



# Stories of transformation and lasting impact





Across Victoria, many talented young women finish Year 12 with outstanding results and ambitious dreams for the future. Yet for some, financial disadvantage stands in the way of pursuing university study and realising their full potential.

Significant challenges such as financial hardship, social isolation, family responsibilities and limited access to support networks make it extremely difficult for these students to take the next step. Most are the first in their families to pursue higher education. The high costs of tuition, living expenses and the need to relocate, especially from rural areas, often force students to take on excessive part-time work simply to survive. Without targeted support, many talented and hardworking young women miss out, and the cycle of disadvantage continues.

Despite the proven impact of our scholarships, the Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation (MJLSF) is forced to turn away exceptional, high-achieving young women every year. The need across Victoria is great, and we simply do not have enough funds to support all who deserve help.

# Our vision

We are committed to opening doors and transforming lives for young women across Victoria.

The Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation empowers determined, ambitious young women by providing crucial financial support, comprehensive personal development, and the chance to realise their educational dreams.

Our goal is to increase the number of financially disadvantaged young Victorian women completing university, and to do so, we need your help.

We inspire.  
We support.  
We give back.

# Melissa Garwood

2009 MARY JANE LEWIS SCHOLAR  
BACHELOR OF BIOMEDICINE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

“Twenty-six years after being born at Sunshine Hospital, I returned – this time not as a patient, but as a doctor. My life journey until that time was fraught with hurdles that I overcame to be the contributing member to society I am today.

I was in foster care for over a year as an infant and returned to the custody of my father after that time. My parents’ relationship was complex, and my siblings and I suffered because of this. My primary and secondary school years were punctuated by financial hardship whereby my family relied on government payments which were never enough. I was the first person in a household of eight to have a job at the age of 15. I made it through secondary college to be Dux in 2008 with the assistance of scholarships as well as my job earnings.

As a student at the University of Melbourne, I completed a Bachelor of Biomedicine, an Honours research year and a postgraduate degree in the Doctor of Medicine. I have worked as a doctor for over eight years, and am currently in the Victorian specialty training program for Medical Oncology.

For the three years of my bachelor’s degree the Mary Jane Lewis (MJL) Scholarship provided me with the emotional and financial support I needed to develop a concrete foundation in tertiary education. It was invaluable to my success in university studies and ultimate achievement of becoming a doctor. For this, I will always be grateful to the MJL Scholarship Foundation.”

2022 MARY JANE LEWIS SCHOLAR  
BACHELOR OF LAWS (HONOURS)/POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY AND ECONOMICS,  
MONASH UNIVERSITY

“The Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship foundation has relieved me of this stress. I no longer worried about not having a digital device to conduct my university work or not being able to purchase the necessary textbooks for my units; this was liberating for me.”

Growing up in Melbourne’s west in a lower income, single-parent household, Milena worried about financial insecurity.

Beyond financial support, the mentorship and community gave her confidence to pursue her dream career. Now in her final semester, Milena has secured a role within Forensic Disability Clinical Services in the Department of Families, Fairness, and Housing.

“I am so thankful for this scholarship and to be a part of this community. I am thankful for the monetary and non-monetary support I have received, and for all the people I have met, and who have helped me along the way. I am forever grateful.”

# Milena Elenoa Knight



# Anastasia Arestia

2009 MARY JANE LEWIS SCHOLAR AND SCHOLARSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER  
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

**“This scholarship changes lives. It changed mine.”**

Anastasia’s childhood was marked by instability: foster care from age six, moving 11 times before turning 11, and packing belongings into bin bags with every move. Later, chronic fatigue syndrome and undiagnosed ADHD and autism added to her challenges.

Despite this, she excelled at school, earned a place at the University of Melbourne, and was recognised by the MJL Scholarship Committee for her potential.

“This scholarship enabled me to not only attend University, but to really experience it. For the first time in my life, I shook off my history and carved a new path – one where I was confident in who I was and who I wanted to be.”

Now a successful engineer and leader in her field, Anastasia is committed to supporting women in underrepresented industries.

Your support can have a direct impact on the number of lives we can change, the number of women able to reach their potential in successful and rewarding careers and the number of doors we can open.

# How we create change

To enable and support these exceptional young women in their tertiary education, the Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation focuses on:

- M Providing scholarships to talented young women facing financial hardship to cover tuition, living expenses, and educational needs.
- M Offering holistic support including mentoring, practical advice, financial literacy, networking and personal development opportunities, and valuable industry exposure.
- M Building partnerships with universities and community organisations to maximise impact and reach.
- M Raising awareness about the barriers faced by brilliant but financially disadvantaged young women in accessing higher education.

The Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship is currently available to young women undertaking any undergraduate degree at any university in Victoria. Recipients are selected through an application and interview process.



# Our impact

Increased access and participation in university for financially disadvantaged young women, particularly in fields where women are underrepresented or male dominated, as demonstrated in our over 20-year history.

- Improved academic outcomes and higher completion rates for scholarship recipients due to reduced financial stress and access to support.
- Enhanced career opportunities and greater economic independence for these women, breaking cycles of disadvantage.
- Increased representation of diverse perspectives and talents within the university student body and future workforce.
- Positive role models and inspiration for other young women from similar backgrounds, encouraging them also break the cycle and pursue higher education.

In this way we work towards a more equitable and inclusive society where young women from all backgrounds can realise their full potential, shaping communities and industries with diverse, empowered voices.

**Help us change the trajectory of young women's lives.**

Join us in opening doors for exceptional young women with big dreams. Already, more than 100 outstanding young women have stepped into higher education and a world of possibility through our support. Together, we can propel even more young women to lead, innovate, and shape a brighter, more inclusive future for generations to come.



# How you can make a lasting impact

Your generosity can change lives, open doors, and help create the next generation of Victorian women leaders:

- 1. Donate.** Every contribution enables us to support more outstanding students and expand our reach.
- 2. Sponsor an undergraduate scholarship.** A gift of \$35,000 can fund one young woman through three years of study, where you will be recognised as a named supporter.
- 3. Sponsor a complete five-year educational journey.** With \$60,000, you can support both undergraduate and postgraduate study, transforming a life with naming rights.
- 4. Endow a scholarship in perpetuity.** A tax-deductible gift of \$250,000 is invested, creating a named giving account within the Equity Trustees Charitable Foundation. Your generous gift will support one new Mary Jane Lewis scholar every three years. And as your named giving account grows – via tax-exempt investment returns or further contributions, more scholars can be supported. Through your giving account you will be supporting the education of young women, forever. And your name and your impact continues, well beyond your lifetime.

- 5. Invest in our alumni network.** Help sustain our strong community of empowered women leaders and the program structures that support them.
- 6. Leave a gift in your will.** By including the Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation in your estate plans, you create a profound and legacy for future generations of Victorian young women. Your bequest ensures that opportunity and hope continue for years to come.

The Mary Jane Lewis Scholarship Foundation is endorsed as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR). All donations are tax deductible. Please contact us to discuss how you can give or to find out more about the impact your support will have.

**Fiona Reed, Chair**

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Together, we can make sure no high-achieving young Victorian woman is turned away for lack of resources.

Together, we can shape a future of opportunity, equality, and leadership for all.



Mary  
Jane  
Lewis