



Mercy  
Education

2025  
Shining  
Lamp  
Awards

*“We should be shining lamps, giving light to all around us.”* – Catherine McAuley

## LETTER FROM THE CEO

# Dear Mercy community,

*“We should be shining lamps, giving light to all around us.”* Catherine McAuley’s words have lost none of their power. A lamp does more than glow—it steadies footsteps, widens horizons and makes space for others to find their way. This year’s Shining Lamp recipients have done exactly that.

Across our schools, the light of Mercy has been practical, courageous and deeply human. We’ve seen young leaders shape prayer and community life; teams elevating sustainability from intention to habit; students who bring people together across cultures and faiths; and outreach that restores dignity for neighbours doing it tough. Each story in this publication shows Mercy values lived—not as words on a page, but as choices made in classrooms, on ovals, backstage, out in the community and at the edges where hospitality matters most.

The work is beautifully diverse because the Mercy charism is inclusive by design.



In Bendigo, sustainability leadership has nudged the whole community toward better daily practices. In Geelong, reconciliation efforts—guided by FIRE Carrier leadership—have invited respectful dialogue and action. In Shepparton, an interfaith celebration at the close of Ramadan gathered people who don’t often share the same room and made them feel they belong. In Lesmurdie, soup patrols and the Mercy Sleep Out have turned compassion into warm hands and full cups. And from Fitzroy to North Melbourne and beyond, students have quietly mentored younger peers, welcomed newcomers, and shown that being “known” is the first step to being loved.

## LETTER FROM THE CEO (CONT'D)

What makes these lamps shine is not scale but spirit. Mercy leadership is collaborative rather than performative; it listens, creates room for other voices, and keeps going when the work gets complex. It is courageous enough to challenge what's not yet just, respectful enough to bring others along, and hospitable enough to ensure no one is left standing at the door. This publication honours that spirit—rooted in Compassion, Justice, Respect, Hospitality, Service and Courage—and celebrates the students, staff, families and community partners who kindle it every day.

To our 2025 Shining Lamp Award recipients: thank you for the way you lead—by noticing, by showing up, by inviting, by persisting. You remind us that Mercy is a verb. To everyone reading: may these pages be both recognition and invitation. Let's continue to light paths in our schools and neighbourhoods—one decision, one conversation, one act of service at a time

Congratulations to each of you. May the light you carry continue to travel—steadily, widely, bravely.

Andy Kuppe  
Chief Executive Officer (Interim),  
**Mercy Education Limited**



# Our Values



## Compassion

We walk with others in love and Mercy.



## Justice

We welcome all with open arms.



## Respect

We give with heart and lead with purpose.



## Hospitality

We honour the dignity of every person.



## Service

We are shaping a better future, led by our faith in God.



## Courage

We boldly pursue fairness and truth,

## 2025 AWARD RECIPIENTS

# Shining Lamp Award



The Shining Lamp Award is a special recognition across Mercy schools, celebrating students who live out the Mercy values in their daily lives. These values are at the heart of our community, and this award honours those who lead by example—through kindness, integrity, and a commitment to making a positive difference.

Each year, one student from every Mercy school is chosen for their outstanding contribution to their school and wider community. These young leaders reflect the spirit of the Sisters of Mercy, inspiring others through their actions and showing what it means to shine brightly for others.

We are proud to share the stories of the 2025 Shining Lamp Award recipients in this publication. Their dedication and leadership remind us all of the power of Mercy values in shaping compassionate, courageous communities.



**Zoe Dafnias**

Year 12

Academy of Mary Immaculate  
Fitzroy, Victoria

Zoe exemplifies Mercy values through her outstanding leadership and dedication. She mentors younger students, supported peers during the Cambodia immersion and fosters meaningful community connections. Her commitment to Service is evident in immersion projects and organising the St Jude's fundraiser.

Zoe champions Justice by leading awareness campaigns, creating Reconciliation resources and driving Justice Group initiatives. She demonstrates Respect through collaboration and generosity, sharing her skills to uplift others.

Zoe's energy and dedication have established her as an influential role model who uplifts and unites the school community.



**Sophie Hughes**

Year 12

Catherine McAuley College  
Bendigo, Victoria

Sophie is our College reGEN Captain and has been a dedicated leader not only throughout this year, but across her entire time at Catherine McAuley College Bendigo.

Together with her co-reGEN Captain, Sophie has made significant progress in improving the sustainability of the College's waste management systems. A key focus this year has been increasing student awareness and education around reGEN and promoting sustainable living.



**Lucas Marafioti**

Year 6

Catherine McAuley School  
Craigmore, South Australia

Lucas is a shining light within the CMS community, admired for his leadership, compassion and quiet strength. As a Mercy Leader, he leads prayer, liturgies and Grace, and approaches every role with enthusiasm and professionalism.

