

## Former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard visits South Africa to promote partnerships in education

Education, employability and entrepreneurship begin at grassroots level, from the support of basic education and literacy to the preparation of students for today's global economy. This is a key message from the South Africa visit of the Honourable Julia Gillard, former Prime Minister of Australia and former Minister of Education.

Gillard visited Zandspruit Primary School on February 8, 2016 to celebrate the Ducere Foundation's African Children's Stories programme roll-out in the local township community along with partner Monash South Africa (MSA), a leading private higher education provider founded by Monash University (Australia) and a member of Laureate International Universities.

As the Chancellor of Ducere and Chair of the Board of Directors, Global Partnership for Education, Gillard emphasised the importance of literacy and education. While launching the latest collection of stories written by local South African learners, she encouraged the children to keep writing and to make their education a top priority.

The MSA and Ducere collaboration is made possible through the MSA student-led programme "This is Me", which promotes children's creative thinking, storytelling and literacy skills to support their academic and personal growth. Di Fleming, CEO of Ducere Foundation, reiterated Ducere's vision to "continue publishing stories written by African children, for African children to be shared across the globe. We encourage and celebrate literacy from a young age, and empower the young learners to embrace their African culture." MSA distributed hundreds of these stories to schools through their campus community engagement programmes.

Esther Benjamin, CEO of MSA and CEO of Africa Operations for Laureate International Universities believes, "This project, one of many MSA outreach programmes, strengthens students' passion for volunteering as part of their personal development, provides them with an opportunity to make important contributions to the community, and equips them with valuable skills for leadership and entrepreneurial thinking."

Gillard's visit culminated in a panel discussion, held on February 9, 2016. Together with panellists including prominent business, NGO, and community leaders, Benjamin and Gillard discussed the challenges and opportunities for students in the global marketplace. During the discussion it was emphasised that students need to pursue academic excellence, along with cultivating essential life and personal skills for employability and entrepreneurship.

Benjamin says, "By facilitating important conversations on education's link to building robust economies and skilled marketplaces, we strive to be a leading change agent in South Africa and beyond. We pride ourselves on local relevancy as well as a global perspective. We work with an extensive global network of thought leaders to ensure that our graduates are equipped for the global business environment as well as for entrepreneurial initiatives relevant to the marketplace."