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MENTONE GIRLS' GRAMMAR

2022







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Principal's Message: Keeping Hope Alive



In his classic book, *On Leadership*, the late John Gardner (1990), asserted that “the first and last task of a leader (and I would add, a school) is to keep hope alive. He went onto say, “We need to believe in ourselves and our future but not to believe that life is easy. Life is painful and rain falls on the just [and the unjust]. Failure and frustration are not a reason to doubt ourselves but a reason to strengthen our resolve”.

As I reflect on the last three years that saw our nation navigating extreme weather events, corporate cyber-attacks, the insidious effects of a pandemic and the consequences of a war fought over half a world away, it is clear that individual and collective resolve is what's needed if we are to rise to the challenges and opportunities of the times. In their July Paper entitled *Our Future World*, the CSIRO went so far as to identify and classify the so-called Megatrends characterising life on planet Earth to 2042 (which, incidentally, has our youngest learners just finishing their first degrees) and a cursory glance (unfortunately) contains no surprises.

Adapting to a changing climate, sees extreme and unprecedented weather events increasing in their frequency and scale of impact, exceeding the bounds of historical norms so that the need to adapt healthcare systems, critical infrastructure and settlement patterns becomes a growing and pressing reality for countries like Australia, for years to come.

Furthermore, as the size of the global population continues to grow, there will be escalating pressures placed on finite food, water, mineral and energy resources. At the same time, these constraints will be driving cutting edge innovations that aim to do more with less, achieve carbon neutrality, reduce biodiversity loss, and address the global waste challenge.

Geopolitical developments are also given consideration, with the crisis in Ukraine and ongoing tensions in the Asia Pacific region posing challenges for democratic countries seeking to ensure peace and stability with implications for science, technology, trade, supply chains and defence strategy.

And of course, the rapid adoption of digital and data technologies in recent times has meant that many sectors have experienced years' worth of digital transformation in the space of months. Whilst this progress has been significant, experts predict that this is just the tip of the iceberg with the



vast majority of digitisation yet to occur. In conclusion and according to the authors of the report, these megatrends are designed to illustrate the emerging patterns of change that are likely to influence policy decisions in the decades to come.

Trends such as these are alarming but they are also somewhat unsurprising and our School motto “Nothing Truer than Truth” and a history in education spanning nearly 125 years reminds us that there is a clear purpose to our formation, to our work and to our vision, that has us well placed to prepare the next generation of scientists, ethicists, teachers, artists, musicians, philosophers, programmers and politicians for a world that impatiently awaits their contribution and impact.

Indeed, these past three years at Mentone Girls’ Grammar, have confirmed what we knew to be true - that we learn with and through others, via a complex web of human relationships that seeks to provide individual

care whilst nurturing and refining the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual life of the young, despite the rapidity with which change is being thrust upon us. And with a new Strategic Plan to be officially launched in March next year, Mentone Girls’ Grammar remains as committed as ever to fulfilling the vision of its founders - to be bold, to do one’s best and to never give in.

It was Emerson who is purported to have commented that “what lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us”. I believe he had it right. May it be hope that fills us and energizes us for the sacred and crucial work of leading the next generation of our students into tomorrow. Inspiring hope and seeing it embodied within the young, is the first and last responsibility of all those who belong to this School community.

By Natalie Charles PRINCIPAL

An Education that Inspires



Serving on any board is a privilege; yet, there is truly something special about being on the board of an independent girls' school like Mentone Girls' Grammar. As a parent and board member, I know firsthand that our School empowers its students to achieve their own version of success and gives them the opportunity to be known, seen and heard.

At Mentone Girls' Grammar, we strive to provide an education that inspires a sense of purpose in our students and prepares them for the future, whatever it may hold. With this in mind, our School Council and Leadership Team developed a draft Strategic Plan for 2023-2028, detailing key initiatives aimed at leading, empowering, and guiding the next generation of women to take their place in an increasingly complex world. We consulted with our School community by hosting focus groups about the feedback relating to the Strategic Plan draft. Its resonance among parents, alumnae and staff has been widely successful.

"The Mission feels very encouraging and nurturing the word 'hope' is also a beautiful sentiment."

"We feel confident that we can produce graduates who can face their future."

"The whole plan looks very well researched and considered."

"Really great to see education being approached differently. Great to see the flexibility that fits the purpose for each child. Thank you and well done."

At Mentone Girls' Grammar, we are fortunate to have a committed group of volunteers who serve on the School Council. Representing a diverse range of professional interests and experience, these Directors are responsible for the good governance of the School. Their expertise ensures Mentone Girls' Grammar continues to be managed in an ethical and considered way, and supports an intentional approach to the School's future by establishing key objectives, policy frameworks and strategic priorities in line with our values and vision.

In recent years the School Council has made significant contributions in strategic planning, the establishment of long term goals and the restructure of School Council sub committees to enhance accountability, improve performance and minimise risk. Working in the not for profit sector, especially in education, is profoundly rewarding and represents the opportunity to have a real and lasting impact.

The direction of Mentone Girls' Grammar looks exceptionally bright as we continue to nurture the whole child through our Known, Seen and Heard approach. I would personally like to congratulate Ms Natalie Charles on another tremendous year of leadership alongside the entire Senior Management Team, diligently working to enrich the educational experience for our students. Gratitude must be paid to those philanthropic members of our community who help to enhance the School's offering for the benefit of all students.

As a small school with a big history behind us, we know that the work of our teachers and support staff is paramount to the success of our students' educational journeys; that the community would not be able to flourish without our remarkable alumnae making their way in the world and inspiring the next generation of leaders; and that the School would not exist without the wonderful parents investing in exemplary education. It takes a village to raise a child and our entire community should be commended for their unwavering commitment to our School's continued success.

By Janelle Donnelly
SCHOOL COUNCIL PRESIDENT



Shifting our Focus

Positive psychology expert Martin Seligman contends that human happiness depends, in part, on being committed to something bigger than yourself. When we experience that joy, it is not just a laugh, it is something deeper. Theologian Miroslav Volf observes that true joy presumes proper relation to some actual good. For him, and me, that good is God as the Psalmist writes “God is good”.

We are people made in the image of God. We are made to be people inhabited by God's Holy Spirit. Benedictine Nun, Joan Chittister, writes “All life takes on a new dimension once we begin to see it as spiritual people. The bad does not destroy us and the good gives us new breath because we are always aware that everything is more than it is”.

The world our students inhabit is increasingly one where self definition has become the route to identity formation. Looking inward becomes the main driver for finding your authentic self. As Elsa, a character in the movie Frozen sings, “It’s time to see what I can do, to test the limits and breakthrough. No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I’m free”. The philosopher Charles Taylor, gives this attitude the term ‘Expressive Individualism’, and his main objection is the exclusivity it attaches to looking inward to find yourself.

Spending time outdoors is a wonderful reminder to shift our focus away from ourselves and towards others. I’m sure the writers of the Psalms spent much time

outside, because of the numerous references to God’s creation. As the weather warms, we will begin to meet for worship on the rooftop of the Cobbalanna or under the tree in the Willow Courtyard, look outwards and pray for those affected by fires and floods; commend those who are sick to God the healer; and ask for blessings for our loved ones and for our new adventures in the days and weeks ahead.

When we come together for worship, we allow God’s Spirit to open our eyes to something different; to challenge us to think differently; to recognise gifts given and received in service; to think of others and promote those qualities of justice and mercy.

By Reverend Philippa Lohmeyer-Collins
CHAPLAIN



Learning Through Leadership

The Student Executive Team, featuring School Captain Chloe Puc and Deputy Captains Zara Anderson and Grace Lewis gained a deep insight into leadership as they made their mark on Mentone Girls' Grammar.

Our three students kickstarted their captaincy campaign by attending the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australia (AGSA) Student Leadership Conference (SLC) at the beginning of the year. SLC 2022 brought together student leaders from girls' schools over a three day programme designed specifically to support girls to become confident and effective leaders.

"I got to be immersed in an environment alongside fellow leaders from girls' schools, defining what it means to be a leader; discussing our worries in facing the upcoming year and sharing initiatives and visions. It was so refreshing to be surrounded by likeminded people and have my feelings validated," said Chloe.

The three leaders naturally took to their leadership roles with clear vision and purpose. School Captain Chloe Puc wanted to lead with vulnerability and show her true self to her peers and teachers – a realism so starved in our society these days, particularly on social media.

"I was determined to outline my flaws, sharing ways that helped me combat obstacles I have faced in my life by sharing my lived experiences, never once asserting that I was an expert or perfect in anyway," said Chloe.

A key goal for the Student Executive Team was to create a more unified environment in accordance with their theme 'synergy'. They noticed that after lockdown, students had struggled to integrate back into a face-to-face school learning environment due to many months of physical separation.

