW and co-founder and first Chairperson of the Federation of Equatoria Community Association in Australia (FECAA). *(Equatoria Community is composed of 64 tribes who inhabit the Equatoria Region of South Sudan. Therefore, Equatoria community in Australia reflects all members of these tribes in Australia).*

William’s friends and colleagues at Hall & Wilcox Lawyers wanted to ensure the dreams and ambitions that he held and that were stalled when he died, had the opportunity to be passed to other refugee students. Something they felt William would be proud of.

In 2023, Hall & Wilcox Lawyers in partnership with Western Sydney University were delighted to announce Zainab Khavary as the inaugural recipient of the William Orule Memorial Law Scholarship.

Zainab left Afghanistan, pregnant and on her own, and arrived in Australia as a refugee in 2015 when her son was one-and-a-half years old. She has recently completed her Bachelor of Accounting/ Bachelor of Laws at Western Sydney University.

During her eight years in Australia, Zainab has endured trauma, anxiety, loneliness, homelessness, financial hardship and hopelessness, but as *“a mother, fighter and dreamer”* she has not given up.

Partner and Head of Pro Bono at Hall & Wilcox Lawyers, Nathan Kennedy, said it was wonderful to be able to support Zainab in William’s name.

*“Part of our purpose is to enable our communities to thrive. What better way to give a hand up to resilient people ready to do great things? Zainab, who dreams of being a role model, is a worthy recipient of this scholarship,”* he said.

The William Orule Memorial Law Scholarship is open to law students from a refugee background in their penultimate or final year of law. In addition to the \$10,000 scholarship, the student has an opportunity to undertake a four-week clerkship at Hall & Wilcox Lawyers.



Originally from Afghanistan, Zainab was a police officer in her homeland. She fled, alone and pregnant, to save her life and her son’s life and arrived in Australia as a refugee holding the Humanitarian Visa Women at Risk.

Zainab has spent the past eight years building a life for herself and her son.

*“I have tried not to be the victim of my circumstance and start studying as I am passionate about studying. I chose Western Sydney University as I found this University has many services to help and support students which makes it distinguished,”* she said.

*“I have had financial hardship in the past years and always have as I do not have any family here to support me. In addition, sometimes I have to support my family back in Afghanistan as women are not able to work due to the current situation.*

*This scholarship helps me to solve financial difficulties during my last year of study, and I will be able to focus just on my study.”*

*“I feel grateful and honored to have received this scholarship. I would like to encourage other people in my situation and especially women and refugees to not give up and work for success and let them know about this great scholarship.”*

*“I hope to continue my study at higher levels and then give back to the community. I dream to be a role model for my community, change and fight all boundaries which are against women’s rights and human rights. I have a big dream for my son to support him with the very best, and a sense of love and security and rise an incredible person.”*

“I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Hall & Wilcox Lawyers for their unwavering support throughout my journey. Currently interning at their firm, I have been fortunate to witness firsthand the exceptional culture and welcoming environment they foster.”

“Transitioning from university to the workplace can be daunting, but Hall & Wilcox Lawyers friendly atmosphere has made the process seamless. Their support has been instrumental in helping me pursue my dreams and navigate the professional world with confidence. I am truly grateful for this invaluable opportunity.”

Zainab Khavary,  
William Orule Memorial  
Law Scholarship recipient





# WAYNE AND LOUISA WONG GIVING BACK TO THE WESTERN SYDNEY COMMUNITY

In the mid-1970’s as a young doctor, Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong immigrated to Australia from Hong Kong and subsequently naturalised as an Australian. Dr Wong received specialist training as a radiologist at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and moved to Sydney to live, work and raise a family.

Over the next 30+ years, Dr Wong worked in the public, private, and corporate health sectors, in metropolitan Sydney, and more extensively in Western Sydney and regional NSW. Dr Wong’s primary location of work was Penrith, experiencing and seeing firsthand the challenges facing the large and expanding Western Sydney community, particularly with its unique multicultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

Dr Wong retired in 2019 from private practice and began working part time with a government service. His wife Louisa also retired from her private physiotherapy practice around the same time. With this history and experience and at a new stage in their lives, in 2021

Dr and Mrs Wong decided to create a scholarship at Western.