What sets Lucas apart is his genuine care for classmates and younger students. He is always ready to assist anyone in need, including peers facing personal challenges. Lucas provides service through liturgical leadership, environmental duties and volunteering at a local childcare centre. His courage to speak up for others and commitment to justice inspire those around him. Lucas' kindness, compassion, and quiet strength make him a deeply respected and valued member of the CMS community.



**Zoe Graham**  
Year 12

Emmanuel College  
Warrnambool, Victoria

Zoe has shown a strong commitment to the life of the College and beyond. Her dedication to Mercy values is evident through her leadership, volunteering, and encouragement of others. As a member of the Social Justice Group, she contributed to initiatives such as Vinnies and Caritas fundraisers, Emmanuel College Community Meals, and Relay for Life.

Zoe regularly supported the faith life of the College by assisting at liturgical celebrations. Through multiple leadership roles, she has promoted social justice with enthusiasm and initiative. Her service, kindness, and respectful nature make Zoe a valued member of Emmanuel College and a worthy award recipient.



**Bronte van der Ploeg**  
Year 12

Marist Regional College  
Burnie, Tasmania

Bronte is a positive role model who exemplifies respect, responsibility and hard work. As House Captain, she has served the school community with commitment and enthusiasm, contributing to a vibrant school culture through sports carnivals and Feast Day celebrations.

Bronte was a key organiser of the lunchtime soccer tournament, the Thurgood Cup, demonstrating exceptional organisation and reliability. Her willingness to give up lunchtimes to coordinate events reflects her dedication and leadership. Bronte's consistent involvement, positive attitude and sense of responsibility have made her a valued and respected member of our school community, inspiring others through her example.



**Kassandra Avedikian**  
Year 11

Mercedes College  
Perth, Western Australia

Kassandra consistently embodies all the Mercy values. Throughout the year, she has demonstrated strong and unwavering leadership, which has led to her election as our Head Girl for 2026. She has made a significant impact on her peers ensuring everyone feels supported and empowered.

Kassandra sees it a privilege to serve the College as a way of giving back to a community that has supported her to be a sociable, authentic version of herself and inspired her through kindness and the Mercy Values. Kassandra looks forward to continuing to share her strengths within our community, helping us to continue to be a welcoming and caring community. It is her hope to empower every student to find and strengthen their voice for justice.



**Nevan Talbot**

Year 12

Mercy College  
Koondoola, Western Australia

Nevan has been a dedicated member of Mercy College's voluntary Service Club throughout his high school years, actively recruiting students and fostering inclusion for those facing social challenges. Despite personal obstacles, he remains positive and focused on supporting others.

As a member of the Student Representative Council, Nevan encourages peers to take on leadership roles. His commitment to service and his encouragement of others have played a key role in nurturing a culture of Compassion, Dignity and Service within the College. Nevan's perseverance and leadership have made a lasting impact, inspiring others to contribute and uphold the dignity of all.



**Amelia Pride**

Year 10

Mercy Regional College  
Camperdown, Victoria

Amelia exemplifies the values of Catherine McAuley through her consistent compassion, leadership and service within our school community. Her engagement in the Year 10 Christian Outreach program was outstanding, and she was formally recognised by Mount View for her contribution alongside Paddy. Amelia consistently demonstrates empathy, responsibility, and a genuine commitment to helping others, making her a deserving nominee.

Amelia strives for personal excellence within and outside of school. She demonstrates that hard work and perseverance contribute to personal success. She is authentic in her interactions with her fellow students, staff, and the wider community.



**Nathan Wagner**

Year 12

Mount St Bernard College  
Herberton, Queensland

Nathan consistently embodies the Mercy values of Compassion, Courage, Justice, Hospitality, Service and Respect. As a strong servant leader, he advocated for peers and represented the student body with integrity on the Student Voice Panel at the ACEC Conference. His commitment to justice was evident through Caritas Australia fundraising initiatives, and he represented the school during the Pilgrimage of Hope in Italy.

Nathan's courage and service shone through his willingness to lead and act for others. His quiet strength and inclusive leadership have enriched the school community, fostering respect and dialogue. Nathan leaves a lasting legacy of kindness and integrity.



Daniel Phillips

Year 12

Our Lady of Mercy College  
Australind, Western Australia

Daniel embodies the Mercy values through his leadership and everyday actions. He consistently demonstrates Respect and Compassion, ensuring all students feel valued and supported. His Hospitality shines in leading College tours and emceeing assemblies, while his Courage is evident as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and participant in the Easter Liturgy. Daniel's Service is reflected in his involvement in fundraising and the Christian Service-Learning program.

