

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mary MacKillop Today Announced as Finalist for FIA 2026 Best Transformational Gift Award

Sydney, Australia — Dec 2025

Mary MacKillop Today is proud to announce that it has been named a Finalist for the **Fundraising Institute Australia (FIA) 2026 Best Transformational Gift Award** for its innovative project, *EdTech for Early Learning* in Timor-Leste.

The nomination recognises the significant and lasting impact that strategic philanthropy and community-centred innovation is creating for children, families, and educators in Timor-Leste. The project demonstrates how digital learning tools, when developed collaboratively and delivered with dignity, can strengthen early childhood education across communities.

The submission, led by **Francesca Cinelli** and **April de Haan**, highlights the extraordinary generosity of **The Noel and Carmel O'Brien Family Foundation**, whose transformational gift made the project possible. Mary MacKillop Today extends its heartfelt thanks for this remarkable contribution and for the Foundation's commitment to supporting sustainable, locally led change.

This year's FIA Awards attracted more than 170 entries from over 100 organisations across Australia. Mary MacKillop Today is honoured to be recognised alongside an exceptional group of finalists, including:

- Adelaide Festival Centre – *Adelaide Festival Centre Foundation Endowment*
- Children's Cancer Institute Australia – *Levi's Project: A future for kids with DIPG*
- Peter MacCallum Cancer Foundation – *Uniting donor and discovery to drive a bold leap in cancer research*
- Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation – *Community-led transformation of paediatric palliative care – Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation's \$13m gift from Mounties Group*
- The University of Newcastle – *From Beanies to Breakthroughs: The Mark Hughes Foundation's Transformational Gift to Brain Cancer Research*
- The University of Notre Dame Australia – *Pain, Purpose and Philanthropy: The Legacy of the Churack Family*

This award category is proudly sponsored by DGB Global.

The winner will be announced at the FIA Conference Awards Gala Dinner on Thursday, 26 February 2026, in Melbourne.

“Being named a Finalist is an honour and a testament to the power of partnership, generosity, and community-led innovation.

We are proud to stand alongside such incredible organisations who are changing lives through transformational philanthropy,” said April de Haan, Philanthropy Manager, Mary MacKillop Today.

Regardless of the final result, the recognition reflects the dedication of all involved and marks an important milestone for the *EdTech for Early Learning* initiative and Mary MacKillop Today’s ongoing mission to support education and dignity for all.

Photo: April de Haan, Philanthropy Manager and Francesca Cinelli, Fundraising and Marketing Director, Mary MacKillop Today.

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