From the Headmistress

It is such a privilege to be at Abbotsleigh, where special events occur virtually every week. I would particularly like to highlight three of these, which, individually and collectively go some way in demonstrating the vibrancy, variety, depth and vigour of our Abbotsleigh community.

Twilight on the Plaza

Despite the threat of inclement weather, more than 500 parents enjoyed Twilight on the Plaza last Friday evening. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to meet so many parents, and for parents to meet one another. The atmosphere was warm and friendly; the conversation, rich. The music was sensational and the food was delicious. (You can read more about the event and the music below.)

As I said that evening, I am passionate about girls’ education and I am passionate about the equality of women – something that our society is heading towards, and something that I hope our girls (your daughters) can truly experience in all areas of their lives and careers in the years to come. I believe that the education girls receive in our girls’ school, Abbotsleigh, places them in an extremely good position to take their ‘equal seat’ at any table at which they may sit during their lives at and beyond school.

Another thing about which I am passionate, is community. I believe that community is so important in supporting the provision of the best possible education for our girls – your daughters. Indeed, the research is very clear regarding the positive impact, parents’ connection to and involvement in their children’s schools, has on successful educational outcomes for children.

Abbotsleigh is, most certainly, an amazing and very strong community:

• Our School Council is quite exceptional.
• Our staff are talented, highly professional and dedicated to providing the best learning experiences for our girls, both in and beyond the classroom.
• Our parents are connected with the School and contribute as much as they can when time and circumstances allow.
• Our girls are talented, vibrant and enthusiastic, and they are a complete delight with whom to work.

I would like to thank Ms Jacqui Everett and her team for their superb organisation, and we congratulate them on such a successful event. I would also like to thank Ms Kimbali Harding, our music staff and our talented musicians, our catering staff as well as Mr Carlos Barreuto and the IT department, for all they did to ensure the success of the evening.

The opening of the Landscape as Knowledge exhibition in the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery

On Saturday afternoon, we were treated to the opening of the Landscape as Knowledge exhibition, which, curated by Adrien Gebers, is from the extraordinary collection of Geoffrey Hassall. The works of art in this exhibition are magnificent and, listening to Geoffrey Hassall speak of his passion about art, and the encouragement and practical help he gives emerging artists, was nothing short of inspirational.

Having an art gallery of such a high calibre in the grounds of our school is quite unique and provides our girls, parents, grandparents and the community well beyond Abbotsleigh, with a wonderful opportunity to learn about, and experience exceptional works of art.
I would like to thank Mary Faith and Lisa Jones for organising this exhibition, which surveys approaches to the Australian landscape and reveals the artists’ relationship to the land and its varied effects upon the public psyche. The exhibition runs until 8 April, and should not be missed.

The Ruth Sanger Awards

It was also a great delight to be part of the Ruth Sanger Awards on Tuesday evening. This annual event allows Senior School parents, grandparents, friends and girls to come together to celebrate and be inspired by the girls’ exceptional achievements in mathematics and science.

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity to hear from our outstanding guest speaker, Miss Renee Wootton. Miss Wootton is a proud Tharawal woman, who, after studying aerospace engineering at UNSW, is now in a graduate program at Qantas. Renee is a strong advocate for encouraging young girls to study STEM subjects and to consider a future in engineering. She also volunteers with disadvantaged Aboriginal young people through an after school program run by The Settlement in Redfern. As a result of her work in these areas, Miss Wootton has been nominated for the 2017 NSW/ACT Young Achiever Award, the winners of which will be announced later this month.

Losing perspective near the peak

Rev Jenni Stoddart | Chaplain

As I write this I am looking forward to Year 6 camp where I will scale Mt Kosciuszko with our intrepid Abbotsleigh girls. As you read this, I have been up the peak and returned. I may well be nursing some tired muscles. However, I am not alone, Week 5 is a peak for all of us. It marks half way through the term. Perhaps like our family, in yours, a few frayed edges are showing. Perhaps like me, you have had moments of thinking, if only everyone in our family pulled their weight. In the middle of one such thought this morning, I noticed Mr Rev quietly remove the old coffee beans from the coffee machine. A job I know I should do but never actually do after making a coffee!