"We combated this by ensuring that we, ourselves, were a united front to lead by example," Deputy School Captain Zara Anderson explained.

Mentone Girls' Grammar has cemented its place in the education landscape by being the school that empowers its students through a known, seen and heard approach. The Student Executive Team all felt that their own sense of empowerment came to light when Principal Ms Charles encouraged them to express their voices freely for long lasting impact as leaders.

"We are empowered because Ms Charles and others in charge listen to us. Where we have ideas, we are always given the opportunity to pitch them and get feedback; where we have concerns, we are always listened to and taken seriously; and if our suggestions aren't implemented, we are always told why," said Deputy Captain Grace Lewis. "It's the feeling of knowing you will always be heard that is empowering."

That feeling of being known and seen cross pollinates across the entire School. Students not only recognise familiar faces around the School grounds, but know their names, their personal stories and engage in friendly conversation.

"Saying hello to someone who looks up to you is a simple action that can really make their day. I know this because I was once that student who was starstruck when a Year 12 knew my name. That made me feel empowered because it meant that I could inspire people with simple actions. By reminding myself of this and how I felt when I was in Year 7 has made me a better leader," said Zara.

As these three girls, along with their cohort embark on their next chapter of life, the baton is passed to the next leaders who continue the legacy of becoming empowered, compassionate people of tomorrow.

"Good luck to all the 2023 leaders who will continuously demonstrate what it means to be a Mentone Girl; by inspiring the younger generation to show themselves to be exemplary role models. It has been an absolute pleasure working alongside Zara and Grace, joining together our different areas of expertise and passions to function in a cohesive and effective manner. I have learnt so much working alongside these girls and I hope that the same will apply to Lexi, Gabi and Keira whom will carry on our legacy. I am optimistic that they will do amazing things with their role and be the voice of the student body that our School can benefit from," said Chloe.

Advocating for Change

Across the globe, women are taking control of their sporting outfits, as they demand more appropriate and suitable attire, so that they can perform at their best. At Mentone Girls' Grammar, our Uniform Committee regularly reviews our offering of garments and welcomes student feedback as part of this process. When our girls can identify an issue, feel confident to speak up and to take action, we are there to support them in any way we can.

Our 2022 Sport Captain, Clare Milligan, approached Ms Charles last year, to discuss the design of the School bathers. She felt that the bathers were cut too high, the fabric too thin, and this was resulting in our students feeling self conscious and not wanting to participate in water sports.

"This was an important issue to me because I am a competitive swimmer and understand that bathers can be a barrier for students wanting to participate in Aquatic activities. As I am very passionate about Sport, especially Swimming, I want to see Mentone Girls' Grammar students have the uniform they need to participate fully in all the wonderful supporting programs that the School has to offer, especially Swimming," said Clare.

Ms Charles asked Clare to lead this change and the project has moved forward in leaps and bounds.

"After identifying the issue, I started to create some designs on my laptop. This was done by screenshotting a pair of bathers and using PowerPoint to digitally draw the designs. I then showed Ms Lewin, which kickstarted the process. She has been so supportive of my initiative. I was able to create a survey that invited all of the Senior School students to express their opinions and show their support for this change. This survey gathered responses from 322 participants, which I was excited about as I wanted the bathers to reflect the voice of all students. I was also hoping that the change of bathers would help



our School standout at Girls' Sport Victoria (GSV) events and represent our School colours in a new and modern way. I was able to use this survey to shape a report to present to Ms Charles. She supported me by taking the issue to all levels of Management and arranging for me to meet with the Strategic Management Team (SMT), Uniform Committee and Bathers Supplier," Clare explained.

When asked to reflect on the experience of presenting to SMT, Clare said "I was a little nervous and extremely excited at the same time. It was a great opportunity to present my ideas and receive feedback from members of Management".



Clare used her voice to advocate for her fellow students. She had the passion to create change and the confidence and entrepreneurial skills to execute the task. This speaks to our purpose to ensure our students feel equipped to take their place in the world so that they can make a difference for themselves and others.

Clare's message to her fellow students is clear; "I have really enjoyed being the spokesperson for my peers and being able to support positive change. I have further developed my confidence in speaking in front of large groups and I have enjoyed working collaboratively with members of staff. If

you're really passionate about an idea, back yourself and take action. Do your research on whether others feel the same way and utilise the skills and expertise of the School's staff and be the voice for change."

We would like to thank our students for providing their honest and constructive feedback as part of this consultation process and cannot wait to see the finished product, as the girls take to the pool in 2023.

The Power of Authentic Relationships

Global discussions around the lasting impacts of COVID-19 on the development of young children are on the rise, as after effects are now becoming apparent in Early Learning environments. Families and educators all over the world are seeing developmental delays and behavioural changes among pre-school aged children and are now faced with the challenge of ensuring that these children are ready for their next major milestone of beginning school.

It's well known that the first five years of our children's lives are critical for laying foundations for development and wellbeing. Young children thrive on routine, structure and opportunities for play during this time.

During the pandemic, Victoria was faced with some of the strictest lockdown restrictions in the world and as a result, we saw disrupted daily routines, lack of social interaction and physical activity and increased stress levels in the home. When children experience negative or difficult circumstances in their first five years, the impact on their sense of self, not to mention their development, can be enormous.

Behavioural problems, increased levels of stress and anxiety and problems maintaining focus are just some of the observations being reported worldwide. To ensure we set our children up to flourish, we must examine what they truly need in a post COVID-19 world.

It's critical that early learners are provided with a nurturing environment where they are known, seen and heard. Children who have spent much of their early years at home, now need opportunities to engage with the world around them.

Research indicates that girls achieve their best when they are educated in an environment that nurtures them, allows them to use their voice to confidently express their opinions

without fear of failure, and discover a life of purpose, meaning and belonging. This, in turn, leads to hope; the single most important attribute we can develop in our children.

An intimate classroom setting encourages children to feel connected with their peers, their teacher and their school. Positive, quality relationships are key to providing children with a sense of security. When children feel secure, their self confidence grows and they feel empowered to be bold, take risks and learn from their experiences.

This year, as we have returned to the classroom, we have witnessed the benefits of face-to-face learning and increased social interactions, including improvements in vocabulary, social skills, self regulation, cognitive and physical development. Our expert teachers meet every student at their point of need and implement strategies to empower the girls to believe in themselves and to exceed their own expectations.

At the Sarah Simpson Early Learning Centre, we place the utmost importance on the relationship between student, teacher and parent. Establishing a partnership between school and family encourages trust, which leads to better outcomes for the child. There is a strong sense of community here and we see our students reaping the benefits of these authentic relationships every day.



Appointment of ELC Director

It is with great pleasure that we have welcomed Ms Bree Phelan as ELC Director. Bree joined the Sarah Simpson Early Learning Centre at the beginning of Term 4 and has thoroughly enjoyed getting to know our young learners and their families.

Bree is a dedicated and compassionate educator who has more than 17 years of experience teaching 3-5 year old children in independent schools. She holds a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (Monash University) and a Graduate Certificate of Leading Education (Edith Cowan University) and is a fully registered teacher with the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

Originally from Melbourne, Bree joined us following her most recent appointment as the Director of ELC at St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School in South Australia. Bree's extensive experience in early learning environments will be invaluable as we reimagine the Sarah Simpson Early Learning Centre.



Indigenous Perspectives

As part of our Indigenous Perspectives inquiry, this year our Junior School students were visited by Lionel Lauch, an Elder and the CEO and Founder of Living Culture. The mission of Living Culture is to educate people about the importance of keeping Aboriginal culture alive, as they strongly believe that Indigenous knowledge is a living link to the past, present and future.

Uncle Lionel performed a smoking ceremony and worked with our Junior School Ambassadors and International Mindedness Captains to develop a unique Acknowledgement of Country, which was used at all gatherings and assemblies for the 2022 school year. We thank Uncle Lionel for sharing his insights with our students and for inviting us to learn more about his ancient culture.



We acknowledge and show our respect to the Bunurong people of the Kulin nation and the Elders past and present. We give thanks for the feminine energies of the past and commit to bring this positive mother energy into the future. We give thanks for the skies, the land and water, the fresh water and the salt water. We show respect for Bunjil the eagle and Waa the raven who watch over us and hold all knowledge. We show our respect for all living things above, below and between.

Written by Mentone Girls' Grammar Junior School students



A Power Perspective

When I first visited Mentone Girls' Grammar, I felt both a sense of understanding as well as belonging. The feeling of belonging can be an elusive one, and particularly challenging for our young people. Over my career I have taught in both co-educational and all-boy environments, but my experience with all-girl education is a lived one. From the time I was 10 years old, I was fortunate enough to be educated at an all-girl school. For eight years I enjoyed a single sex experience during the formative years of my childhood and adolescence. It was a precious time and one that I feel privileged to have had.

