

## Philanthropist changing the lives of women and children in Timor-Leste awarded honorary doctorate

Australian Catholic University (ACU) has awarded its highest honour, an honorary doctorate, to Marianne MacRitchie and a posthumous award to the Hon John Fahey AC, GCSG during graduation ceremonies in Sydney.

The university recognised **Mrs MacRitchie** for her contribution to the people of Timor-Leste and for being a valued philanthropist to the university.

After a successful career in the financial services sector spanning two decades, Mrs MacRitchie turned her leadership skills to philanthropy.

Her new career began with a project that funded a girls' school in Adjumani, Uganda for three years. Such was its success that the United Nations sponsored the project which became its model for many other projects around the world.

Following this success Mrs MacRitchie and her husband Ian established the Emerge Foundation to promote education gender equality, and women's and children's health in the newly independent country of Timor-Leste, a country where some 60 per cent of women and 44 per cent of men are illiterate.

Since 2008, The Emerge Foundation has supported the people of Timor-Leste and ACU with three key programs:

- The Future in Youth program, which in recent years has supported more than 5,000 Timorese youth from more than 30 schools, using sport to improve the wellbeing, life skills and education of these young people.
- The Maternal Children program, which promotes health literacy and basic primary health care for people in the Dili and Baucau districts, lowering the rate of childhood mortality and disease, and improving the quality of first-aid care for infants and women in remote villages.
- And the establishment and support of the Catholic Teachers' College in Baucau, a leading educational institution that has trained primary school teachers who've gone on to teach in all 13 districts of Timor-Leste.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said Mrs MacRitchie's work and generosity have had a remarkable impact on the lives of the people of Timor-Leste and beyond the young nation.

“Marionne’s generosity and talents have clearly had a profound influence on the people the Emerge Foundation has worked with in Timor-Leste, and also on us here at ACU – our students, our staff and the broader university community.

“Through her vision and collaborative spirit, her role in helping to educate, heal and empower women and children in economically marginalised societies, will have a lasting impact.”

Mrs MacRitchie has previously been awarded the title of ACU Honorary Fellow, and among her other professional awards, she was the 2016 recipient of the Women in Financial Services Award. In 2019, she was recognised as one of the Australian Financial Review’s 100 Women of Influence. Her husband Ian MacRitchie received an honorary doctorate from ACU in 2014.

ACU also bestowed an honorary Doctor of Laws on **Mr Fahey** who served as Chancellor from 2014 until his death in 2020.

After a distinguished career in politics, public life and community service, Mr Fahey led the university through a period of growth and rising profile.

Among his greatest achievements was oversight of the university’s expansion strategy. During his time as chancellor, ACU established its first international campus in Rome. Meanwhile, courses commenced at the new St Francis of Assisi campus in Adelaide. And in Brisbane, both the Saint John Paul II Building and the ACU Leadership Centre opened their doors. It was also during Mr Fahey’s era that ACU enhanced its research capabilities, forming five new centres across many disciplines, and four new clinical schools in the health sciences.

Professor Skrbis said the honorary doctorate was a fitting tribute to a man who personified ACU’s mission as a Catholic university.

He said Mr Fahey’s legacy would continue to have an impact on the lives of future generations of ACU students who received a world-class Catholic higher education.

Mr Fahey’s granddaughter Amber received the award on his behalf.

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