As College Captain, Daniel's inclusive leadership has strengthened connections among students, staff and visitors, and has inspired others to participate and serve. He has left a lasting impact by fostering a welcoming, compassionate and faith-filled school environment.



Teah Bujas-Boughton

Year 10

Our Lady of Mercy College  
Heidelberg, Victoria

Teah has been an active member of the Social Justice group, regularly volunteering for the afterschool reading program at St Pius X and assisting with the Exodus community holiday program. She also contributed to the Faith Animation group and has taken an active role in college masses. Teah quietly seeks opportunities to help, volunteering at swimming and athletics carnivals and supporting the Celebration Concert backstage. Her respectful and inclusive nature is evident in the classroom, where she ensures all feel a sense of belonging. Through her generosity and commitment, Teah has made a positive impact on the College community.



Poppy McKenna

Year 6

Our Lady Queen of Peace  
Albert Park, South Australia

Poppy exemplifies Mercy values through her unwavering Service, Compassion, Respect, Hospitality and Courage. As School Captain, she leads with integrity, kindness and a readiness to help. She uplifts others, listens attentively and fosters inclusion, warmly welcoming newcomers and engaging with younger students.

Poppy's respectful nature shines in all interactions, and she takes pride in doing what's right. Her leadership and generosity have made a lasting impact on the OLQP community. A dedicated choir member, she represents the school with enthusiasm and joy. Always willing to assist with a smile, Poppy's presence uplifts those around her. She is a true role model for her peers.



**Kalani Love**

Year 9

Padua College  
Mornington, Victoria

Kalani demonstrates compassion through simple gestures, like asking how others are, and consistently shows respect to peers and teachers. She often helps classmates with work or organisation for Aspire 9.

Kalani stood out in the Social Innovators workshops, confidently leading a team of unfamiliar peers and inspiring collaboration. Her enthusiasm and courage to step outside her comfort zone were evident throughout the three-day program.

In RE and Aspire 9 classes, Kalani continues to shine through her leadership, involvement in extracurricular activities, speaking at assemblies, and showing kindness to everyone she meets. Kalani is a future leader and positive influence in her community.



**Maggie Clatworthy**

Year 12

Sacred Heart College  
Geelong, Victoria

Maggie, a passionate FIRE Carrier (Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education), actively promotes reconciliation, inclusion, and justice for First Nations peoples. She engages others in respectful dialogue and leads initiatives that foster unity and understanding. Her everyday interactions reflect Compassion and Respect, uplifting those around her through kindness and integrity.

Maggie has made a significant impact through her leadership in Mercy initiatives, reconciliation efforts and sporting excellence. Representing the school in Cross Country, Athletics, Triathlon and Football, she embodies fairness and perseverance. Maggie inspires others through her dedication to Mercy values and advocacy for justice and inclusion.



**Sophie Dunn**

Year 11

Sacred Heart College  
Kyneton, Victoria

Leader, role model, volunteer, exemplary student — Sophie's service to the College has been ongoing since Year 7, marked by her willingness to give generously of her time and energy in support of others. Whether assisting at events, contributing to community initiatives, or quietly helping peers, she leads with reliability and heart. Sophie's presence carries weight, and her compassion and integrity are reflected in her appointment as College Wellbeing Captain for 2026. Sophie's experience at the Jarlmadangah remote Aboriginal community deepened her understanding of culture and service, inspiring her commitment to reconciliation. Through consistent service, thoughtful leadership and authentic presence, Sophie has made a lasting impact on the spirit of the College.



**Naomi Karczub**  
Year 11

Santa Maria College  
Attadale, Western Australia

Naomi embodies the true spirit of Mercy in word and action. She shows Compassion by supporting those in need and demonstrates Justice through her involvement in Just Leadership and Seeds of Justice groups. Naomi treats everyone with Respect and offers warm Hospitality within the Ministry Team. Her Service is evident in her generous contributions, and her Courage shines in her confident, values-driven approach. Humble and committed, Naomi serves as an Altar Minister, leads Rosary, and contributes to initiatives like Young Mercies Cook Ups. Elected Ministry Captain for 2026, she also excels academically, participates in music and sport, and inspires others through empathy and leadership.



**Liliana Bagnato**  
Year 11

St Aloysius College  
Adelaide, South Australia

Liliana lives out the Mercy values through her leadership and everyday actions. Her Compassion and Respect shine in mentoring peers and younger students, while her Hospitality is evident in her inclusive approach to school life. She shows Courage in public speaking and champions Justice by advocating for student voice and equity. Her Service is reflected in her reliability and initiative.

Liliana has served on the SRC since 2021, been House Captain, Peer Support Leader, and Charter Ambassador, and was elected College Captain for 2026. Beyond school, she captains her soccer team, referees junior matches, and was named Assisted Checkout Coach of the Year at Coles, demonstrating initiative and compassion across all areas of life.