I firmly believe that an all-girl environment sets girls up for future success. Girls will experience their school years in a manner that is unique and personal to them, but there is no doubt that the skills they will acquire in a single sex environment will serve them well in today's world.

We only need to look at the alumnae of Mentone Girls' Grammar to see evidence of women's capacity to thrive. They are athletes, award winning authors, renowned editors, prominent researchers, industry leaders, trailblazers within their professions, and most importantly, contributing members to our society. They are making our world a better place.

Moreover, if we look at our society more broadly, of the newly appointed female MPs in the Federal Election this year; five out of the eight elected MPs attended all-girl schools; a significant statistic when we consider that only 2% of schools in Australia are all girls.

The world needs female leaders right now, more than ever. The last few years have been troubling ones for girls and women. The COVID-19 pandemic has been hardest globally on females, with women losing more hours of work than men during the pandemic, and in 2020 alone, according to the United Nations, the pandemic led to 512 billion additional hours of unpaid childcare globally for women. It is harder still, to make sense of the Supreme Court decision in the US to overturn Roe vs Wade and thereby eliminate a woman's right to choose. Or the recent disappointing appointment of a politician (known for voting to restrict women's rights) as Minister for Women in the UK. It is not surprising that recent research by Monash University (Walsh, 2022) shows that girls are feeling uncertain about their futures.

How do we help our girls make sense of the world? We do so by supporting them to be critical thinkers and to challenge the status quo. We do so by encouraging them to question, and to help them make the world a better place; to do good; to provide a liberal education that broadens their perspective of the world, so that they understand important social issues and what their place is in the world. We want them to understand that they are a force for good and a catalyst for change. We want them to have a power perspective.

Research strongly indicates that girls who are educated at girls' schools are encouraged to be critical thinkers, take more risks and pursue more leadership opportunities. They leave our schools with a sense of confidence and purpose. An analysis of the OECD's PISA results in 2020 found that girls from all-girl schools out perform girls from co-educational schools on all academic measures including Mathematics, Literacy, and Science.

It is our responsibility as educators of girls to give them a sense of agency and the tools to think critically and to act decisively for the greater good whilst supporting each other's ideas and ambitions. As Marian Wright Edelman, civil rights activist said, "You can't be what you can't see". We must continue to support our girls and show them who they can really be - we are all in the trenches together; fighting for our girls' futures and there is no better environment to do this than the one provided at Mentone Girls' Grammar.

By Meg Adem
2023 DEPUTY PRINCIPAL/HEAD OF
SENIOR SCHOOL



Appointment of Deputy Principal/ Head of Senior School



We are delighted to announce that Ms Meg Adem has been appointed as our new Deputy Principal/Head of Senior School. A Bayside local, Meg's time at Brighton Grammar School has seen her build strong relationships with both staff and students over the breadth of her career.

A passionate educator, Meg is committed to providing the best care for each student by developing their inherent strengths and talents and providing an environment where they are safe to be themselves. Following her own personal journey in a girls' school growing up, Meg believes a school such as Mentone Girls' Grammar is critical for empowering girls and provides them each

with a power perspective of the world. Meg's key priority during her career is to educate and care for the whole child, with wellbeing central to her philosophy. We very much look forward to welcoming Meg to the Mentone Girls' Grammar community at the beginning of Term 1, 2023.

Engaging with Technology



In 2022, educators from across the world descended on Boston, Massachusetts for the Global Forum on Girls' Education. This in-person event provided teachers, academics, and school leaders the opportunity to connect, share ideas, and learn from each other, guided by the shared mission of educating girls.

It was a privilege to join educators from around the world, with school leaders and teachers from such a diverse community, with a common mission of how to offer the best opportunities for young girls through meaningful learning. The forum in the US commenced the day the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v Wade*, and this made a palpable shift to the tone of the conference, as discussions were shaped around questioning the validity of progress made when such decisions were happening in supposedly civilised nations.

Shabana Basij Rasikh, founder of the School of Leadership for Afghan Girls in Kabul, spoke of the challenges her mission was facing in a city that has fallen to the Taliban, in a country that already put the teaching of girls second. Her tales of young women being denied an education were as elucidating as they were harrowing, yet most importantly they were key in providing perspective on the challenges we face more locally in education. As we evolve as a culture swift to reach for the keyboard to express consternation about the 'injustice of a team selection or the 'horror of subject offerings, it can sometimes be worthwhile acknowledging that just stepping foot into a classroom where both student and teacher are safe to learn is a privilege in itself.

FOCUS AND SCREEN TIME

In my presentation to delegates, I sought to address what it means to integrate technology in an environment where much of the commentary surrounds the pitfalls of digital life. One of the greatest challenges not only to children, but adults alike, is the cacophony of interruptions that compete for our attention in a world where focus can be an elusive skill to maintain. However, the main differentiator between adults and children is that the child's prefrontal cortex is still in development. Whereas the fully developed brain should, in theory, have the metacognitive capacity to attenuate distraction, it is a far greater challenge for the young mind to ignore the competing relentless interruptions due to ubiquitous technology. Journalist Johan Hari contends that our attention is not lost, rather it is stolen. Therefore, how do we as educators embrace the need for technological integration, while acknowledging the challenges it poses to our students?

One of the essential skills for the future graduate is digital literacy, which goes beyond the core competencies that once adorned resumes, where a rudimentary understanding of word processing and spreadsheets was considered 'tech savvy'. To be digitally literate in



2022 and beyond means to understand how to engage with technology responsibly, ethically, and purposefully across a range of contexts.

A significant misconception in this field, and in particular the term 'digital native', is the assumption that being born in the 21st Century by default gives the individual inherent skills. The risk that this poses is that we, as educators, assume our students come pre-equipped with the abilities necessary to engage with technology without intervention. The greatest differentiator between what a young person understands about technology, and what they don't, is their intrinsic motivation to use the tool. While a young person might seem adept at using their device, their capacity to use social media, produce creative content, or play games, is a vastly different skillset to that for academic pursuits. This certainly does not deride the myriad benefits of the aforementioned online activities.

Studies have highlighted how gaming can improve fine motor skills; creative platforms can foster collaboration; and social media can enable community and connection once confined by the tyranny of distance. However, it would be naïve to assume that there is not another side to the coin when it comes to a life online.

Therefore, it is imperative that we acknowledge the pitfalls, and how to address them, if we are to harness the power of technology in 2022 and beyond. It would be a disservice to our students to instil an over romanticised notion of how life used to be before technology and suggest the solution to the threats of online life is to avoid it altogether. Rather, comprehensive awareness and sustained educational programs that teach our students how to engage responsibly with the tools at their disposal is key.

Sharing knowledge, and learning from others, was an enriching experience at this Global Forum. It provided a great insight into the fact that regardless of the size of school, depth of resources, or breadth of teaching talent, the challenge for schools that proudly uphold the single sex proposition is the same: How do we best prepare our girls to graduate into a world where they are future ready, agile, and equipped to compete? I left the US uplifted by a network of likeminded educators, who continue to improve a world where our students are empowered to take these challenges in their stride.

By Dr Karl Sebire DIRECTOR OF
RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY

Back with a Bang!

Reigniting the Creative Arts

The past two years have challenged all areas of the Creative Arts to think beyond traditional means of expression, to learn new methods of presenting our craft, and to maintain connections. Despite two years of lockdown, it is through Creative Arts where we can connect not only in the present, but also through time. An education in the Creative Arts gives students the skills to tell stories that inspire, to create long lasting relationships, and to generate the feeling of intrinsic reward.

This year at Mentone Girls' Grammar, students and staff have once again been able to experience the sensation of live performances with audiences and reactions that are not limited to an emoji. The VCE Theatre Studies class presented *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. All Drama and Theatre Studies students from Years 9 to 12 have experienced live theatre this year and for some this would have been their first experience! The Year 10 Drama classes have enjoyed collaborating to present to an audience of peers, family, and teachers, excerpts from Shakespeare's *Tempest* as well as devised theatrical works as part of *The Suitcase Series* hosted by Malthouse Theatre. Year 9 students engaged with renowned performer Jessica Pratt in developing skills in improvisation and comedy.

Through the style of Hip Hop, Dance students discovered new and modern ways to move their bodies.

In 2023, we are pleased to offer two new subjects at Years 9 and 10. The new subjects, aptly titled 'Dance and Theatre', combine elements of both disciplines so that students may have a richer and fuller experience as theatre makers of the future.

The Visual Artists have once again been able to experience live exhibitions, collaborating on creating art works, and working in a studio environment. Students across the whole school have enjoyed working with Kate Rhode, our Artist in Residence, during Term 3. Ms Rhode is known for her intensely colourful jewellery and sculptural object based works.

