



Sisters of Charity Foundation



Chairman's Speech

Signing of Memorandum of Understanding

between

Australian Catholic University and Sisters of Charity Foundation

The Sisters of Charity Foundation is delighted to be able to work in partnership with the ACU to help realize our vision for a scholarship programme that targets young women leaving out of home care.

For differing reasons these young women have not had the support from their parents and family that so many of us take for granted but have however been able to rely on the support of foster carers.

It sometimes happens that because of circumstances beyond their control young people in foster care have often experienced disrupted schooling and their educational outcomes have been compromised as a result.

When this is then coupled with financial disadvantage tertiary education can often come beyond their reach.

Education is a powerful driver of change and growth – both for individuals and the wider society in which they will work.

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

All society benefits from a skilled, committed workforce, while the individual gains confidence and satisfaction from developing and using these skills.

Indeed Robert Zoellick, the President of the World Bank, has said “investing in women and girls is not only the right thing to do, but is also the smart thing to do

This scholarship programme has particular significance for our Foundation.

Since 1838 the Sisters of Charity, impelled by love of Christ, have devoted themselves to practical service of the poor.

Five devout and courageous women travelled from Ireland to Sydney and immediately set about ministering to the prisoners in the Female Factory at Parramatta.

Their commitment to improving the standards of health, education and welfare saw the rapid development of St Vincent's Education and St Vincent's Hospitals , all of which have set an enviable benchmark of achievement and dedication to excellence.

So, while our scholarship programme is primarily about offering brighter futures to motivated young women, it is also an opportunity for us to honour the mission and history of the Sisters of Charity in Australia.

Our vision has been made a reality because of the shared mission and commitment with the Australian Catholic University.

I would like to thank Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Anne Cummins, for her commitment and the commitment of her team to bringing these scholarships to life and ensuring that they will be available for the 2012 academic year.

I would also like to express our appreciation to Kate Evans and Colleen Malone who have expertly guided this programme through the University's processes ensuring that all criteria were met within a tight timeframe.

It would be remiss of me not to also acknowledge our CEO Reba Meagher who brought the idea of the scholarships to our Board (who incidentally embraced this idea with great enthusiasm) and worked hard to move the idea from a concept to a reality

However, much of the success of this programme will be driven by our partners – the out of home care providers. We are relying on the agencies and their case workers to be the bridge that delivers motivated young women to the doors of a brighter future.

We thank all who have joined with us in a spirit of community service to be a catalyst for change in the lives of those we are committed to serve.