



[Home](#) / [News](#) / [Local News](#)

Inspiring Tanzania school founder Gemma Sisia to speak in shire



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Gemma Sisia. Picture supplied

Gemma Sisia, who is described as "one of Australia's most inspiring women", will speak at an event organised by combined Rotary Clubs of Sutherland Shire.

In January 2002, Ms Sisia raised funds in Australia to establish The School of St Jude in Arusha, Tanzania.

The school opened with one volunteer teacher and three students. Today, it provides free education to over 1800 students at primary and secondary levels. Ms Sisia continues to oversee the leadership team.

The event will take place at Sharks at Kareela on Wednesday March 19.

A leaflet distributed by the Rotary Clubs reads:

Gemma grew up as the only girl in a family of eight children on a 100,000-acre property in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. Her childhood involved mustering sheep, horse riding, swimming and fishing in the waterfalls at the family property.

After completing a science degree at The University of Melbourne, Gemma followed up with an honours program and a Diploma of Education through the University of New England in Armidale. At 22 years old, Gemma travelled to Uganda to put her qualifications to good use, volunteering as a teacher at a girls' centre. This experience fostered her belief that education is the right of all children and the strongest weapon in fighting poverty.

During this time, Gemma also met Richard, who would later become her husband in neighbouring Tanzania.



📷 Gemma Sisia with a book telling the story of St Jude's.

Upon returning to Australia, Gemma began fundraising to build a school that would provide a free, private education to those in poverty, which would eventually become The School of St Jude.

With help from her father, Gemma spoke to local Rotary Clubs, friends, school, and churches and the support for her school began to grow, eventually raising enough to build the first classroom. She has toured Australia to tell the story of St Jude's almost every year since.

After 20 years of fundraising and building St Jude's from its foundations, today St Jude's provides free, quality education to 1800 primary and secondary students and support hundreds of tertiary scholars every year.



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St Jude's is more than a school. Gemma and her team have developed a successful model to combat poverty, with each scholarship alleviating financial strain resulting in significantly improved economic outcomes for families and local community.

Outside of St Jude's, Gemma runs a safari company with her husband, Richard, and they enjoy spending time with their four children, Nathaniel, Jacob, Isabella and Louisa.

