

Media Release

2 July 2026

MacKillop Maidstone serves up tribute to Australian tennis legend

MacKillop Education's Maidstone campus has unveiled a vibrant new mural honouring Australian tennis icon **Evonne Goolagong Cawley AC MBE**, in a powerful initiative that brings together sport, culture and opportunity for young people in Melbourne's west.

Commissioned by the Australian Tennis Foundation (ATF) and Emirates, the permanent mural now stands at the heart of the school as both a striking visual centrepiece and a daily source of inspiration for students.



Designed by Melbourne-based artist Hayden Dewar in collaboration with students, the mural features colourful Australian wildlife and doubles as a functional hitting wall. With tennis equipment supplied and maintained by the ATF, students can access the sport independently throughout the day, extending opportunities for engagement beyond structured sessions.

MacKillop Education Maidstone provides tailored education for children who have experienced challenges in mainstream settings, including those navigating neurodiversity, trauma and school refusal.

Through the ATF's Move. Breathe. Belong. program, students have taken part in four terms of weekly coaching delivered by trained professionals—an initiative that has grown into something far more impactful than originally envisioned.

Tammy Byrne, Co-Principal at MacKillop's Maidstone campus has observed noticeable shifts in student engagement and wellbeing, "learning to play tennis with a coaching professional has provided a consistent, calm and inclusive space where students can build confidence at their own pace.

"For many of our students, engaging in sport hasn't always been accessible or comfortable. Our students often need supported, low-pressure opportunities to connect with others and try something new. Tennis has provided a calm and inclusive space where they can build skills, confidence and positive peer relationships."

Tammy added, "We've also seen students use the hitting wall as a way to regulate their emotions and reset during the day. With that support in place, they're then more able to engage positively with others - whether that's joining a game or inviting peers to play. Seeing students independently organise games during breaks has been a really encouraging sign of growing confidence, social connection and a sense of belonging."

The addition of the hitting wall has further extended this impact, with students now independently organising games during breaks and lunchtime, an encouraging sign of growing confidence and social connection," Tammy added.

The decision to feature Evonne Goolagong Cawley reflects both her legacy and the program's core values of resilience, excellence and belonging. As one of Australia's most celebrated athletes and a proud First Nations woman, her story holds particular significance for the school's strong cohort of First Nations students, offering a relatable and inspiring role model within their everyday environment.

The success of the program at Maidstone highlights its future potential, with Move. Breathe. Belong. set to expand to additional MacKillop Education sites across Melbourne. At its core, the initiative demonstrates how strategic partnerships and targeted investment can deliver lasting impact. At MacKillop Maidstone, this is already evident through increased student participation, stronger social connections and growing confidence among young people.

The mural hitting wall forms part of Emirates' Force for Good program, a \$2.25 million, five-year commitment aimed at creating brighter futures for young Australians through access to tennis.

With Evonne Goolagong Cawley's legacy now embedded in the campus, the initiative is set to inspire generations of students for years to come.

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