It’s easy as tiredness sets in to see the faults in others. Jesus reminds us how ridiculous such behaviour is. Matthew chapter 7:3-5 records Jesus’ words to his disciples:

> ‘Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Or in my case; Why do you hold the clothes on the floor over your family and not notice the coffee beans in the machine? You hypocrite, first clean out the coffee machine and then you will see the clothes on the floor in right perspective. If I keep this perspective, my family and I, with Jesus’ help, will make the peak of Week 5 in good shape. Jesus is calling us to reflect honestly on ourselves before jumping to judge those around us. He asks us this as the one who offers forgiveness and change to the frayed and weary like me.

Another highlight of the evening, was when two of our girls, Josephine Lee (12G) and Rebecca Whittle (10P), shared their experiences of visiting the inspiring facilities at the Australian National University, engaging in experiments, solving challenging problems, meeting experts and listening to career talks.

As Ms Betina Wrightson (Head of Mathematics) and Miss Kathryn Fraser (Head of Science) note: ‘According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) is the most rapidly growing area of employment in the Australian economy. It is also an area that is most under-represented by women. What is interesting, however, is that girls who attend girls’ schools are bucking this trend and choosing to study and work in STEM areas. At Abbotsleigh, the girls are afforded the opportunity to be involved in competitions, challenges and problem solving activities that seek to produce creative and critical thinkers who are enabled to engage in solving problems beyond the classroom.

The message of the night was to ensure that girls studying STEM subjects understand the relevance of what they learn, its impact on society, its combination with the arts and its potential to open doors for a variety of careers.’

Throughout this year, there will be many opportunities for all our girls to be involved in STEM and STEAM activities. One such activity will see the return of Renee Wootton in Week 10 of this term to work with our Year 8 girls in a STEAM/engineering incursion day.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Ms Betina Wrightson, Miss Kathryn Fraser and every member of the Mathematics and Science Departments for their organisation of this event. I would also like to thank the Head of Music, Ms Kimbali Harding, Mrs Louise Keller and the European Touring Strings ensemble for performing a stunning piece that incorporated musical patterns and sequences. Thank you too, to the many members of the Abbotsleigh staff, parents, guests and girls who were able to share in this celebration.
Walk with purpose
Ms Sally Ruston | Head of Junior School

Keeping safe and connected are two very good reasons why ‘walking with purpose’ is what I commended to our girls last week in assembly. Our body language communicates so much about our levels of confidence and readiness to engage. Given this phenomenon is well researched, let’s not keep this highly valuable information a secret. Rather, let’s explain and model to the girls just how they too can make a very positive first impression as being assured and confident Abbotsleigh girls.

So what does ‘walking with purpose’ look like? When we walk with a confident stride and at pace, smile, engage with eye contact and step out as we have important tasks to complete, then we communicate an air of authority and engagement.

Child development and health: important information for parents
Mrs Liz Cannon | Director of Counselling

Undetected difficulties in your child’s vision, hearing, speech and emotional health can affect their potential development. These difficulties can cause problems for learning as well as social and emotional development difficulties.

Early identification and intervention is the key.

Returning campers
Ms Sally Ruston | Head of Junior School

As your daughter returns home from her camping experiences this week, I warmly encourage you to talk with her about the activities and times she found rewarding, easy, challenging and difficult. Perhaps your daughter can also reflect on the things that she has missed and the insights she has gained about herself by being away from the creature comforts and support of home. Most probably ‘sleep banking’ will be needed with lots of down time and rest over the weekend. It is for this reason that we have cancelled Saturday sport and AbbSchool programs throughout this week as the camp programs are designed to be physically, intellectually and emotionally challenging experiences from which much learning eventuates.

