

## ANDREA LONGS FOR HOMELAND

*Andrea Kyle's heart is always leading her home to her Palm Island. But it's the realities of life that take her to Melbourne and Townsville. While it's just a short plane trip (75km) from Townsville to Palm Island, it might as well be a world away.*

"Palm Island is so beautiful, so quiet. I know everyone when I walk along the street. I can go fishing when I want to along the water where it is so peaceful. You look around and it is such a beautiful place to be," Andrea said.

Ironically, it is the 'dark' side of Palm Island that takes her to the mainland. Andrea is studying law at Deakin University, Geelong. She travels to Melbourne regularly to attend residential blocks and for the rest of the time she mostly lives in Townsville with her daughter, Jada, 8, who is in a State school in Year 3.

After working in various Aboriginal education, legal and support service jobs, Andrea finally decided to study law in the hope that she can one day offer a service to her people, especially those on Palm Island who need her. She hopes to one day work as a solicitor and then as a magistrate. Andrea, a Birri Gubba woman, is set to begin the 4<sup>th</sup> year of her degree and is one of the 2008 recipients of the Good Shepherd Indigenous Reconciliation Scholarships. Juggling parenthood, study and her family responsibilities on Palm Island can be difficult, but Andrea is confident she will achieve her goal. She comes from a long-line of determined and competent women!

Her grandparents were born in Bowen, but were taken to Palm Island in 1918, along with people from more than 40 different tribes, after a cyclone wiped out their mission. Andrea's mother, Erykah Kyle, has been an influential member of the Palm Island

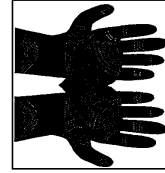
Aboriginal Community and Mayor of the Palm Island Council. Andrea was born in Ayr and went to school in Brisbane before returning to Palm Island.



"Sure there are struggles and problems on Palm and most people don't have a job, which causes a lot of difficulties," she said.

The struggles of Palm Island influenced Andrea's decision to go into law as well as the death in custody of one of her brothers, Brett, several years ago. Two of her brothers are currently in prison.

Most Australians know of Palm Island as the site of many riots involving the island's Indigenous people and local police, more recently over the death in custody of an Aboriginal man. Yes, it is a poor community, with limited services and almost 90% of the population receiving a benefit. But Andrea sees a different Palm Island, one of beauty and friendship and she is hopeful that she can one day be a part of the change on her beloved island.



Good Shepherd in partnership with the Mary MacKillop Foundation are calling on other religious orders and communities and Life & Justice readers to contribute to the Indigenous Reconciliation Scholarship program. No amount is too small. Please send donations to:

The Mary MacKillop Foundation

9 Mount St

North Sydney 2060