Dr Wong felt that it was a way to show his commitment to the community and a privilege to return, in a small but meaningful way, the opportunities and support he received from the community in Western Sydney. The Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong Scholarships in Medicine were first awarded in 2022 with two students each receiving \$7,500 annually towards supporting their lives and study, for the full five years of their Medical Degree. In 2023, Dr Wong committed to generously support a further two duration of degree medical scholarships annually for the next five years.

Thanks to Dr Wong’s thoughtful generosity, before the end of this decade, 12 Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong scholars will be serving the community as medical professionals in the speciality of their choice. This is a wonderful tribute to Dr Wong and his legacy.

Dr Wong passed away in mid 2024, leaving his wife Louisa, son Geoffrey and two grandchildren as well as a legacy of hard work, generosity, and a desire to do some good in the world.

We will remember Dr Wong through the *Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong Scholarships in Medicine*.



Inaugural recipients of the Dr Wayne Wai-Kung Wong scholarships, Kristy Green and Dylan Wilson agree that the scholarship has given them the gifts of freedom and a little

more time for things outside of work and study.

*“This scholarship gave me a financial advantage, which meant I didn’t have to work as many hours at my job, meaning I could spend more time studying, which benefited me academically. It also relieved me of a lot of stress to do with my financial situation and gave me more time to hang out with friends and family, which positively impacted my mental health,” said Kristy. For Dylan it also supported his academic career with tangible items,*

*saying, “the scholarship had such a big impact on my studies and my life during my first year. It allowed me to have access to technology and resources which allowed me to complete my studies, and without it, medical school would be a much different experience.”*

If you would like to learn more about how you could support students at Western, please contact the Office of Advancement at [donorrelations@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:donorrelations@westernsydney.edu.au)



# EUCCHARISTIC COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP FINDING A HOME AT WESTERN

Kortana Cullen-Blissett has been part of the Western Sydney University family since she was a teenager. She first connected with the University in high school when she took part in Pathways to Dreaming, a Western-led cultural-based program encouraging higher education participation. Kortana was so passionate about being part of the program that when she changed high schools and found they did not offer Pathways to Dreaming, she worked with her new school to bring it there.

Now 20 years old, Kortana is studying a Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Secondary) with the ambition to become a music and drama teacher.

While university was always part of her plan, she had her sights set on Macquarie University before finding her home at Western.

Kortana says, *“throughout high school my heart was set on Macquarie University (MQU) and nothing, not even my family could change my mind. However, being involved in both Pathways to Dreaming (Western) and Walanga Muru (MQU) it opened my eyes to how Indigenous people are perceived and treated in different areas. When I attended Western’s campus, something just felt right. I felt proud and protected. Being an aspiring teacher, I know how important it is to feel comfortable and supported in your learning environment and that was a large factor for me.”*

The scholarship support that was available for Indigenous students also played a role in changing Kortana’s mind about her chosen university.

*“The financial support for students at Western stood out to me. Coming from a single father household into adulthood attempting to work four jobs to keep myself afloat, the potential of getting some financial assistance was a big relief.”*

Kortana is now the proud scholarship recipient of the Eucharistic Community Scholarship for Aboriginal Women and says that the scholarship has allowed her to remain close to community.

*“I am extremely grateful for the kind generosity of the Sisters as it has allowed me to work closely with my community and not have to sacrifice these moments because of work commitments. I greatly appreciate how this scholarship has allowed me to pursue my [academic studies] and succeed with the additional resources I can now afford.”*

Kortana has big plans for her future and making impact within her community in years to come. She is already thinking about how the scholarship support she is receiving will also support her future classroom and students.