Music students have been rejuvenated by live performances. Junior School Music students enjoyed spending time with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and Years 7 and 8 students presented their work in Music, Drama and Art at the annual 'Create' evenings.

Big Art 2022 was a vibrant and eclectic display of Art, Drama, and Music from the whole school. Students were able to share their creations with a host of 500 parents, friends, siblings, and peers. Big Art is a wonderful celebration of artistic creativity, passion, but more importantly, our contribution to our world.

All the 'great' people in history are connected by one thing, the Creative Arts. Albert Einstein, Pythagoras, the Late Queen Elizabeth II and the new King Charles III were all artists. Was it their primary profession? No, but they have each said at one time or another that without the Arts, their lives would not make sense.

By Tony Toppi
HEAD OF CREATIVE ARTS





Part of our Senior School curriculum is the Outdoor Education program, which sees our students reaping the many benefits of spending time in natural settings on camps. These camps give the girls the opportunity to spend time with their peers while learning different skills, making new friendships and participating in activities that push them out of their comfort zones. When girls are challenged to take risks and participate in activities they wouldn't ordinarily try, they grow, developing independence, resilience and persistence along the way. The feeling of accomplishment that comes from succeeding at something new, something that was once feared, is one that promotes self esteem and encourages a commitment to personal growth.

As our girls continue to move forwards, they know that without fear, they know no limitations.

The Sky is the Limit





Active Bodies, Active Minds

The numerous physical and mental health benefits of participation in exercise and sport are well documented. At Mentone Girls' Grammar it is our mission to provide opportunities to develop the skills for lifelong engagement in a wide variety of activities. It is through this philosophy we have established a program that keeps our students engaged, opposed to the trend of Sport drop-out seen in the teen years.

By acknowledging the reason that teen girls drop out of Sport, we have developed a program that encourages engagement and participation. As girls reach puberty they seek social connectedness. The inclusion of team breakfasts, presentation events and even the bus trips to sporting competitions, becomes an opportunity to socialise with their peers. The structure of the Girls' Sport Victoria (GSV) competition allows students to compete in teams with others, creating friendships and connections outside their year group.

The research into teen girls Sport drop-out rates has consistently shown that teen girls move away from competitive sporting situations. Lack of confidence and self esteem during puberty, or intolerance to poor sportsmanship associated with extreme behaviour in competitive sports settings, are amongst the theories for this trend. The creation of a supportive and safe environment that allows students to take risks and make mistakes is imperative. By developing a growth mindset within our coaching philosophy, our program aims for girls to develop the tools to thrive with confidence. Our coaching staff are positive and inspiring and many of our alumnae return to become mentors and role models.

The GSV program offers a wide variety of sports each term, allowing students to try new activities throughout the year. Within our Sport program, we offer both competitive programs and activities with a larger focus on personal wellbeing. The non compulsory nature of our competitive program allows girls to continue to choose the activities within the program they wish to pursue and provides the freedom to manage their varying obligations as they develop independence and the essential life skills of time management.

While the link between physical activity and enhanced academic performance is also well documented, research published by the University of Sydney in February went a step further, to show the benefits were strongest in sporting programs run during school hours. These findings were no surprise at Mentone Girls' Grammar, where we have students competing at all levels of Sport and achieving excellent results in their academic endeavours. Sport is included in the curriculum from Year 3, giving it the status of being essential and valuable. The Sport program is key to creating our unique community where every girl is known, seen and heard.

By Libby Lewin
HEAD OF SPORT



Community by Design



Gifted Education theorist, Joseph Renzulli, holds the belief that highly able students benefit from three types of enrichment: general exploratory activities, group training activities and investigations of real problems. Through our latest initiative, *Community by Design*, a human centred design challenge, students were engaged with all aspects of Renzulli's enrichment triad model. The event's theme focused on the pertinent issue of social isolation and loneliness in communities, which provided students the opportunity to tackle a problem that was both tangible, and relevant to their lived experience.

Schools from our local Bayside community were invited to nominate highly able students in Years 9 and 10 to attend Mentone Girls' inaugural Enrichment Symposium. Students heard from Dr Michelle Lim, Chairperson and Scientific Chair of Ending Loneliness Together; Director of Social Health and Wellbeing (SHAW) Laboratory, Swinburne University, and co-author of the Australian Loneliness Report (2018), together with a panel of community leaders from law enforcement, social work and international development, on impacts of loneliness in our community. Working in mixed groups, students then followed the Stanford School Design Thinking Framework to develop a solution to an issue arising from the morning's discussions. The first step of the framework was to empathise with one's potential audience or users. Hearing from experts and those working at the coalface brought rigour and context to the students' exploration of the issue. The open-ended nature of the task allowed the groups to synthesise their findings from the panel using various lenses and ultimately define a specific problem the team wished to

address. One team posed the question, "How might we provide people with disabilities access to public spaces and events so that they feel included in their community?". As students progressed through the design stages brainstorming ideas and prototyping solutions, no restrictions were placed on their process or creativity. When we offer students a sense of agency, and the freedom to test their capabilities, their performance often exceeds expectations, as was the case on the day.

Equally important to offering exploratory problem-based challenges is providing gifted students with opportunities to collaborate with like-minded students. Highly able students thrive when they are given time to mix with others who share their capability and enthusiasm for learning. Students often find it a relief not to disguise or underplay these attributes and aspects of themselves. One participant reflected, "...we collaborated on different parts and realised that many of us attending Enrichment opportunities like this maybe more like



mindful than our peers at school." The safe social environment is exemplified by others' feedback that, "We were all very inclusive, even with lots of opinionated ideas"; "I felt comfortable working with everyone towards a common goal"; and "I made new friends who are perhaps more similar to me".

The best educational experiences are authentic, allowing students to engage with 'real world' problems and scenarios. As one student remarked, the Symposium "simulate[d] an actual work environment". Another reflected, "It challenged our learning outside of the classroom and taught us skills that extend into the world after school." Gifted students often have a highly developed sense of justice, or moral sensitivity, which makes social, human centred problem solving an ideal form of enrichment. By hearing real accounts of loneliness from Senior Constables Tania Stacey and Murray Stranger; together with insights on social marginalisation from Executive Officer of BayCISS, Rose Paduano and Youth Governor, Kergen Angel, students were given an

unembellished picture of society as it was, yet they were also empowered with a conviction that they could alter the status quo.

It was great to see students come together from our neighbouring schools to collaborate, ideate and prototype potential solutions to real problems. The quality of students' proposals to council was testament to the high level of creative thinking and engagement of participants. We look forward to future partnerships with schools in the Bayside area so that, together, we can offer activities that enrich our highly able students both socially and intellectually.

By Bridget Forster HEAD OF KERFERD LIBRARY AND **Anna Hawthorne** ENRICHMENT CO-ORDINATOR



EnviroKids

Several years ago, while planning the Unit of Inquiry 'How We Organise Ourselves', we wanted to provide the best approach to get a real world understanding of organisations and how they operate. We considered inviting guest speakers to share their stories, and we could research organisations online. We could even explore our own school to see an organisation in action. These were viable and beneficial learning engagements. However, we wondered whether the best way for our students to get a true sense of what an organisation is, how organisations work and the importance of a shared vision, would be for them to form their very own organisation, living and breathing it each day.

From these wonderings, the EnviroKids program, as it is today, was developed. The program continues to blossom and mature, always leaving room for the next year to grow and build on what was already there. Several steps and processes have come into play in EnviroKids that make it a unique program where students have a voice, agency and a proper understanding of the roles and responsibilities within an organisation.

Each year's goal is to build upon what has already been created in previous years. When this program began, we needed to start from the foundations and consider what roles would be required to create a student-led environmental organisation. The roles were created through discussions, research, and brainstorming with the students. The students were then asked to consider which role they would like to apply for. They were asked to consider roles in which they had a genuine interest and the roles they felt they had skills and could carry out efficiently. They were even asked to consider roles where they knew they wanted to develop their skills. Once they had a list of three roles they were interested in, they needed to write an application letter to apply for the

role. They then sat a short interview with their classroom teacher, and from there, the organisation was up and running.

Each year the students develop a different aspect of the organisation. In 2020 they created roles. In 2021 students worked with the School's Marketing team to create a logo. This year the focus was on developing our Mission statement: To encourage and inspire our School community to make positive choices that respect and protect our local environment."

