

Dear Sponsors and Supporters,

December 19, 2017

Our Solomon Islands Placement and Community Experience Program took place from November 2nd to December 5th, 2017. The Australian Federal Government's New Colombo Plan funding scheme means that this program is accessible to a wide range of our preservice teachers, and the twenty that participated in 2017 did a marvellous job of collecting donations and funds to support the communities with whom we work. The support we received, both financial and through donations, is humbling and makes a significant difference in the very underprivileged context of Solomon Islands. This letter aims to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supports the program and outlines information on some of the impact you and/or your organisation has had through this support. We hope it helps to illustrate what a difference you have helped to achieve.

We received donations from a number of organisations including **AFL Victoria and Queensland, Squash Victoria, Volleyball Victoria, Netball Victoria, AMART Sports, Rebel Sport, Bunnings, Ballarat Books, Officeworks, Modern Teaching Aids, Marbig, Artline, Texta, Hardy Grant Publishing, National Gallery of Australia (Canberra), Kmart (Brunswick and Moonee Ponds), Yarra Trams Essendon Depot, ABC Centre Ballarat, Rotary Club of Ballarat West, Art Gallery of Ballarat, and Staedtler and Panthers on the Prowl**. The combined efforts of our generous families, friends, colleagues and the preservice teachers added to the fundraising and donations.

Virgin Airlines donated a baggage allowance of one bag per person to the Solomon Islands. The support from Virgin, and the resources donated meant **we collectively transported an astounding 621kgs of books, sporting equipment and other teaching resources to the Solomon Islands**. These were shared across Bishop Epalle Catholic School in Honiara, Paposi Primary School on North Savo Island, and Nagotano Primary School on Buenavista Island, Small Gela. These schools do not normally have access to many of the instructional materials/equipment that support quality teaching and learning. The benefits for our preservice teachers (and impact on the students they were teaching) of utilising the wide array of resources donated was certainly significant for all involved.

Our preservice teachers worked hard to undertake fundraising in the lead up to the trip through bake sales, a trivia night fundraiser, and a Go Fund Me page, and **collectively raised over \$4600AUD** to support the schools. Aside from the significant impact that providing these resources has for the schools we work with, the support we received this year enabled two remarkable achievements that have not happened before:

1) Completion of the Paposi School Library and Resource Building

Paposi Primary school have been working towards the construction of a library building for the past two years. In 2016, our first time working with Paposi School, the "library building" was merely a wooden base frame (Picture 1). Our arrival in 2017 saw a building frame (Picture 2), but progress had ceased due to a lack of funds. We discussed the allocation of a portion of the fundraising money among our group, and then with the school administration, it was decided that ACU would fund the completion of the building in time for the 2017 closing and graduation ceremony.



Picture 1. Library frame 2016.



Picture 2. Library in progress early November, 2017.



Picture 3. The library in progress (late November 2017).



Picture 4. The library opening, early December, 2017.

This was cause for great celebration for the school; it is the first library on the island and was a huge collaborative achievement. The opening was reported in the local paper. The other half of the fundraising money was utilised to purchase some much needed audio visual equipment for Bishop Epalle Catholic School- including two UE Mega Boom Speakers, a digital camera and a mega phone.

2) Interschool tri-sports carnival

Sharing the sporting equipment that was donated across both Paposi Primary School and Bishop Epalle Catholic School, the preservice teachers conducted physical education lessons specific to Volleyball, AFL and Squash, held try-outs, and selected a multi-sports squad for each school. The teams trained, and we funded transport for the Paposi team to travel to Honiara and compete against the Bishop Epalle team.

This was the first experience of coming to Honiara for many of the Paposi children, and certainly the first competition that took place with representation from two islands. After much anticipation, the students competed in matches for the three sports, with Paposi school taking the title at the end of the day.



Picture 5. Primary boys play with AFL balls as they watch the games.



Picture 6. Two Paposi Squash players.



Picture 7. The Bishop Epalle squad- runners up.



Picture 8. The Paposi squad- competition champions.

There is a strong sense that our time in the Solomon's affected all participants deeply. **Views were changed, attitudes shifted, challenges embraced and insights gained.** Our students come to understand the significant privilege we experience in Australia, and that many of the things we take for granted, such as education, are so sought after and difficult to access in other places. As such, we all felt a strong sense of responsibility to contribute, and continue to seek social justice for all. The program is growing slowly, and over the coming years we hope to expand our reach and continue to work with our Solomon Islands neighbours to enhance education for all.

We still need your support!

Every good program must be sustainable and continue to adapt and change to work towards evolving goals. Therefore, we hope we can count on your continued support for future iterations of our program.

Before we prepare for our 2018 program, we are **working towards an academic and cultural exchange** whereby we will **bring two Solomon Islands teachers we work with to Australia in May 2018** for two weeks. We will be providing them the opportunity to attend classes at ACU with our preservice teachers and visit some primary schools. We are also looking to show them some of the Australian context, like attending an AFL game and an Australian wildlife park. If anyone has any ideas or would be able to contribute to this exchange in any way please contact renata.cinelli@acu.edu.au – all ideas and contributions would be welcome- we want to make this dream a reality for our partners.

“Little by little, a little becomes a lot”. Tanzanian Proverb.

With heartfelt thanks,

ACU Staff: Dr Mellita Jones (Ballarat), Dr Renata Cinelli (Melbourne), and Ms Mary Gallagher (Canberra).

2017 ACU Preservice teachers: Katie Rawet, Eilish Flagg, Emily Nicholson, Stefanie Schoolderman, Chloe Johnston, Lydia Nolan, Stephen Roberts, Nicholas Seeber, Meagan Azzopardi, Tyler Boyd, Tim Gilbert, Bree Alger, Sophie Weber, Maddison Balzano, Gabrielle Ciampa, James Carrocci, Sarah Contin, Katherine Howard, Montana Fitzgerald, Holly Ross-Gilder.