*“I feel that with any scholarship from Western, I will be able to afford resources to further my own education as well as purchase resources to allocate to my future classroom. With the salary that teachers receive, I, three years from graduation, am already concerned about being able to fund my classroom. I aspire to work in rural/remote communities with high Indigenous populations or in schools with a large population from a low socio-economic background.”*

If you are interested in learning how you can support students to achieve their goals by creating scholarship opportunities, please contact Sobhini Sinnatamby at [giving@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:giving@westernsydney.edu.au).



Kortana Cullen-Blissett,  
recipient of the Eucharistic Community  
Scholarship for Aboriginal Women





Scentre Group Director of Corporate Affairs, Ms Alexis Lindsay; Scentre Group CEO, Mr Elliott Rusanow; the 2024 Brian Schwartz AM Scentre Group Scholarship for Excellence recipient, Mr Tully Lynch; prior Non-Executive Director and Scentre Group Chair (2016-2023), Mr Brian Schwartz AM and Scentre Group Organisation Capability Manager, Ms Carolyn Agar.

# SCENTRE GROUP EMPOWERING TOMORROW’S LEADERS

In recognition of retired Board Chair Brian Schwartz AM, the Scentre Group has generously committed \$30,000 to Western Sydney University to establish the Brian Schwartz AM Scentre Group Scholarship for Excellence.

*“Brian has been an influential and empowering leader of our business and was our second Board Chair between 2016 and 2023. He is a passionate advocate for diversity, inclusion and equity, investing in capabilities to grow businesses and nurturing the potential of people to succeed,”* said Elliott Rusanow, Chief Executive Officer of the Scentre Group.

*“We are very pleased to be working with Western Sydney University to acknowledge Brian’s leadership qualities, our role in the broader Western Sydney community and our shared commitment to making a difference to someone’s life through access to education.”*

The Brian Schwartz AM Scentre Group Scholarship for Excellence will be supporting a student for three years at \$10,000 each year and is aimed at recognising students’ hard

work and academic achievements.

The inaugural recipient, Tully Lynch, will use the scholarship to assist in the completion of his Bachelor of Clinical Science (Medicine) / Doctor of Medicine (MD). On being awarded the scholarship Tully said it will provide the freedom to fully focus on his studies, and ultimately deliver social good.

*“I chose to study Medicine at Western because I believe medicine is our best attempt at addressing how humans become and stay healthy,”* says Tully.

*“I am the first generation in my family to attend university and this has come with its own set of challenges. Throughout my undergraduate degree, I studied full time and worked full time concurrently; a consequence born out of the responsibility to support*

*close family and friends.”*

Former Scentre Group Chair, Mr Brian Schwartz AM, for whom the scholarship is named said, *“I’m delighted by the acknowledgement and association with this scholarship which will create life-changing opportunities. The benefit of higher education goes beyond a student’s time at university, it creates a lifelong curiosity for learning and enables people to directly contribute to the future of communities and economies.”*

*“Tully is an incredibly talented young person and I’m confident he will go on to become a competent and compassionate doctor and will provide immense support to the broader community.”*

# SPIRIT OF GIVING REFLECTED IN A GIFT FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

The spirit of philanthropy is woven into the history of Dr Mark Steglick’s family. An aunt and uncle’s past decision to establish a Foundation with an aim to provide philanthropic support, including to Indigenous communities, and a cousin’s travel to central Australia can be reflected in his decision to support scholarships for Indigenous women today.

As a Western Sydney University donor, alumnus and academic prize winner, Dr Steglick acknowledges the Foundation as influencing his choice to continue the family tradition of philanthropy by establishing an endowed scholarship for Indigenous women at Western Sydney University.

A generous endowed gift of \$125,000 from the Steglick family will support the Steglick Indigenous Women’s Scholarship. Designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women studying health, medicine or education, the scholarship will contribute \$5,000 towards each recipient’s university program fees for one year. As the gift is endowed, the scholarship will be offered in perpetuity, allowing more Indigenous women at Western to receive a head start on their educational expenses.

Noticing that in the private school sector there were more scholarship opportunities available for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men than young women, Dr Steglick established a six-year scholarship specifically for a young Indigenous woman at his daughter’s school in eastern Sydney.