2022 has been the most successful year for the EnviroKids organisation. The team set a monetary target of \$1005. To date, the students have planted and harvested Winter, and now Spring, vegetables. They have held two successful markets. They make weekly visits to our local beach, where some students have independently taken on cleaning the rubbish and keeping the space free from plastics, microplastics and general rubbish. The Parents' Association has donated a sprinkler to support the program, keeping the veggies watered using an efficient watering system. Following the second market at the end of Term 3, they have now earned \$1258. They



have purchased their own seedlings, soil and supplies throughout the year. The EnviroKids have worked closely with the Senior School Environmental Leader, Yue. She met regularly with the Year 4s to work toward selecting a school-appointed environmental charity where they could donate the surplus of their funds. They will be leaving enough money in their account for the 2023 Year 4 class to start with enough funds to be self sustaining and keep the organisation running.

EnviroKids is a valuable part of the Year 4 curriculum; students are passionate and invested and experience what it takes to be part of a functioning organisation. If any student from Year 4 was asked what they enjoyed the most, without fail, they would say being a part of the EnviroKids organisation.

By Nicole Spence
YEAR 4 TEACHER

“Being in an organisation provides opportunities by being an environmental leader for the Junior School. You understand what it takes to organise an event like our EnviroKids markets. Plus, EnviroKids is just a lot of fun!” Iggy W

“EnviroKids is learning to save resources. We make worm juice; we compost our fruit scraps. We use these things to make the vegetables that we grow better. It is like a lifecycle in its own way.” Ishani R

“The EnviroKids program shows that kids can take action and that we can have a positive impact on the environment.” Erica W

“I like EnviroKids because I can work with my friends. You have roles in your team, and if you don’t do your job, it impacts the other teams, which impacts EnviroKids.” Lexi L



Rocket Science

This year saw the launch of our inaugural Rocket Science program in collaboration with the Monash University Engineering Departments High Powered Rocketry team. Experts from the team visited the Enterprise Academy to work with Year 7 students and taught them how to build their own Low Powered Rockets (LPRs). Monash HPR is a student team dedicated to the design, analysis and construction of high powered rockets with their Vice Lead of Marketing and Graphic Designer also being our past student, Jade Rayner (Class of 2020).

Monash HPR workshops taught the students engineering concepts and principles, mimicking a similar process that members of the team would undertake regularly to launch rockets into the atmosphere and conduct scientific tests. In the program, students used the software OpenRocket to design and simulate their rockets before building them. The construction process saw the girls assembling the rockets which they had virtually tested, as well as decorating them to make them launch ready!

At the time of writing, the girls are waiting for optimal weather conditions, to travel to Monash University's Clayton campus to launch their rockets. We wish the girls all the best for the big day when it arrives!

By Christian Williams
ENTERPRISE ACADEMY MANAGER

"I signed up for the program because I thought it would be a great team building experience. I like aviation and I wanted to learn more about this area of STEM. Going to the workshop and excursion were really good experiences; I learned a lot about aerodynamics and rocket science. It was fantastic" Chloe, Year 7

Well Led

We are proud to have a community of highly skilled educators and thought leaders at Mentone Girls' Grammar.

Our School values open dialogue, warmth and trusting interplay between students and their teachers, both inside and outside of the classroom. Such an atmosphere contributes to a culture of mutual respect, where curiosity, mastery, independent thought, and

delight in learning are prized. Our exemplary educators inspire passion and a life long love of learning in our students each day.

This year, we launched the *Well Led Leadership Series*, which introduced some of our talented leaders and celebrated the positive impact they have on our students. These videos were shared with our community each week during Term 2 and Term 4, via our social media channels.

Please visit our website to view the *Well Led Leadership Series*, at mentonegirls.vic.edu.au/about/our-educators.





Lights, Camera, Aquatics

In 2021, the School's Aquatic Centre was the idyllic backdrop for the major motion picture of Tim Winton's *Blueback*, an achingly beautiful story about family, belonging and living a life in tune with the environment.

Blueback – a fable for all ages – is a deceptively simple allegory highlighting the greed of humans invading patches of seas. While learning to dive, young Abby befriends a magnificent wild blue groper, beginning her life-long journey to save the world's coral reefs. When the quiet reef at her coastal hometown is threatened by commercial fishing operators, Abby and her activist Mum take on poachers and developers to save her friend.

Mentone Girls' Grammar student Helen Strydom (Year 5) plays a body double of the lead character Abby as a child, performing underwater scenes in the School's Aquatic Centre.

"I had to hold my breath underwater and swim with remote-controlled fish in one of the scenes," she said, smiling. "I heard one of the crew say I was the best body double!"

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the lead actress could not travel from Queensland to film the aquatic scenes. The contingency plan was to ask the School for any Year 6 students who fit the bill.

"My older sister Michaela was one of those students, but she was too tall, so she recommended me and I was only one centimetre taller than the lead actress," said Helen.

"I even had to cut my hair for the role to look like the actress".

Acting never crossed Helen's mind until she landed herself on the set of this major motion picture, yet she would love to explore acting further and study the craft to land future roles.

"I would really like to work in film and television series," said Helen.

Director Robert Connolly has kindly accepted the invitation to present to our students and screen the movie on campus in the new year. *Blueback* is in cinemas from 1 January, 2023 starring Eric Bana and Mia Wasikowska.

Community Partnerships

At Mentone Girls' Grammar, our students are committed to supporting women in need within our community. This year, the girls were inspired by local charity *St Kilda Mums*, as they worked to attain their goal, 'to ensure children and families are happy, healthy and safe'.



Our students have been utilising their unique skills and talents to support *St Kilda Mums* with creative fundraising initiatives, using their lunchtimes to host recycled fashion markets, book sales, bubble tea stands, bake sales and more. Collectively, the Year 10 students have raised more than \$2000 for *St Kilda Mums* this year. In class, the girls have been working with industry leading design experts and engineers at Swinburne University to manufacture new products, such as baby baths, from sustainable products. They have also been refining their STEM skills in the Enterprise Academy, by designing and constructing cots and beds from recycled wood, to donate to young families.

Students from Year 7 and 10 have spent time with the *St Kilda Mums* team this year, supporting their work by sorting and packing donations for vulnerable women. Together, we are reducing waste and pollution by extending the life cycle of kids' essential goods through repair and reuse. We are helping to alleviate financial pressures on vulnerable families in our areas and creating opportunities for every child to feel secure, safe and to thrive.

"My friends and I are very passionate about helping others and supporting people who can't afford basic needs. We are glad to make furniture out of landfill rather than letting it go to waste." Felicia

"During this project we have built a race car bed using different materials. We learned how to put furniture together and use different tools. We want to support the *St Kilda Mums* charity because these families deserve a nice place for their children to sleep. *St Kilda Mums* work hard to make sure that these children have a happy life and this is our way of helping them. This charity is something that tugs at our heartstrings and we are enthusiastic about helping them." Amelie



"During this term, myself and three other students have been working on two projects to help support a not for profit charity, *St Kilda Mums*. Over these weeks, we have designed, painted and built a cot, and a race car bed. *St Kilda Mums* supports vulnerable women in our community, helps babies and children and works with less fortunate families. We are so lucky to live the lives we have and helping the less fortunate is the best way to help our community." Hannah

Farewell to Staff

Instilling a Love of Learning – Jo Frost

At the end of Term 2, staff and students bid farewell to Mrs Joanne Frost after 22 years of service to Mentone Girls' Grammar. Jo made an enormous contribution in her time at our School, and touched the lives of generations of students.

Jo began her journey at the School after moving to Australia from the UK with two young children. She applied for the role of a part time English teacher and she reflects "it just felt right, right from the first interview".

Jo quickly moved into a full time position as head of Year 7 and after four years, she took on the role of Head of Year 11 and 12. She also taught what she was most passionate about English and Literature.

When the Head of Senior School position became available, Jo jumped at the chance.

She held that position for eight years and had opportunities to grow professionally and personally. She enjoyed being part of a community where everyone is working towards a common goal the best learning outcomes for students.

Her philosophy has always been teach the child, not the subject. "Teaching is about the individual and they need to be nurtured so that they can reach their full potential," says Jo. She has always sought to instil a love of learning in the girls, so that they will have the confidence to follow their passions.



Having initially taught in a co-educational environment, Jo enjoyed observing how authentic girls are in an all-girl environment. "In a school like Mentone Girls' Grammar; the girls can be cartwheeling, playing AFL, drumming. There are so many opportunities. The free flowing discussions and the way the girls use their voice is the beauty of an all-girls school," she says.

"Our School encourages girls to use their voice, have a sense of self so that when they leave us, they have the courage to speak up and take their place in the world. I hope that a Mentone Girl is confident; that she knows

that what she has to say is worthy of being heard; that what she wants to do is worthy of doing; that she wants to do good in the world and has a clear sense of purpose."

We thank Jo for her incredible contribution to our School. She is known for her kindness, intelligence, warmth, humour and her outstanding teaching and leadership skills. It has been wonderful to hear both staff and students reflecting on their time with Jo, who will be dearly missed. We wish her all the best as she travels to the UK to spend time with her family.

