

NZ

CLASSIC DRIVER

MGA 70TH ANNIVERSARY (1955-2025)

THE MG BORN IN THE FABULOUS FIFTIES



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A DREAM RESTORATION

An exceptional 1961 MGA Mark I is set to go up for auction and it comes with a backstory as inspiring as its restoration.

Words and Photos: I HAVE A DREAM CHARITABLE TRUST



Clint McEwen with his proud automotive students at Tikipunga High School Trades Academy.



This classic British car was donated to I Have a Dream Charitable Trust by long term volunteer, mentor and MG enthusiast, Dave Cotty, to raise crucial funds for the youth-focussed charity.

The charity's founder and chairman, Scott Gilmour, had the idea of offering the car as a restoration project to students at I Have a Dream partner school, Tikipunga High School, which is home to a dedicated in-school Automotive Trades Academy.

The MG has been lovingly restored by a group of students from the Academy under the expert guidance of teacher Clint McEwen. Once auctioned off, funds raised will be split between I Have a Dream and Tikipunga High School, paving the way for future projects for the students.

Tikipunga High School's Automotive Trades Academy was established to provide a solution to a skill shortage in Northland and has since built a solid reputation for producing high calibre graduates and connecting students to employment pathways through an ecosystem of community partners.

RESTORED BY STUDENTS

More than just a stunning vehicle, the restored MG symbolises education, community involvement, and long-term social impact. Sparked by the initial generosity of donor





Dave Cotty, this collaborative project to bring the classic car back to its former beauty is representative of the transformative power of giving back, which Dave Cotty is endlessly passionate about.

A dedicated supporter of the charity, Dave spent many years volunteering in schools as well as mentoring young people through I Have a Dream, and has seen firsthand the power of its long-term model of support.

The unique New Zealand-based charity is focused on inspiring dreams in young people and helping them to realise these through education support and interest-focussed opportunities.

Dave bought the 1961 MGA MkI many years ago while living in Australia. He put it in storage while he worked in Mozambique and then shipped it back to New Zealand on his return home. When it came time to part ways with the car, he wanted to use it as a vehicle to continue his life-long dedication to helping those less fortunate in his local community.

Dave's MG has become a real-world learning opportunity for students, sparking their curiosity, skill development, sense of accomplishment, as well as raising funds for future projects. Dave was happy to learn that the final proceeds of the MG auction will be shared equally between the school and the charity, helping to fund more vocational

1. Clint McEwen with some of the automotive students at Tikipunga High School Trades Academy who worked on the MG; 2. Tearii Kupa Wichman with the MG; 3. The students checking under the bonnet; 4. Last minute checks; 5. Tikipunga High School automotive students trialling the car; 6. Tikipunga High School Trades Academy Automotive MG project.

MORE ABOUT I HAVE A DREAM

At the heart of I Have a Dream is a visionary model of long-term, holistic and educational support that accompanies children from their earliest school years, right through to tertiary education or employment and beyond. Participants, affectionately known as Dreamers, are supported by a Navigator who serves as a consistent, caring adult in their lives. Navigators come from all walks of life and provide a rich mix of mentoring, life skills and wellbeing development, tutoring, advocacy, and role modelling. The positive impact they have on the lives of young people has a benefit at both an individual and community level.

Unlike short-term interventions that often lose momentum, I Have a Dream is committed to supporting young people across a 15-year period. Navigators work in close partnership with whānau, teachers, and communities to support each Dreamer and help instil values that can shape a lifetime: the importance of education, strong relationships, service, aspiration, and resilience. Their aim is to ensure every Dreamer has the opportunities, resources, and encouragement they need to succeed, regardless of the circumstances.

The evidence speaks for itself. An independent economic analysis found that for every dollar invested in I Have a Dream, there is a return of \$3.60 in social value. That's not just a good outcome, it's a transformational impact. This ripple effect spreads out across communities, lowering social service costs, increasing productivity, and building stronger, more hopeful futures for everyone.





Tikipunga High School automotive students trying out the seats.

training and hands-on learning for other young people.

Clint McEwen explained that although the MG wasn't running when it arrived at the workshop, what could have been a major challenge quickly became a valuable teaching opportunity.

"As it was a classic car, we had to strip it down to the basics and deal with the little issues that cropped up. The harder you looked the more stuff needed to be done," said Clint.

A NEW KIND OF CHALLENGE

For Te Koha Williams-Burling, one of the students involved in the project, working on the MG marked a new kind of challenge.

"It was the first time I had dealt with a vintage vehicle," he said. "It was nothing like the modern cars I've helped with before, but it was amazing to work on."

Through the supportive, hands-on environment of the Academy, Te Koha has since developed a wide range of automotive skills, from basic servicing and oil changes to welding. It's a foundation he hopes to build on as he looks ahead to a career in the trades.

Another student, Tearii Kupa Wichman, echoed the excitement and pride the group feels as the car nears its auction date.

"It's been a long process," he said. "But now that it's finished, I'm excited to see how the auction goes."

For Tearii, the Trades Academy represents

more than just a class, it's a pathway into the automotive industry. "It opens doors. Some of the past students are now working for companies like Toyota and Ford."

He's hopeful of following in their footsteps and building a future in diesel engineering.

Stories like these are common in the workshop. Rewiti Hill-Dudley, a Year 12 student, described the Academy as feeling more like whānau than school. "We treat each other with a lot of respect. There's a big advantage to having Matua McEwen on your side, especially when things are hard," he said. "The way he teaches us is different from other teachers. My dream is to be a diesel mechanic in the mines in Perth and hopefully I'll get an apprenticeship next year."

These dreams are becoming realities. Clint McEwen shared that one student who dedicated significant time to the MG restoration has since gone on to win a national apprenticeship award. And looking ahead, he's especially excited about the growing diversity in the programme with nearly half of next year's intake expected to be girls.

He said the project has helped spark ambition and build confidence for everyone involved, all while reviving a piece of motoring history.

Now fully restored, gleaming in its original finish and humming with new life, the 1961 MGA Mark I is ready for its next chapter. On 30 September, the MG Car Club Auckland will

open its doors to classic car enthusiasts from around the country for a live auction held in person and via phone, just ahead of its Annual AGM. Auctioneering will be supported by Webb's Auctions, through their Collectors' Cars, Motorcycles & Automobilia department.

With its rich backstory and meticulous restoration the vehicle is expected to generate significant interest – and a generous return. [🔗](#)

MGA AUCTION DETAILS

Auckland MG Club AGM – Tuesday 30 September 2025

Location: Remuera Club, 27 Ohinerau Street, Remuera, Auckland

6:15pm Welcome drinks
6:45pm Auction commences
7:15pm Dinner served

All auction attendees are warmly invited to stay for dinner (\$40 per person) and are also welcome to attend the MG Club AGM following the meal. To secure dinner reservation, please register by emailing mgparts.nz@outlook.com

For phone or absentee bidding, contact jodie@ihaveadream.org.nz to register.