The recipient went on to higher education and importantly, other parents at the school were inspired to establish further scholarships, contributing to the education of future generations of Indigenous women. Dr Steglick

hopes to be part of a similar tradition at Western.

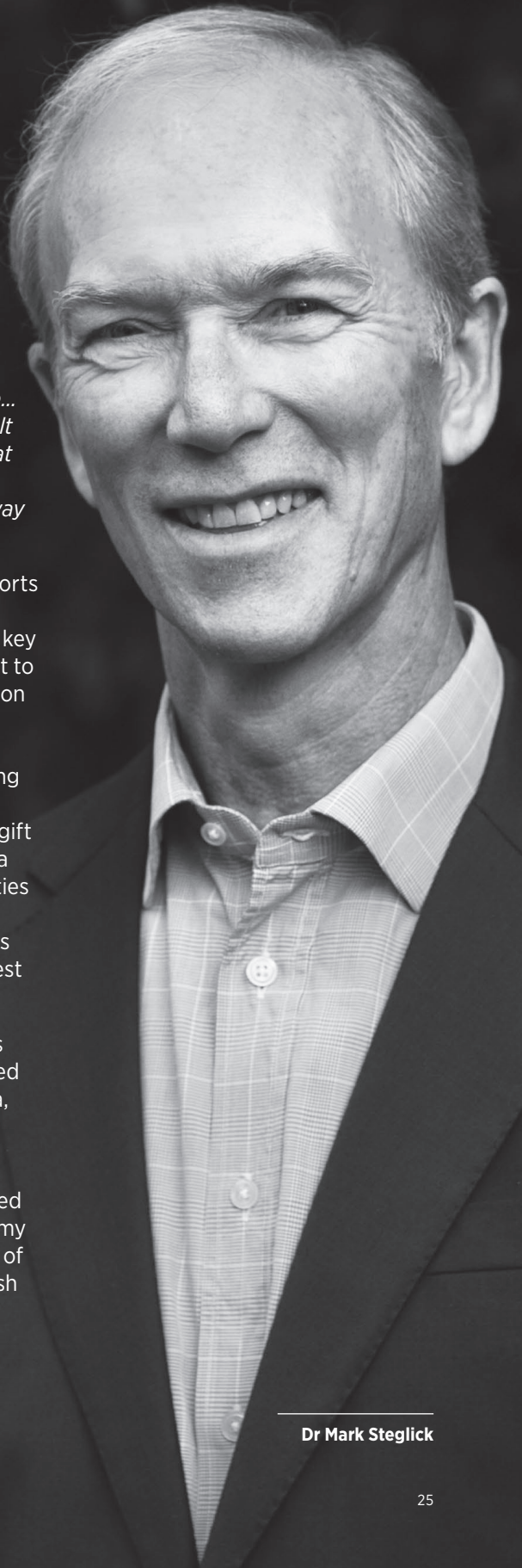
*“I mean, I was just profoundly disappointed that in a society like ours, there is this group of people... who’ve been left behind... I just felt that the disparity was so great that if there was some way we could contribute then this was a good way to do it,”* said Dr Steglick.

Generosity like Dr Steglick’s supports Western’s Indigenous Futures Decadal Strategy 2023-2032, the key values of which are a commitment to social justice and self-determination for Indigenous Australians and creating the next generation of Indigenous leaders. By establishing an endowed scholarship for Indigenous women, Dr Steglick’s gift assists Western in our goal to be a university that creates opportunities for Indigenous excellence, and commitment to ensure Indigenous students are provided with the best opportunities to succeed.

The Steglick Indigenous Women’s Scholarship has now been awarded for the first time. Recipient Tahlya, Bachelor of Arts (Pathway to Teaching Primary) student says

*“From a young age I always wanted to make my parents proud, push my limits and achieve more. I dreamt of being the first in my family to finish high school and go to university.*

*I would like to thank the Steglick family for awarding me this scholarship.”*



Dr Mark Steglick



“The Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship epitomises the Australian value of a fair go. Through the generosity of the donors and the support of Western Sydney University, I’ve been given a chance to pursue my academic goals and thrive despite the challenges I’ve faced as a refugee.”

