



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

Media Release

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Student nurse named inaugural Robin Miller Sugarbird Lady Award winner

The University of Notre Dame Australia is proud to announce newly graduated nurse Ellen Bermingham as the recipient of the inaugural Robin Miller Sugarbird Lady Award.

The award celebrates the legacy of trailblazing nurse and aviator Robin Miller, who flew solo across the North West of Western Australia to deliver vaccines to remote communities during a polio outbreak in the late 1960s.

Funded by the Royal Australian Airforce Association (RAAFA) WA, the annual award will be presented to a Broome nursing student who has completed a placement in the Kimberley or the Pilbara.

Ellen completed her placement on the pediatric unit at Broome Hospital earlier this year and graduated from Notre Dame last week with a Bachelor of Nursing.

She received the award at her Graduation Ceremony in front of members of Robin's family and the RAAFA.

Robin earned the nickname Sugarbird Lady for delivering the polio vaccine to children on sugar cubes, helping to mask its bitter taste.

She flew her personal plane to administer the vaccine and continued to live a life of service and adventure until she died of cancer at age 35 in 1975.

Notre Dame's Rural Nursing and Midwifery Program Lead, Scott Stokes, said Robin was a true pioneer – both in the skies and in the service of humanity.

"Robin's courage, compassion and unwavering commitment to rural health access continue to inspire generations of nurses," Associate Professor Stokes said.

"The Sugarbird Lady Award honours her trailblazing contribution to public health and encourages our students to carry forward her mission of increasing access to healthcare for those in rural and remote areas."

RAAFA Chief Customer and Community Officer, Aaron Crowther, said: "RAAFA is proud to honour Robin Miller's legacy by inspiring nursing students to apply their skills and passion in the Kimberley and Pilbara,

helping these communities thrive with better access to care."

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