

## Collaboration & Volunteering | Br Chris Wills

# Marists on the Edge

### International Volunteering in Action!



## Bridge Builders

Supporting Marist Collaboration & Volunteering

**I**n this new short series, we will be talking to some Aussie Marists who are currently involved in Marist volunteering projects around the world.

Second is **Tom Milliken**, a past student of Marist College Ashgrove:

Tom is a Marist volunteer in Ecuador.



Tom (right) and a friend in the classroom.

### Tell us about your previous volunteering experiences.

I am a past student of Marist College, Ashgrove and was a member of an immersion group in the Solomon Islands (Vanga Point) while I was at school. This inspired me to seek other opportunities after I left Ashgrove and while I was studying at university. I have volunteered with the Jesuits in India and Taiwan and starting in September last year, I was part of

the Marist community at St Dominic's Rural Training Centre and St Marcellin School at Vanga. I had also spent some time as an intern with Australian Marist Solidarity in their office in Brisbane.

In 2019 I have committed to a one year experience in Latin America, starting in Ecuador for six months with three month engagements in Bolivia and Chile to follow.

### Where are you now?

I am in the Ecuadorian Amazon at the Marist secondary college called Abya Yala.

### How are you managing with language?

I am fortunate that I am able to speak Spanish enabling me to quickly become a member of the Spanish speaking Marist communities and to communicate with the kids although out of the 150 students there are 5 indigenous groups in the school each with their own language and traditions.

### What are you doing there?

The volunteering role has been to teach physics to the high school students which I enjoy immensely. Having a background in civil engineering has kept me eager to teach physics. I arrived in January and will be teaching until school breaks up in July.

### How have you found the experience so far?

The experience so far has been wonderful thanks to the keen interest the students have to learn and do practical experiments. I often try to

take the students outside of the classroom to keep the classes interesting and engaging. The students are always happy to share and talk about their cultures. They often invite me to their village communities to share fiestas and time with them.

### **What is the worst thing that has happened?**

Getting the correct visa!

### **What advice would you give the next volunteer from Australia?**

Get the correct visa!

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There are many opportunities to be involved in Marist mission nationally or internationally.

Feel free to contact me by email:

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