“The opportunity provided by this scholarship is not just financial assistance; it’s a symbol of hope and opportunity. As someone who has endured many difficulties, knowing that there are compassionate individuals and institutions like Dr. Krishna Hort, Western Sydney University, and Australia itself, who believe in giving everyone a fair go, is truly heart-warming.”

“From the bottom of my heart, I extend my deepest gratitude. Thank you for believing in me and providing me with the support and encouragement I need to succeed in life.”

Bayan Sohailee, Bachelor of International Studies/Bachelor of Social Science 2023 with Bachelor of Applied Leadership and Critical Thinking, 2021, Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship recipient

# ENID HELEN HORT AND FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTING FUTURE LEADERS

Kurdish-Iranian refugee, Bayan Sohailee, has experienced firsthand the trauma of forced displacement, and is passionately committed to making a meaningful impact for marginalised communities. This commitment has been the driving force behind Bayan’s pursuit of undergraduate degrees in International Relations and Social Science.

Thanks to the Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship, Bayan has been able to focus his time on study while also serving the community through roles previously held such as the elected undergraduate student member of the Western Sydney University Board of Trustees, Vice President of the University’s Student Representative Council, and student club leader.

*“The Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship has profoundly influenced my academic journey and personal development. It has reduced financial burdens, enabling me to dedicate more time to my studies, extracurricular pursuits and meaningful volunteer work within my local community.”*

Since its establishment by Mr Harold Hort and the Hort family in 2012, the scholarship has aimed to support students experiencing hardship, ensuring they have the opportunity to attend university. In coordination with his son, Dr Krishna Hort and in memory of his late wife, Mrs Enid Helen Hort, the Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship has supported 34 students to-date and will be awarded in perpetuity.

*“The recognition from the University and its donors has been deeply inspiring and humbling. The scholarship has instilled in me a profound sense of gratitude and responsibility. I am inspired to give back to my community and make a positive impact, just as the Enid Helen Hort and Family Scholarship has done for me,”* says Bayan.

In 2021, Bayan was recognised with the Chancellor’s Unsung Heroes Award at the ZEST Awards led by the Western Sydney Community Forum. Bayan was acknowledged for his extensive volunteer work, including roles as a Corporal with St John Ambulance Australia, involvement with the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), serving as a Multicultural Youth Ambassador with MYAN and for contributions to various other organisations.

*“Volunteering can help you establish networks, build skills, improve self-esteem and confidence, and is a great way of giving back to your local community. If you have the time and want to volunteer, seek out opportunities and I promise you will not regret it,”* said Bayan.

Last year, Bayan’s dedication and leadership were further acknowledged when he received the 2023 Blacktown City Council Tertiary Scholarship Award for outstanding academic excellence.

Bayan says, *“I am proud of my achievements and deeply grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by Western Sydney University. Despite my transition to the University of Sydney [to pursue a Master of International Relations], I recognise that my journey would not have been possible without the foundation and support provided by Western. It has shaped me into the individual I am today, and I carry its values and teachings with me as I embark on this new chapter in my academic career.”*



# STAFF GIVING SPOTLIGHT PROFESSOR YI-CHEN LAN

For 30 years, Professor Yi-Chen Lan has been part of the Western Sydney University family, first as a student and alumnus, then as an academic, executive and scholarship donor.

He first came to the University from Taiwan in 1994 to study computing and information systems as an international undergraduate student. He completed his Honours degree in 1998 and PhD in 2004, going on to become Professor of Information Management within the University's School of Business and later a senior leader as Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Development.

Up until his departure in February 2024, Professor Lan was Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Development and Provost of the Vietnam campus, leaving the University to take on a new role in Taiwan as Fu Jen Catholic University's new President. Fu Jen Catholic University was first founded in 1925 in Beijing and then re-established in Taiwan in 1961. Located in Xinzhuang District in New Taipei City, it is a top-ranked comprehensive university with 26,000 students and more than 200,000 alumni.

