



MICHAELA, AUSTRALIA

Twenty-one year-old Michaela is helping to build a social enterprise for people with chronic illnesses at Purple House in Alice Springs. Featured in Project Compassion 2014, the First Australian-run Wellbeing Program, uses its profits to connect and care for dialysis patients who are far from home. The program helps keep traditional knowledge strong and gives new hope to staff and patients alike.

Michaela is a young Alywarr woman, who lived in both Alice Springs and Adelaide while she was growing up. As a Purple House trainee, she completed a Certificate IV in business management and was recently promoted from administration trainee to permanent employee, working on The Wellbeing Program.

Purple House is a 'home away from home' for First Australians who are suffering from chronic kidney disease and have to travel far from their traditional lands to receive treatment. Michaela helps care for patients as they receive dialysis, and helps them to remain hopeful and connected to country during treatment. Patients in turn pass on traditional knowledge to Michaela who is eager to listen and learn.

"We cook roo tails on the fire in the garden and we make damper which I learn from the older ladies. We also take them out bush hunting for witchetty grubs, honey ants and bush fruit," Michaela says.

"It has taught me the clinical side of dialysis and importance of diet to help our patients to feel comfortable," she says.

The Wellbeing Program at Purple House is run by the Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation, with support from Caritas Australia.

First Australians are twice as likely to experience chronic kidney disease, and four times more likely to die from it than other Australians*. The local Aboriginal community in Central Australia responded to this and created Purple House.

With the help of staff like Michaela, the Aboriginal-controlled service gives patients the opportunity to stay connected with their culture. They do this through traditional healing practices and income-generating activities, such as making bush balms and soaps. The patients are sharing their knowledge and handing down wisdom to young people, like Michaela.

"It makes me feel very happy that I can help and I can spend time with the patients and learn from them. Also, I love making the bush medicines because that's another part of my culture."

Michaela says that making and using the bush balms helps

patients to feel a sense of home. Profits from the business are invested back into supporting dialysis patients receiving remote care and help to get people on dialysis back on country.

Sarah Brown, CEO of Purple House says there is good evidence that people on dialysis in Central Australia are doing much better and surviving longer than elsewhere in Australia.

Sarah explains that for people living on country, "Dialysis used to be a one-way ticket to Alice Springs. Sick, homesick, miserable. Missing family, country, waiting for dialysis, waiting to die. Now people have things to do, plans to make, grandkids to teach, country to visit."

Business is also flourishing, with income from bush balm sales almost doubling since 2015, and retail stockists growing across Australia.

"We are not passive recipients of care. We are focussing on good food, good company and sucking the juice out of every day we have together," says Sarah Brown.

Employment opportunities are growing too, with the program supporting an increasing number of trainees and part-time employees. Michaela is proud of her role at Purple House. In addition to completing her studies, she has obtained a driver's licence, is running workshops solo and has travelled interstate several times for work.

"She is a great role model for her family and other young people in her orbit. This job is giving Michaela a range of options for the future," Sarah says.

"Hope means having something to look forward to," says Michaela. "I would like to thank people for their support, I feel very honoured to be a part of Project Compassion."

"I enjoy building relationships with patients. I think it's very important for us to feel proud of who we are and ensure that my children and their children can say where they are from and feel proud of that. If we keep our culture alive we can feel strong."

- Michaela



FIND MICHAELA'S SHORT FILM AND INTERACTIVE STUDENT WORKBOOK:

<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1114794226886901761>

REFLECT

"Hope requires that we spin a few dreams for ourselves that are possible, doable and desirable."

Joan Chittister OSB

- How does this quote relate to Michaela's story?
- What is your hope for the future? What dreams will you be spinning?
- Why do you think Caritas chose this quote with Michaela's story?

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Subsidiarity

We believe in every person's right to participate in the decisions that affect their own lives.

- How is Michaela's story a great example of subsidiarity?
- How can we work together to achieve greater recognition, reconciliation, civil rights, and improvements in education and health for our First Australian sisters and brothers?

LEARNING TASKS

TASK 1: STORY STUDY

English
Y7- ACELY1723,
Y8- ACELY1734,
Y9- ACELY1744, Y10-
ACELY1754

▶ Watch (or read) Michaela's story and discuss:

1. How is Michaela

bringing hope to others?

2. Where does Michaela live?
3. Why are places like Purple House important to ensure First Australians keep their connection to country while receiving treatment?
4. Why do you think it is important for young people like Michaela to learn more about their culture from Elders?
5. Why did the community create Purple House?
6. How does Michaela participate and contribute to her community?
7. What role has Purple house had in providing a future full of opportunity for Michaela?

TASK 2: CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

Michaela and the patients at Purple House enjoy working and learning from one another. They are able to share important information about their culture and traditions.

1. What do you know about the history of First Australians?
2. Do you believe that the traditions, knowledge and practices of our First Australians are valued in your community? Why?
3. Do you believe that the traditions, knowledge and practices of our First Australians are valued

in Australia? Why?

4. How can you learn more about the history of our First Australians?
5. What are some of Michaela's cultures and traditions?
6. What are some of your traditions?
7. How does where we live influence our sense of identity?
8. How would you describe yourself and your identity?



TASK 3:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 goals to achieve 3 extraordinary things in the next 15 years:

- End extreme poverty.
- Fight inequality and injustice.
- Fix climate change.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) attempt to address the root causes of poverty and inequality within and between countries, climate change and environmental degradation, the lack of peace and justice, alongside other important issues.

1. How do the goals relate to Catholic Social Teaching (CST) principles?
2. Which goals do you think apply to Michaela's story?
3. How has the Caritas supported program

contributed to achieving these goals?

4. How are we tracking to achieving these goals? <https://sdg-tracker.org/>
5. What can you do to achieve these goals?
6. What link do you see between SDGs and CST?
7. What can we do to bridge the gap between the reality and the ideal?
8. How can you make a commitment to take action?



TASK 4: CLASS DEBATE

English Y7 ACELY1804, Y8 ACELY1807 ACELY1808, Y9 ACELY1811, Y10 ACELY1812, ACELY1813, Civics and Citizenship Y9 ACHCS089, ACHCS085, Y10 ACHCS099

Topic: Lives change when we all give 100%.

OR

The traditions, knowledge and practices of our First Australians are valued in Australia.



TASK 5: GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Michaela is a 21-year-old trainee at Purple House, a dialysis center in the Central Desert for people suffering from kidney disease. With the support of Caritas partners, Michaela is helping to build a social enterprise, a connection to culture and a new outlook for the chronically ill.

"Hope requires that we spin a few dreams for ourselves that are possible, doable and desirable."

– Joan Chittister OSB

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This week I was filled with hope when...

I showed I was a person of hope this week when...



100% COMMUNITY



Michaela, Australia

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This week I am grateful for...

Three important things I learned from others this week are...

1.

2.

3.