Farewell to Staff

Sharing Hope and Joy – Reverend Philippa Lohmeyer Collins



The role of the School Chaplain is a special one. For the past decade, we have been blessed with Reverend Philippa and in recent times her Chaplaincy Centre, providing spiritual solace and a safe place for reflection in the very heart of our School.

Commencing with us in 2012, the same year that she was ordained, Reverend Philippa has made an indelible mark on the spiritual life of this community. Indeed, we are all aware of the challenges young people face in coming to terms with all the disparate elements that contribute to the formation of their identity including sex and gender but equally, we must also be attuned to their spiritual formation; in this context Philippa has offered a clear pathway to help them understand who they are and who they might become.

When reflecting on her time at the School, Philippa says, "Mentone Girls' is the gentlest, kindest community. It is staffed with the most competent and humble teachers I know. They think what they do is just ordinary, but it is extraordinary the way they bring out the best in young people. Mentone Girls' Grammar also works so hard to enable each person to use their God given gifts in the best possible way. I have seen students struggle and because of the professional skills, the teamwork of staff, the commitment and belief that everyone has gifts given by God to allow communities thrive, these students grow and flourish. That is an outstanding School".

Whether she was hosting Prayer and Pastries on a Tuesday morning; administering to those experiencing hardship or mentoring the Faith Captain, Philippa's generosity and wise counsel has been appreciated by all those who know her. Thankfully she will continue in Ministry, sharing the message of hope and joy.

"There is no 'retirement' as such in God's plan. I love being involved with others and will keep my Priest licence. One keen interest of mine is the interface between Science and Faith. I hope to continue to help people grapple with what are two fantastic areas Science and Faith in our God who made this world," says Philippa.

We wish Philippa all the best as she moves on to the next chapter of her life. Her message to our community is one of love. "Thank you to the Mentone Girls' Grammar Community for the privilege of serving you these 11 years. Thank you for involving me in your lives and allowing me to contribute to the education of your daughters. I am humbled and pray for the future for this wonderful School Community. You are God's gift to this area to build it up and serve it. Blessings!"

Farewell to Staff

Kellie Morgan – Head of Junior School



This year, we bid farewell to Ms Kellie Morgan, Head of Junior School, after an enormously impactful two years at Mentone Girls' Grammar. Kellie's genuine delight in children, extraordinary work ethic, high standards and capacity to build community, were hallmarks of her time at our School. Kellie is a passionate educator, who strongly believes in the power of an all-girl education.

"I always wanted to be a teacher, because of the learning communities I belonged to growing up, and the people I met within those communities. Standing beside others, supporting them, helping them, nurturing them and cheering them on as they find their own path is the best job in the world," she reflects.

"I feel passionate about the education of girls, not only the girls we educate each day, but those girls less fortunate, across the globe, who are denied the same rights. All girls have the right to grow, learn and develop in an environment that empowers not just

the individual, but all women. Schools must be designed for girls to focus on self belief, belonging, collaboration and agency for girls to flourish. Every decision at this School is made for the girls, who are the leaders, the soloists, the captains, the heroes, of each moment of every day," she says.

When asked to reflect on her time at Mentone Girls' Grammar, Kellie says the team around her has been instrumental in creating an optimal learning environment for our students.

"As a leader, you rely heavily on others to bring ideas to life. I am grateful that I have had the support around me to do this. Everyone from our Principal, our educators, the entire staff, all the girls and their families, our School Council and the wider community have a role to play. Schools come to life when we work together and support one another."

Aside from her expertise in streamlining operational processes and vast experience in Early Years learning, Kellie played a key role in the creation of our beautiful Junior School playground, which will be enjoyed by students for years to come.

"The excitement of the surprise mini upgrade to the playground during the 2021 lockdown was a highlight for me. I loved the anticipation, as the girls returned after so many consecutive weeks at home. Our 2021 Preps playing in the space for the first time is a moment I will never forget. With shoes and socks off, and pants rolled up, they paddled in the creek and made potions in the mud kitchen with the wonder and awe I had dreamed of," says Kellie.

Kellie proudly reflects on watching the Year 6 girls leading with passion and compassion; the Year 5 girls connecting with the wider community through the City of Kingston WoWoW project; the Year 4 students becoming environmental champions through the EnviroKids program; and a connected community of students, teachers and parents, all committed to providing the best possible learning environment. She says, "My heart is always full to the brim when I see the girls engaged in purposeful, meaningful experiences. I am proud of all of it, from the big noticeable moments and the small, unseen moments."

A Connected Community

American author Coretta Scott King once said, “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” Here at Mentone Girls’ Grammar, our community is connected by a strong sense of belonging, meaning and purpose, which in turn, bring hope. It is hope that sews the seeds for growth towards a common goal—in our case, to build upon providing an education that inspires a sense of purpose in our students and empowers confident, compassionate, and capable young women who are prepared for the future, whatever it brings.

The Parents' Association is a pivotal part of our community by being the voice of all our parents and guardians who entrust our exemplary educators with their daughters. It has been another wonderful year of initiatives led by the Parents' Association including the beloved Father's Day Campout and Father's Day AFL-themed Junior School and ELC Breakfast, Big Art, Trivia Night, Mango Drive and much more.

There was a lot of love and joy felt at this year's AFL themed ELC and Junior School Father's Day Breakfast. Guest speaker and AFLW player Erin McKinnon graced the Assembly where students hosted a Q&A for the Saints star. Dads enjoyed games, performances and activities across the morning and engaged with their daughters' learning in the classroom. Red The Bear also made an appearance, much to the delight of our littlest learners.

The Father's Day Campout was a roaring success with students and fathers wishing it had been a longer adventure. Families brought their caravans and tents to Warburton, where they indulged in pizza and roasted marshmallows over the campfire. They enjoyed a hike along the river and finished the night by watching a movie under the stars.

One of the most festive events on the School calendar is Big Art, where all year levels including ELC join together in celebration of the performing and visual arts. Students performed music, sang songs,

graced the acting arena and exhibited their best illustrations. The last two years saw Big Art switch to an online format due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but this year was a joyous occasion of togetherness and artistic expression, which were sorely missed over our time in isolation.

Head of Creative Arts, Mr Tony Toppi said, “It was a joy to see new art works on display, hear live music, experience drama in the Willow Courtyard and enjoy dumplings and a snag!”

The Rock 'n' Roll themed Trivia Night was a highlight, with parents dressing up and tables battling it out for the win. A live auction, spot prizes and raffles all added to the fun!

The Mango Drive was a fruitful event as families rallied to get their hands on the freshest mangoes harvested from Northern Queensland. With 125 registrations across our School community, the initiative was a great success.

The Parents' Association is the cornerstone of our School community. We wish to thank Will Donovan and Kath Shield who have contributed their time and efforts over the years as Co-Presidents. Both Kath and Will have stepped down from their roles this year, and we thank them sincerely for all their work.

2023 will see a change of leadership, and we look forward to soon announcing the new Parents' Association Presidents, who will make their own mark on our beloved School.





From the Old Girls' Club President

When I graduated from Mentone Girls' Grammar in 2019, I didn't anticipate that three years later I would be President of the Old Girls' Club (OGC). I am so grateful for this opportunity; to once again be able to serve the School and surrounding community. I would like to extend a warm thanks to past President Michaela Rowland for her unwavering support during this transition and to the OGC Committee members for their warm welcome.

My time at Mentone Girls' Grammar, including my tenure as Environment Captain and my involvement in the Hockey and Swimming teams, helped prepare me for post school life. I have since studied a Bachelor of Science at Monash, and have taken on part time jobs as a Dental Nurse and Disability Support Worker. I cherished my time at the School, as not only did I make friends I hope to have for life, but I became part of a community of individuals connected by the shared values of kindness, verity and female empowerment.

The Old Girls' Club supports and links our 7,000 alumnae, located around the world, providing not only the resources to reconnect with the School, but also the opportunity to reminisce on their formative years. Thank you to everyone who attended reunions this year. These events bring our community together and provide valuable networking opportunities.

We aim to assist students and recent graduates as they transition from Year 12 to life outside of school and assist them with career progression, linking them with like-minded alumnae as mentors.

Our School's rich history provides an opportunity to reflect on the past. Learning from the experience of our talented alumnae is, as well as understanding our School's long standing traditions and honouring significant individuals is of the upmost importance as we approach 125 years of empowering girls. In conclusion, I look forward to my time as President of the Old Girls' Club. There is the potential for much change, while honouring our age old traditions.

By Courtney Walsh
PRESIDENT, OLD GIRLS' CLUB

GET INVOLVED!