Professor Lan has been a trusted and valued colleague, teacher and friend to many at the University. He has given back in many ways, including the Staff Giving program through which he established the George WH Lan Scholarship – named in honour of his father – to help support students from all backgrounds to realise their dream of university study.

The late George WH Lan started his career as a school teacher, and even though he went on to become a multinational business owner, his passion for education never waned. His son chose a scholarship for high-achieving business students as the perfect way to honour his memory.

*"There are young people who are really talented but can't go to [university] because of their economic situation,"* Professor Lan says.

*"My father believed that if we have the capacity to support these young people, we should."*

Professor Lan experienced the life-changing impact of education himself. *"Australia is a great country and I decided I wanted to make it my home,"* he says. *"Even in the early days of my studies when I was finding it very tough, I was fortunate that my father was supporting me."*

With the help of the scholarship, which amounts to \$10,000 per year for the duration of a student's degree, Professor Lan's hope is to give students the same chance he had to achieve their best without the distraction of financial pressures.

Former Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Barney Glover AO has thanked Professor Lan for his outstanding service, philanthropy and leadership.

"Professor Yi-Chen Lan has made a significant and sustained contribution to the development of Western Sydney University over many decades. He has been particularly instrumental in strengthening our international presence and deepening our engagement and partnerships with key institutions overseas. This includes establishing our Vietnam campus in partnership with UEH University, helping it to become an important driver for economic and social development in the region," said Professor Glover.

"Together with the Institute of International Education he also established a humanitarian scholarship initiative to support refugee and displaced students from Myanmar to study at the Vietnam campus, for which he was recently recognised with a prestigious Centenary Medal. His passion for the transformative impact of higher education has been the hallmark of his career, and I have no doubt he will carry this same student-centred focus into his new role as President."

"On behalf of the University community, I warmly wish Professor Lan all the best on this next chapter in his career – I know he will continue to be a strong supporter and friend of this University for years to come."



Professor Yi-Chen Lan and scholarship recipient Kimroth Kung





# GIVING DAY 2023

## SCORING A HOLE-IN-ONE FOR WESTERN

On Wednesday, 6 September 2023, the University community once again joined together for Giving Day 2023, to celebrate the impact of philanthropy and to raise funds for important causes at Western.

\$1,343,554 was raised through the kindness of 384 donors – an incredible community effort. The Chancellor's Challenge was again the highlight of Giving Day, with then newly installed Chancellor, Professor Jennifer Westacott AO, and Team Chancellor pitting their golf skills against Professor Barney Glover AO and Team Vice-Chancellor in the Chancellor's Challenge Golf Competition. Team Chancellor, raising funds for the Indigenous Centre of Excellence, raised the trophy in the golf competition while Team Vice-Chancellor, supporting Integrative Health Research at Western, proudly raising the most funds of the two teams for their cause.

Giving Day's incredible fundraising total went to support three special areas within the University in scholarships, student programs, and research and innovation.

The Giving Day Walk was back again with a dedicated group of students, staff and community taking part in the 10km adventure from our Parramatta South campus to raise funds for what they are most passionate about at the University.

Western is so proud of the commitment of the wider University community who came together in the spirit of philanthropy on the day. Thank you to everyone who played a part in such a successful day.

**Western thanks our incredible leadership gift donors who made Giving Day 2023 so impactful and whose kindness will be felt for generations to come.**

- Presentation Sisters
- Dr Mark Steglick
- Lee Ming Tee Foundation
- Western Sydney Local Health District & WSU School of Social Sciences
- Genea and The Generations Foundation
- GJK Facility Services
- Rae and Barry Roy
- William Buck Foundation
- Ray White Commercial Western Sydney
- GO Foundation
- GPT First Nations Scholarship
- Rotary Club of Carlingford
- Eucharistic Community
- Peter Eichhorn
- Women In Industrial
- Daisy & Libero Soldatić





# THANK YOU

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