

NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

A Vision Born from Country Life

Beryl Neilsen OAM and her late husband John Neilsen understood deeply the educational challenges faced by children growing up in rural and remote Australia.

Having lived the realities of country life—drought, floods, pests, financial pressures, government regulations and the impact of mining expansion—they saw firsthand the stark contrast between the educational opportunities available to city students and those living in the bush.

Despite these challenges, Beryl and John never lost sight of a dream: to one day help country children access the education and opportunities they deserved.

The Winchester Foundation is a lasting memento to her husband and herself and is named after their property known as “Winchester Downs”.

That dream became reality in 2010 when, Beryl established the John & Beryl Neilsen Winchester Foundation as a Public Foundation.

Just two years later, in 2012, the Foundation awarded its first four tertiary scholarships—marking the beginning of a remarkable journey of educational support for rural and remote students.

A Growing Impact

From those humble beginnings, the Foundation has grown into a powerful force for educational opportunity across Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Milestones

2012

4 inaugural tertiary scholarships awarded

2026

484 scholarships awarded, including:

289 Secondary Scholarships

191 Tertiary Scholarships

4 Trade Scholarships

In total, the Foundation has awarded **2,467** scholarships to **935** individual students.

These scholarships support students across all stages of education—from **primary and secondary school through to university and TAFE**.

130

students have graduated from university

To date:

162

students have completed Year 12 with Winchester support

Every scholarship recipient and their families proudly become Winchester Ambassadors, helping spread awareness of the Foundation’s mission and strengthening the network of support for rural education.

BEYOND SCHOLARSHIPS: ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Festival

In 2013, the Foundation organised and fully funded a group of 93 students and 14 teachers from Brigalow District Schools—including Mistake Creek, Kilcummin, Coppabella, Valkyrie, Nebo, Mackenzie River and Clarke Creek—to attend the Whitsunday Voices Youth Literature Festival.

Held at Whitsunday Anglican School, the festival brings students from Prep to Year 12 face-to-face with talented writers, illustrators and performers, creating a truly enriching and inspiring learning experience. Through workshops, presentations and interactive sessions, students are encouraged to explore creativity, storytelling and literacy in ways that ignite a lifelong love of reading and learning.

What began as a single opportunity has grown into a long-term educational partnership.

In 2025, Foundation support enabled **464 students, 72 teachers and 22 schools** to attend the festival.

Over the past **12 years, a remarkable 5,096 rural students and 714 teachers** have participated in this inspiring literary event—an achievement made possible through Beryl's vision and the dedication of many volunteers.

We look forward to welcoming back students and teachers for this year's festival being held on 16th and 17th July, 2026.



Isolated Parents & Children's Association (ICPA Qld)

The Foundation's partnership with Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland began in 2014 with sponsorship of the Queensland State Conference in Townsville, hosted by the Belyando/Mt Coolon Branch.

Over the past twelve years, this collaboration has grown into a strong and valued relationship built on a shared mission: ensuring that distance and isolation never become barriers to education. The partnership reflects a deep commitment to rural communities and a shared belief in creating greater opportunities for country children and their families.

The 2026 State Conference is being held in Atherton on 4th and 5th June, 2026, the Foundation is proud to continue its support as **Diamond Sponsor**.



Springsure Cattle Camp

This year marks the introduction of the Foundation's sponsorship of the Springsure Cattle Camp being held on 9th to 12th April, 2026.

The four-day camp brings together approximately 105 young participants from across Central Queensland, including students travelling from as far north as Sarina.

Participants gain valuable hands-on experience in key aspects of the cattle industry, including:

- Junior cattle judging
- Parading
- Branding
- Understanding weigh bills
- Auctioneering

Through these activities, students develop practical agricultural knowledge, leadership skills and confidence while building connections with peers who share a passion for rural industries.

Mackay Chamber Music Festival

Also, for the first time this year, the Foundation is providing sponsorship to enable **students and teachers from remote areas of Central West Queensland** to attend the Mackay Chamber Music Festival being held on 15th to 19th July, 2026.

The festival forms part of the broader Mackay Festival of Arts and is led by former Mackay musician Glenn Christensen, now Principal Violinist with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra.

The initiative offers students—and importantly, their teachers—an extraordinary opportunity to spend a week immersed in music, working alongside world-class musicians through workshops, rehearsals and performances.

The program culminates in a series of concerts at the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, providing a truly inspiring cultural experience.

2025 Scholarship Recipient Luncheon held at Winchester Downs

The 2026 Winchester Scholarships Recipient Luncheon will be held at Winchester Downs on Saturday, 27th June, 2026. We welcome all past and present Recipients and Family to join us for this wonderful event.



Beryl Neilsen Winchester Scholarships would like to Welcome the following team members.



Nicholas Flor – B.Bus
Director



Brendan Brieffies – BVSc
Foundation Associate
2012 Inaugural Recipient



Brittany Vella – BspPath (Hons)
Foundation Associate
2014 Recipient



Charles Williams – Grazier
Foundation Associate



A Legacy That Lives On

Winchester Scholarships stand as a lasting tribute to Beryl's generosity and unwavering belief in the potential of country children.

Because of Beryl's dream-and the determination to see it realized – **rural and remote students have been given the opportunity to pursue their education, follow their ambitions and build brighter futures.**



Beryl Neilsen
WINCHESTER
SCHOLARSHIPS
Empowering Country Children

A donation to The Winchester Foundation is a gift that keeps on giving for rural and remote students in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

As a registered Public Foundation, donations are fully tax-deductible.

Contact us:

www.winchesterfoundation.org