If you would like more information regarding the Old Girls' Club Committee, public speaking or mentoring opportunities, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Old Girls' Club President, Courtney Walsh, via oldgirlspresident@mentonegirls.vic.edu.au for further details.

UPDATE YOUR DETAILS

As part of our commitment to sustainability, the Old Girls' Club Newsletter will be distributed digitally from 2023. Please visit the website to update your details, to ensure you continue to receive this publication: mentonegirls.vic.edu.au/community/old-girls-club





“There is so much to learn from the inspiring women in our community... if we take every opportunity we see, we can follow in their footsteps.”
Sophie, Year 6

Learning from STEM Leaders

Our School community is full of remarkable women with fascinating backstories of overcoming adversity, embracing opportunities and using their gifts and talents to make a difference. This year, as part of the Science and Enterprise Enrichment program in the Junior School, Years 5 and 6 students researched and interviewed inspiring STEM role models, including some of our own incredible past students.

These alumnae engaged in deep and meaningful conversations with our students about pursuing passions and career progression in STEM fields, and also shared stories about their time at Mentone Girls' Grammar, reflecting on how the School has changed throughout the years. The students recorded and edited these interviews, producing a podcast designed to entertain, educate and inspire our Junior School students.

We are so thankful to our Old Girls who participated in this project. The wisdom and perspective the students have gained from connecting with our alumnae is invaluable. After learning more about the ground breaking research Old Girl Hayley Nitschke is doing at RMIT in Space Science, Year 6 student Emily said “Now I'm even more interested in learning about Science!”

By Christian Williams
ENTERPRISE ACADEMY MANAGER

Passing the Baton

Mrs Gayle Neylan, has a unique insight into the rich history of Mentone Girls' Grammar; not just through her work as the School Archivist, but through the special connection of the Neylan family to the School throughout the years.

Moys Sinclair, Gayle's mother, began her journey at Mentone Girls' Grammar in 1936. Now aged 102, Moys still likes to look back on her time at the School, which was then located on the site where St Bede's College is currently situated. During Moys' time at the School, it relocated to its present location, when Headmistress, Miss McCowan, purchased what was to be known as the 'Main House'. At that time, the School's students comprised of both day girls and boarders. Moys fondly recalls having lunch under the Willow Tree, after which the Willow Courtyard is named. Latin and Botany were two of the subjects she studied, and Moys remembers being the only student studying Botany, which was taught by Miss McCowan in her office, and still has the drawings she produced in class. Moys became a Prefect and proudly represented the School on the athletics track. The Old Girls' Club has been a big part of Moys' life, with many enduring friendships from different peer years, an advantage of the small size of the School at that time.

"Having heard of my Mum's love of the School for many years, there was nowhere else I wished to go for my secondary education," reflects Gayle, who enrolled at the School in 1967. Gayle, a valued member of staff and a dedicated contributor to our Old Girls' Club, has many treasured memories of her time as Prefect, under the leadership of Headmistress, Miss Lewty.

The School was rapidly growing and a new Science Block was constructed, consisting of upstairs laboratories and a space downstairs which was used for piano playing and for the Year 7's to conduct fashion parades, where they modelled garments from their sewing classes. Gayle was awarded the role of Library Monitor and remembers the Library being located in a small room in the Main House. Bookshelves lined the walls and



students had to climb over wooden tables and benches to reach them. During Gayle's time at the School, the Kerferd Library and Assembly Hall were built. The Library has since been extended into classrooms and the mezzanine added to the Hall. "Our English teacher, Mrs Tarrant, had us write an essay about how the pine trees felt when they were cut down to make way for the new building," reflects Gayle.

After graduating from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree, Gayle's first job was as a School Laboratory Technician at Sale Technical School. She then became the first full time lab technician at Mentone Girls' Grammar in 1983, where she set up the laboratories on the ground floor of the Science Block. During her eleven years, under the tenures of Principals Hunt and Douglas, Gayle also played an integral role in setting up the School's hothouse. In 2012 Gayle secured the job of School Archivist, which she affectionately thinks of as 'The Keeper of Memories', a role she still enjoys to this day.

Gayle was intent on sending her daughter Cassandra to Mentone Girls' Grammar and so, she joined the School in Year 7 in 2006. Cassie was thrilled to follow in her mother's footsteps and thrived in the all girl environment. Over her years at the School, she witnessed the opening of the VCE Centre, "Cobbalanna", which stands where the Main House was situated and the construction of the Bay Café. Cassie excelled academically, in the pool and on the athletics track and in the role of Deputy Head Girl. She graduated from Monash University as a Physiotherapist and is currently doing further studies through the University of Melbourne.

To have three generations witness such change throughout the history of our School, is a unique and special gift. As we look towards Mentone Girls' Grammar's 125 year anniversary, we know this rich history will shape our future direction, and the future looks bright.

50 Year Reunion

In October, we welcomed back our Old Girls for their 50 Year Reunion. Laughs were had, songs were sung and memories were shared over a delicious sit-down lunch in the Rose, where the group was entertained by our student String Ensemble. After lunch, the group toured the School to see all that has changed since they left. Thank you to all who attended this special event. It was wonderful to see you all back on campus!



Jennifer Down wins the 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award

Congratulations to Jennifer Down (Class of 2008) who won the 2022 Miles Franklin Literary Award with her most recent novel, *Bodies of Light*. This epic novel is a masterwork of tragedy and heartbreak, the story of a life in full.

Jennifer Down has become one of the writers defining her generation after being shortlisted for the Stella Prize in 2022 with *Bodies of Light*. As a prolific writer and editor, her work has appeared in *The Age*, *Saturday Paper*, *Australian Book Review* and *Literary Hub*. She was named a *Sydney Morning Herald* Young Novelist of the Year consecutively in 2017 and 2018. Her unpublished manuscript,

Our Magic Hour was shortlisted for the 2014 Victorian Premier's Literary Award. Her novel *Pulse Points*, was the winner of the 2018 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction and the 2018 Steele Rudd Award for a Short Story Collection in the Queensland Literary Awards, and was shortlisted for a 2018 NSW Premier's Literary Award.

The Miles Franklin Literary Award was established in 1954 and is Australia's most prestigious literature prize. Established through the will of *My Brilliant Career* author, Miles Franklin, the prize is awarded each year to a novel which is of the highest literary merit and presents Australian life in any of its phases. A warm congratulations to Jennifer.



Photo credit: Leah Jing, McIntosh

Remarkable Women Gala 2022



This year's Remarkable Women Gala at Encore in St Kilda, saw us come together as a community of parents, students, staff and of course alumnae, to celebrate the many extraordinary women who have attended our School over the years. We welcomed our wonderful MC and Old Girl, Ms Natalie Box (Class of 1995); School Council Directors; the fabulous musicians from our Alumnae Choir and Jazz Band; representatives from the Parents' Association; past and current students, and of course our 2022 Hall of Fame inductees Commanding Officer of the

Royal Australian Navy, Alisha Withers (Class of 2001); Emeritus Professor Vera Mackie (Class of 1973) and Reena Ghelani (Class of 1987), Director of Operations and Advocacy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. We are so grateful to have had the opportunity to hear their inspiring stories. Thank you to everyone who attended this truly remarkable evening and we look forward to seeing you again next year.

Remarkable Women Gala 2023

**Thursday 16 February, 2023
6:45pm arrival
Sandringham Yacht Club
32 Jetty Rd, Sandringham, VIC**

**Please join us in celebrating
the many remarkable women
in our community.
More details to come soon.**

Remarkable Women Hall of Fame Inductees



Reena Ghelani (Class of 1987)

Human Rights Lawyer

Reena works tirelessly to protect people and empower women who have suffered from conflict and disaster. She helps these women's voices be heard, putting them at the forefront of decision-making, designing and implementing projects and peace.

Reena currently works for the United Nations Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as the Operations Director. The OCHA's mission is to coordinate the global emergency response to save lives and protect people in all humanitarian crises. As the Operations Director of OCHA, Reena is responsible for all field operations worldwide, supporting Humanitarian Coordinators and is the lead adviser to the Under-Secretary-General on operational decision-making.

"When you see the power of what humanitarian aid is: to be with front-line workers – nurses, doctors, vaccinators and people running refugee camps – who are literally helping people survive. That is what this job is all about. It is one of the most amazing privileges to work in humanitarian aid. I wake up every day and feel like I need to keep going because I know there is a need for our work."

Reena has held several roles within the United Nations office including the Deputy Director of the Coordination and Response Division (CRD), serving as the Chief of Middle East and North Africa operations (CRD), and various other capacities in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. Prior to joining the OCHA, Reena held several assignments with the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Department of Peace Operations (DPKO), and has been a Protection/Human Rights Officer for the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA). She has also worked with the Australian Government's aid program.

