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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Mary MacKillop Today Philanthropy Manager Wins National Myth Smashers Award for Challenging Inequity in Fundraising**

**Melbourne, Australia** - Mary MacKillop Today is celebrating national recognition after Philanthropy Manager, April de Haan, was named the 2026 Myth Smashers winner at the Fundraising Institute Australia Conference in Melbourne last week.

April's award-winning presentation challenged a persistent myth shaping professional opportunity across Australia's fundraising sector:

***"It's not what you know, it's who you know."***

Growing up in rural Western Sydney, April described the phrase as less advice and more a barrier.

"No one in my family had been to university. There were no boardrooms, no professional networks, no quiet introductions," she told a room of sector leaders. "Very early on, I learned what inequity feels like. Being capable and motivated, but shut out because of circumstance."

Instead of accepting the myth, April built her career around capability, ethics, and purpose. She studied international relations, volunteered, interned, processed donations, and developed deep expertise in ethical fundraising practice.

In a moving moment during her presentation, she shared a photo of herself at 10 years old dressed as ophthalmologist and humanitarian Fred Hollows, fundraising for the Fred Hollows Foundation.

"I didn't inherit a network," April said. "I built a purpose."

Now Philanthropy Manager at Mary MacKillop Today, April manages major donor relationships, supporting education and community development programs across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. She also serves on the Marketing & Growth Committee of Plan International Australia's Board.

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Her presentation also challenged recruitment practices in the sector, particularly job advertisements stating, *“existing donor connections desirable.”*

“That’s not a strategy,” she told delegates. “That’s exclusion. It reinforces privilege and shrinks our talent pool.”

April emphasised that fundraising success is built not on inherited networks, but on expertise, empathy, integrity, and authentic relationship-building.

“Philanthropy is not a closed club,” she said. “It’s a conversation, one that anyone with purpose and knowledge can lead.”

The Myth Smashers program has been led for the past decade by sector leader Gavin Coopey, who was also honoured at the conference with the prestigious Arthur Venn Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to Australia’s fundraising profession.

Mary MacKillop Today CEO, Jane Woolford said, “the recognition reflects both April’s leadership and the organisation’s commitment to ethical and inclusive philanthropy.”

“April represents the future of fundraising, values-driven, strategic and deeply committed to equity. We are incredibly proud to see her leadership recognised nationally.”

**For interviews, images or further information:**

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