



ABBOTSLEIGH

*Old Girls' Union Inc.*

# The Loom

ABBOTSLEIGH OLD GIRLS  
NEWSLETTER

April 2024



## Autumn in the Glen

1940s

UPCOMING 2024 EVENTS



**Friday 5 April**  
AOGU Generations Breakfast

**Friday 31 May**  
AOGU Speakers Morning Tea

**Friday 21 June**  
Archibald, Wynne and Sulman  
Prizes Tour

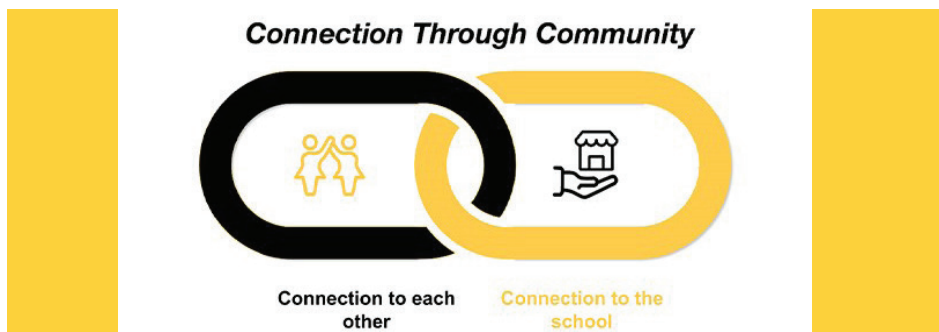
**Saturday 11 May**  
Community Event – Dubbo

# President's message

## What a fabulous year we have had

Abbotsleigh Old Girls have such a special connection with each other. There is a real sense of commonality and community when we meet each other in our personal and professional realms, underpinned by empowering women and girls and advocating for others. And this connection is evident whether we knew each other during our school days or are generations apart!

The AOGU Committee is therefore delighted to announce the **AOGU's refreshed vision and strategy** that supports and celebrates Old Girls' unique connection with each other and with the School. This vision has been developed from your feedback in last year's Members survey.



**Connection Through Community** will be our guiding principle over at least the next two years. The AOGU is seeking more ways for Old Girls to connect personally and professionally. An increased number of regional reunions are being organised and ideas being thought through on some new events, and we will have information for you by mid-year on ways we will facilitate stronger connection with each other professionally!

There are some special ways to connect with Abbotsleigh over the next two years. The Junior School is celebrating its 70th birthday this year and in 2025 Abbotsleigh turns 140 years old! There will be many opportunities to be on campus and we hope to see you at one of the special celebratory events. We are also sharing events that happen regularly on the School calendar that Old Girls are welcome to attend – such as music concerts and exhibitions at the Grace Cossington Smith Art Gallery. When we think of connections with School, we of course remember our friends, but also those staff members who provided us with particular support. One person who has had an immense impact on so many Old Girls over the last 40 years is Marg Selby in her role of Careers Adviser. Marg is retiring in May and on behalf of all Old Girls, we offer her our deepest gratitude for her tireless effort in guiding generations of Old Girls to navigate our first steps beyond the school gates. We are truly thankful for all you have given to us and the way you stayed connected with Old Girls beyond their school years.

If you have any ideas or energy to help Old Girls to be better connected, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [aogu.president@gmail.com](mailto:aogu.president@gmail.com).

Sarah Franks (1991)  
**President, AOGU**



## Reunions

### 2019 Leavers' 5 Year Reunion

Took place on Saturday 16 March  
Greengate, Killara

### 2014 Leavers' 10 Year Reunion

To be confirmed  
Jess Broomfield, Stephanie Graham  
and Selena Liu  
All details to follow

### 2009 Leavers' 15 Year Reunion

Saturday 9 November  
(4.30 pm onwards)  
Tilbury Hotel, Woolloomooloo  
(Plus Abbotsleigh for School Tour  
in the morning)  
Alexandra Davis  
Save the date – invitation to follow

