

Cummins helps champion basketballer shoot high with Girls Academy



Cummins South Pacific managing director Steph Disher (centre) with, from left, Renee Crilly, Girls Academy Queensland regional manager; John Bortolussi, Cummins Asia Pacific engineering director; Warwick Strong, global corporate relations leader for Cummins' distribution business; Hervey Bay State High School students; and Tracy Yow Yeh, Girls Academy program manager.

Ricky Grace, former American-Australian professional basketball player, established the Girls Academy in Australia in 2004 with the simple but powerful motto: 'Develop a girl, change a community'.

Cummins is now supporting Grace's significantly expanding Girls Academy as part of its Cummins Powers Women initiative, investing more than \$10 million globally in a range of effective programs aimed at finding solutions to gender inequality in our communities.

John Bortolussi, Cummins Asia Pacific's director of engineering, serves as a program champion for Cummins Powers Women. "Working to promote women's equality is not new to Cummins," he says. "We've seen first-hand positive transformation when we ensure diversity and inclusion within our organisation, bringing more women into our business at every level."

Girls Academy provides school-based programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls. The aim is to increase the number of girls benefitting from the program to 3,500 by the end of 2019.

"Cummins' values are aligned with our values," says Ricky Grace. "It's great to be involved with a global company that has such a great reputation for its ambitious community projects."

The full-time Girls Academy staff, 80% of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, delivers the program in more than 40 schools across Australia to encourage attendance, improve academic performance, build confidence, enhance health and wellbeing, and strengthen cultural connection.

Cummins is specifically supporting the expansion of the Girls Academy into Queensland. Since early 2018, the academy has been launched in seven schools in the Bundaberg and Hervey Bay areas, with around 450 girls enrolled in the program across these schools. All schools have separate rooms set aside for the girls involved in the program.

Support of the Girls Academy builds on the work Cummins South Pacific began in 2016 with the launch of its Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which pledges commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A comprehensive cultural awareness and education program has been conducted at all of Cummins' 35 locations around the South Pacific to raise awareness of the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Cummins is now assisting the Girls Academy on career progression. "Our aim is to align our existing initiatives in Technical Education for Communities (TEC), Beacon Foundation and work experience programs with the needs of the Girls Academy," says John Bortolussi.



Ricky Grace (centre) at the launch of a Girls Academy school in Queensland.