Due to the nature of Reena's work, most of the projects she is involved with are highly confidential. However, some of her projects include food security in South Sudan; raising awareness and funds for millions fleeing Congo; coordinating response efforts in Lebanon following the blasts that devastated Beirut; navigating a major crisis of people fleeing fighting in Syria and Ukraine; and response efforts relating to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reena has also spent time in Afghanistan meeting with the Taliban, negotiating to gain a greater understanding of their intentions regarding the education and working rights of women.

This line of work is not for the faint-hearted and Reena does an incredible job of advocating for those who don't have a voice. Her all-girl education at Mentone Girls' Grammar helped cement Reena's drive to empower female humanitarians. "Women know their communities and their societies, and they know the right solutions. When you put women at the centre of designing programmes, you get a different kind of response. You know it will capture the most vulnerable."

"I have nothing but wonderful memories of my time at Mentone Girls' Grammar. The environment the teachers created allowed us to challenge ourselves and really reflect on who we are as people, how we can be our best and contribute to the world. Today I work frequently with communities who have literally nothing, but mostly only ask for one thing: education for their children so they have the foundations to change their life. A school where girls can thrive is the foundation to open opportunities and potential. Mentone Girls' was always this place for me."

Remarkable Women Hall of Fame Inductees

(continued)



Vera Mackie (Class of 1973)

Emeritus Professor

A single change to the school curriculum at Mentone Girls' Grammar in the 1970s paved Vera's career path. Today, she is a renowned academic in her field who specialises in Japanese feminism and gender history.

Vera was born in Glasgow, Scotland, migrating with her family to Victoria, Australia when she was just nine years old. Vera commenced her secondary education at Mentone Girls' Grammar in 1968, graduating in 1973. During this time, high schools in Australia were beginning to turn their focus to our closest neighbours, the Asia-Pacific region, and languages from this part of the world were introduced into the curriculum. This saw the introduction of Japanese at Mentone Girls' Grammar. It was this single shift in Vera's schooling curriculum that shaped the trajectory of her career.

Vera was one of the first group of six students to study the Japanese Language at Mentone Girls' Grammar.

"It was wonderful to be in a small school which cared for the individual needs of its students. Mentone was willing to make a long-term investment in building up the Japanese language program from small beginnings to a program with a sound reputation."

She immediately fell in love with this rich, yet difficult language. Vera went on to complete a Bachelor of Arts with Honours and a Masters degree at Monash University, both focusing on Japanese and Linguistics. In 1994 she completed her PhD in History and Women's Studies at the University of Adelaide.

"I consolidated my knowledge of Japanese with studies at Monash University and then, thanks to a Japanese government scholarship, in Japan. The early stages of my academic career were built on the ability to undertake intensive academic research in primary sources in the Japanese language."

Over the years, Vera has enjoyed teaching the Japanese language, Japanese studies, Asian studies, Gender studies and Cultural studies. She has held teaching positions at various institutions including Swinburne, the University of Melbourne and the University of Wollongong. She has also held visiting Professorships and Fellowships at numerous universities in countries such as Japan, the USA, Singapore, the Philippines and Germany.

"I feel blessed to have pursued my academic career at the time I did, when Australian governments actively supported the study of Asian languages and studies."

As she progressed through her studies, Vera's proficiency in Japanese studies and linguistics began to intersect with her interest in gender and history. This also became the foundation of her first book, 'Creating Socialist Women in Japan, 1900-1937' (Cambridge 1997).

Since then, Vera has authored and edited a number of books including 'Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality' (Cambridge 2003); 'Remembering Women's Activism' (Routledge 2019), with University of Wollongong's, Associate Professor Sharon Crozier-De Rosa; and 'IVF and Assisted Reproduction: A Global History' (Palgrave, 2020), with University of Wollongong's, Professor Sarah Ferber and Dr Nicola J. Marks.

Vera's work and contributions have seen her awarded the title of Emeritus Professor of Asian and International Studies in the School of Humanities and Social Inquiry at the University of Wollongong. She is also Foundation Director of the Centre of Critical Human Rights Research.



Alisha Withers (Class of 2001)

Commander, Royal Australian Navy

Over the last 20 years, Alisha Withers has forged a very successful career with the Royal Australian Navy. From protecting our borders to training and educating new recruits, Alisha has seen many facets of the Navy. Her commendable career is one to celebrated and honoured.

At the age of nine, Commander Alisha Withers' family settled down to life in Melbourne, after her father left the Navy. Accustomed to Navy life and the values that go along with it, Alisha's parents instilled in her a strong sense of service, thirst for adventure and determination. These qualities, coupled with the education she received at Mentone Girls' Grammar, served Alisha well when she joined the Royal Australian Navy upon graduating.

"I grew up not being interested in following my parents' footsteps, (but) it became the natural choice when I had started thinking seriously about my future."

Upon joining the Navy in 2002, Alisha conducted her initial officer training at HMAS Creswell, followed by six months at sea. In 2003, she commenced further studies at the Australian Defence Force Academy, graduating with a Bachelor of Science (Mathematics and Oceanography). A thirst for further training resulted in Alisha attaining a Masters of Military and Defence Studies from the Australian War College.

Since becoming a qualified Maritime Warfare Officer in 2007, Alisha has qualified as a Fighter Controller; an Officer of the Watch, an Air Intercept Controller (AIC), a Principle Warfare Officer specialising in air warfare and has conducted numerous operational deployments and exercises.

Some of her deployments include the Middle East Area of Operations SLIPPER, Operation RESOLUTE on multiple occasions and major exercises including RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), Talisman Sabre and the Royal Canadian Navy's International Fleet Review. During her tenure she has also served in HMAS Canberra (II), Melville, Ipswich, Sydney and Newcastle, and been the Commanding Officer of HMAS Maitland.

Being in command of HMAS Maitland, Commander Alisha led her crew conducting Border Protection roles in the northern approaches to Australia.

"The highlight of my almost 20 years in the Navy is my two years in Command of HMAS Maitland, from 2014-2016. This incredibly rewarding and challenging experience enabled me to hone my leadership skills and gave me the confidence to strive for my next Command."

In 2016, Alisha became the Fleet Direction Officer for Sea Training Group, responsible for on the job training of operations teams, before proceeding to the Australian Command and Staff College in Canberra in 2019.

By 2020, Commander Alisha was the Personal Staff Officer to the Deputy Chief of Navy and assumed the position of Current Operations Planner for the South West Pacific in Headquarters Joint Operations Command the following year. Alisha is currently the Commander of the Royal Australian Navy Recruit School.

Remarkable Women Hall of Fame

Simpson Sisters

SCHOOL FOUNDERS

– 1899 –

Dr Margaret McLorinan

SURGEON & HEALTH CARE PIONEER

– 1901 –

Annette Kellerman

ATHLETE, PERFORMER & AUTHOR

– 1902 –

Dulcie Boling

AUSTRALIAN MEDIA ICON

– 1949 –

Mary Bawden

TRANSPLANT DONOR
ADVOCATE & RETIRED
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

– 1969 –

Jo Cavanagh OAM

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

– 1971 –

Vera Mackie

EMERITUS PROFESSOR

– 1973 –

Dr Polixeni Papapetrou

LAWYER & PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTIST

– 1978 –

Kate Summers

TECHNICAL EXECUTIVE
– POWER OPERATIONS

– 1979 –

Dr Kathleen McGuire

CONDUCTOR,
DIRECTOR & LECTURER

– 1982 –

Wendy Leegel

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT
CONSULTANT

– 1983 –

Sarah Derrington

HEAD OF SCHOOL
& DEAN OF LAW PROFESSOR

– 1984 –

Nicole Bradtke

TENNIS CHAMPION & COACH

– 1987 –

Reena Ghelani

HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER

– 1987 –

Rakhee Ghelani

FREELANCE WRITER

– 1990 –

Dr Manjusha Thorpe

COMMERCIALISATION MANAGER

– 1991 –

Dr Sarah Miller

CLINICAL &
FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGIST

– 1992 –

Dr Pratiti (Mimi) Bandopadhyay

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR,
LABORATORY HEAD,
UNIVERSITY LECTURER
& PEDIATRIC NEURO-ONCOLOGIST

– 1994 –

Zoe Badwi

INTERNATIONAL SINGER &
SONGWRITER

– 1996 –

Christine Melis

BARRISTER, LEGAL ADVOCATE
& TEACHER

– 1998 –

Dr Suzie Sheehy

ACCELERATOR PHYSICIST

– 2001 –

Alisha Withers

COMMANDER, ROYAL
AUSTRALIAN NAVY

– 2001 –

Dr Bao Nguyen

VISUAL NEUROSCIENTIST,
OPTOMETRIST & LECTURER

– 2002 –

Neary Ty

TELEVISION REPORTER

– 2005 –





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