### 2004 Leavers' 20 Year Reunion

Saturday 2 November (6 pm onwards)  
Tilbury Hotel, Woolloomooloo  
(Plus Abbotsleigh for School Tour in  
the morning)  
Gria Meakin (Barlow) and  
Jacinta Younan  
Save the date – invitation to follow

### 1999 Leavers' 25 Year Reunion

To be confirmed  
Belinda Thomas and  
Katie White (Craig)  
All details to follow

### 1994 Leavers' 30 Year Reunion

Saturday 19 October (12 pm onwards)  
The Apartment, Centennial Hotel,  
Woollahra Kirsty Gunning (Broad),  
Sarah Mangelsdorf, Sarah Robson,  
Caitlin Ruddock  
Save the date – invitation to follow

# Old Girl opportunities to support current students

Upon the retirement of Marg Selby, the AOGU is delighted to introduce Old Girl Vivienne Gilkes (2001) as Abbotsleigh's new Head of Careers Education and Post-School Opportunities. Not only is Viv an Old Girl, but she is also a member of the AOGU Committee, and her daughter Olive attends nursery class at the Abbotsleigh ELC. She has worked in Independent Schools for nearly 20 years and is already focused on getting to know the girls and the Abbotsleigh community in her new role.

One part of the AOGU's Connection Through Community vision is for Old Girls to connect with current girls, and not just via the swimming and athletics relay races! There are many ways that Old Girls can support current Abbotsleigh students to become the next generation of empowered female leaders, including:

**1. Volunteer to speak at an Industry Career Webinar.** The days of Careers Nights that most of us remember are gone. The School now holds evening Industry Career Webinars for interested students in Years 9-12 where Old Girls connect with current students to share their career journey and post-school wisdom. As they are online, it is a great opportunity for Old Girls beyond Sydney to be involved and we have had Old Girls join previous webinars from rural areas, interstate and even from a mining site overseas!

**2. Offer to host a placement for Work Experience.** Year 10 girls complete Work Experience in May each year. This program is very effective in helping them explore career pathways that may be of interest before they need to make important subject decisions for Year 11. The girls particularly appreciate the connection and rich learning experience of being hosted by an Old Girl.

**3. Connect as a representative of the tertiary sector.** Old Girls who work in the tertiary sector are an invaluable connection for our current girls. You may like to offer to speak with a group of girls in person or virtually about the tertiary institution that you work for, or about working in that sector. Any insight into university studies and life makes the transition after Year 12 a less anxious experience for many girls.

**4. Connect as a scholarship recipient or student at an international university.** Many students strive to apply for scholarships, cadetships and international university admissions. Any advice, support or mentoring that Old Girls can provide would be of great benefit to our current girls.

If you feel like you might be able to support current girls in any way, please reach out to Vivienne to explore the opportunities via email at [gilkesv@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:gilkesv@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au)

## Connecting with your year group: Year Representative call out

We are currently forming an Old Girls Year Representative network to help the AOGU connect with Abbotsleigh Old Girls, letting them know what the AOGU is up to and hearing back from our members about their expectations. We have volunteers for about half the year groups and are seeking more. If you would be interested in being your class's Year Representative and working with the AOGU to better connect the Old Girls community, please get in touch with Fiona Hobill Cole at [aogu.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:aogu.secretary@gmail.com) to learn more.

### Can you help?

We are looking for Old Girls who would be keen to organise a reunion in their regional area and would love to hear from you if you are interested. Please email the Old Girls Office at [oldgirls@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:oldgirls@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au)

#### 1989 Leavers' 35 Year Reunion

Saturday 14 September  
Venue to be confirmed  
(Plus Abbotsleigh for School Tour in the morning)  
Trudi Shepard (Beatty) and Kirsten Orr  
Save the date – invitation to follow

#### 1984 Leavers' 40 Year Reunion

Saturday 7 September (6 pm)  
The Oaks, Neutral Bay  
(Plus Abbotsleigh for School Tour in the morning)  
Suzie Evennett (Taylor) and Caroline Rigby (Miller)  
Save the date – invitation to follow