**Sebastien Hall**  
Year 9

St Aloysius College  
North Melbourne, Victoria

Sebastien lives out the Mercy values of Service, Respect Compassion, Justice, Courage and Hospitality in all he does. He leads with quiet confidence, always putting others first. Whether supporting peers, volunteering for Social Justice initiatives, or assisting behind the scenes with the AV Team, Sebastien demonstrates generosity and care in every action. His reliability and teamwork create an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued.

Sebastien's positive impact on the College community is felt daily. As Vice Prefect, he leads with humility and empathy, inspiring others to act with kindness and integrity. Sebastien's enthusiasm and dedication enrich College life daily, making him a role model who truly embodies the Mercy spirit.



Edward Wayne Ellery  
Year 4

St Anthony's Catholic Primary  
Millicent, South Australia

Eddie consistently demonstrates Mercy values through his kindness, respect and willingness to help others. He shows Compassion by including everyone and supporting those in need, and Justice by treating others fairly and standing up for what is right. His Hospitality shines through his warm, welcoming attitude, and his Courage is evident in taking on new challenges with confidence.

Eddie has made an outstanding positive impact on his school community, leading by example and with kindness in everything he does. He regularly volunteers to assist teachers, mentor younger students and support school events, always with enthusiasm and humility. His initiative, generosity and positive attitude create a sense of belonging for all.



Florence Clarke  
Year 11

St Brigid's College  
Lesmurdie, Western Australia

Florence exemplifies Mercy values through her dedicated service to those in need. Through the Cathedral Outreach Program and Red Cross Soup Patrol, she has shown Compassion and Hospitality by providing meals and care to homeless individuals. Her participation in the Mercy Sleep Out reflects Courage and Justice, raising funds for shelters. Florence also volunteers at the primary school art club, sharing her time and talents to nurture creativity in younger students.

Florence's kindness and actions reflect a commitment to uplifting others with dignity and care. She thinks of others first, demonstrating that meaningful change begins with compassion and action. Her commitment to serving the most vulnerable in our community inspires those around her.



Holly Paech  
Year 12

St Francis de Sales College  
Mount Barker, South Australia

As a College Captain, Holly has selflessly given her time and energy to ensure that the College is a place of welcome and compassion. No task is too much for Holly — whether leading assembly or liturgy, representing the College at community events, or mentoring other student leaders, she approaches each responsibility with dedication and grace.

Holly's most significant impact lies in her ability to make time for all people, making them feel accepted and included, and going out of her way to ensure no one is left behind. From the Early Learning children to the Year 12 cohort, Holly has time for all. She is deeply respected by both staff and students and is sure to make a great difference in the world.



**Elizabeth Jane Larsen**  
Year 11

St Joseph's College  
Mildura, Victoria

Elizabeth demonstrates the Mercy values of Compassion, Service, and Hospitality through her inclusive leadership and genuine care for others. She consistently looks out for younger students, ensuring they feel supported and valued. Elizabeth gives generously of her time to the Mercy Action Group, showing a deep commitment to serving the community and living out the values of justice and respect in all she does.

Through Elizabeth's commitments to the school community, she continually acts as a Shining Lamp, embodying the Mercy Charism. In recognition of her efforts and dedication to the college and community, Elizabeth will be a very deserving Vice Captain of the College in 2026.



**Chris Jothis**  
Year 6

St Michael's Primary School  
North Melbourne, Victoria

Chris is a compassionate and courageous student whose leadership is grounded in faith. Inspired by Gospel values, he shows deep respect for others and is always ready to help, especially younger students. Chris lives out his faith through acts of Justice and Hospitality, creating a welcoming and fair environment for all. An active participant in Social Justice initiatives, he is a determined learner who strives for personal growth while celebrating the success of others.

Since joining St Michael's last year, Chris has nurtured a culture of empathy and inclusiveness. His ability to connect with others reflects his commitment to ensuring everyone feels seen, valued and respected.



**Joseph Law**  
Year 6

St Thomas School & Preschool  
Goodwood, South Australia

As a House Captain, Joseph consistently demonstrates the Mercy values in all aspects of school life. He leads with kindness and empathy, supporting younger students as a Senior. His Courage shines through in standing up for what is right and volunteering for roles that enhance school life. Joseph welcomes all with warmth, creating a sense of belonging with his peers that reflects true Hospitality.

Joseph models integrity and fairness, mentors peers, and gives generously of his time without seeking recognition. He has represented the school in events such as Tournament of Minds, debating, and the Da Vinci Decathlon. He lends his leadership in Masses, assemblies and programs like the SPARK gifted program.



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