#### 1979 Leavers' 45 Year Reunion

To be confirmed  
Chrissy Baltussen (Bloch-Peterson), Andrea Hunter and Fiona Robinson  
All details to follow

#### 1974 Leavers' 50 Year Reunion

Saturday 19 October  
Manly Skiff Club (Lunch plus Abbotsleigh for School Tour in the morning)  
Annabelle Chapman (Davey)  
Save the Date – invitation to follow

#### 1969 Leavers' 55 Year Reunion

Saturday 14 September  
(School Tour and Lunch)  
Abbotsleigh Senior School  
Meriel Barlow (Beale)  
Save the Date – invitation to follow

#### 1964 Leavers' 60 Year Reunion

Saturday 19 October (School Tour and Lunch at Abbotsleigh Senior School)  
Sunday 20 October (Lunch at a venue to be confirmed)  
Suzie Lyle (Craig), Anne Mitchell (MacFarlane) and Penny Stratton  
Save the Date – invitation to follow

#### 1959 Leavers' 65 Year Reunion

Friday 18 October (TBC)  
(School Tour and Lunch)  
Abbotsleigh Senior School  
Diana Dickson (Cay) and Susan Downing (Bevan)  
Save the date – invitation to follow

#### 2024 Regional Reunions

##### Tasmania Reunion

Friday 23 August  
The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, Hobart  
Liz Little (1969)  
Save the date – invitation to follow

##### Canberra Reunion

To be confirmed.  
Petra Parker (Halliday,1988)  
All details to follow

## AOGU opportunities

We are excited to have five new committee members in 2024. The AOGU always welcomes more of our members to be involved, whether it is supporting our activities or representing Old Girl interests within the School. If you would like to know more about the following roles when opportunities arise, we'd love to hear from you. Please email [aogu.president@gmail.com](mailto:aogu.president@gmail.com).

- AOGU Representative on Abbotsleigh Foundation
- AOGU Representative on Abbotsleigh Council
- AOGU Executive roles, especially Vice President and Treasurer
- AOGU Committee roles

## Connecting and Celebrating: AOGU 110th Anniversary Grant recipient Karen Hamilton (Bootle, 1988)

Come and meet Karen Hamilton (Bootle, 1988) at the AOGU Speakers' Morning tea in the Marion Clarke Dining Hall, Friday 31 May at 10 am. Karen is the recipient of the sixth AOGU 110th Anniversary Grant which will support Karen's project offering a six-week Mindfulness and Meditation Program to cancer patients at the Western Cancer Centre in Dubbo. This Centre services an enormous rural area, consisting of many smaller outback towns. The program will be offered to cancer patients who are facing a challenging time, often away from home and it may be the catalyst for this type of program to be made available to other cancer patients in the future.

Karen is a breast cancer survivor who experienced the benefits of relaxation techniques while recovering in Sydney. Being passionate about the important role of these strategies in her recovery and knowing they are not widely available in rural areas, Karen transitioned from her career as a school teacher to being a mindfulness and meditation teacher. Her business, 'Harmonious Heart' offers community mindfulness and meditation classes in rural western NSW.

Karen will attend the Speakers' Morning Tea in person and talk about her mindfulness and meditation program for cancer patients and run one of her meditation sessions for attendees. The talk

will also be available via Zoom for those not able to attend in person.

The purpose of the AOGU 110th Anniversary Grant is to support Old Girls to 'pay it forward through a project designed to benefit the community or have a positive social impact. As always, it is a privilege for the Anniversary Grant Sub-committee to learn how Old Girls are giving back to the community and taking steps to improve the world.

We would like to encourage Old Girls to apply for the 2024 AOGU 110th Anniversary Grant; applications will be called for later in the year. We thank all our applicants for taking the time to apply for the Grant, wish them all the best in their respective projects. We are very proud to call them Abbotsleigh Old Girls.

RSVP for the AOGU Speakers Morning Tea with Karen Hamilton Bootle (1988) [events.humanitix.com/2024-aogu-speakers-breakfast](https://events.humanitix.com/2024-aogu-speakers-breakfast)



### Stay connected

Contact the Old Girls  
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