The Year 6 girls left for camp on Monday of this week and spent the first two days enjoying a wonderful time in Canberra. One of the many places visited was the Australian War Memorial. While on Thursday the girls and I reached the top of Mt Kosciusko.

This brochure from NSW Health outlines the main developmental difficulties, the warning signs and suggested NSW Health intervention contacts. Teachers are often the first to notice and identify these difficulties, but it is also important for parents to know the warning signs to look for in their child.

Please do also speak to your child’s teacher if you are concerned about any issue with their learning or development. Your local GP is another important resource for any concerns regarding developmental issues in children.

Literacy and numeracy information sessions
Ms Sally Ruston | Head of Junior School

For all parents of girls in Kindergarten to Year 2 we are holding a literacy/numeracy information morning, which will be repeated the following week. During these sessions we will introduce strategies that can be used at home to enhance and develop your daughter’s reading and mathematical skills. Abbotsleigh girls enjoy a rich literacy and numeracy program. They are encouraged to borrow a wide range of books from the Palmer Library and engage in mathematical opportunities both inside and outside the classroom.

Two parent sessions will be held in the Lower Everett Space on the following occasions:

• Morning tea session from 9.30-10.30 am on Friday 17 March 2017
• Evening session from 7-8 pm on Tuesday 21 March 2017

In addition to this please be aware that our parent section in the Palmer Library continues to grow and parents are encouraged to take good advantage of this facility. The library is open at 8 am
Music ensemble rehearsal times
Mr Stephan Kooper | JS Head of Music

Please find listed below the correct rehearsal times for the below ensemble groups. Please email Mr Stephan Kooper if you have any queries.

Bands
• Concert Band: Monday morning, 7.30-8.15 am
• Bundarra Band: Thursday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm
• Brass Belles: Tuesday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm
• CaSE: Tuesday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm

Strings
• Symphony Orchestra: Thursday morning, 7.30-8.15 am
• Chamber Strings: Friday morning, 7.30-8.15 am
• Poole House Strings: Tuesday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm
• Bambini Strings: Monday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm

Choirs
• Cantare: Tuesday morning, 7.30-8.15 am
• Everett Choir : Wednesday morning, 7.30-8.15 am
• Archdale Choir: Wednesday lunchtime, 1-1.30 pm
• Year 6 Handbell Choir: Friday morning, 7.30-8 am

Year 3 music for sport excursion
Mr Stephan Kooper | JS Head of Music

On Thursday 9 March Year 3 will be going on an excursion to the Sydney Symphony Orchestra at Riverside Theatre, Parramatta. The focus of their trip is to watch and listen to a symphony orchestra by experiencing, seeing and hearing all the instruments they have been studying in our instrumental program. The conductor will explain how the music is put together and the role of each instrument.

The repertoire will include music studied in class. Works will be based on an exciting theme titled ‘Music for sport’.

This will be a valuable experience for the girls and demonstrate the role of the musical instruments that are an integral part of this year’s Year 3 music program and we do also hope this will encourage some ideas for new chants and calls at future athletics or swimming events at school.

Before and After School Care
Ms Sally Ruston | Head of Junior School

It is wonderful to see so many families using our Before and After School Care facility this year. It is also a delight to witness the positive manner in which the girls are responding to this safe, nurturing environment. Under the leadership of Mr Myles Watkins, the girls are enjoying a healthy breakfast or afternoon tea, completing homework and engaging in physical activity both in the centre and by taking advantage of our great outdoor play areas.

To ensure we are well staffed and able to provide the best quality care, we ask that you communicate with Myles Watkins via email on jsasc@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au to make a permanent or casual booking. Please see details below of cost savings to families who are able to predict and communicate their needs to us in advance.

Permanent bookings
Girls who are booked in permanently to Before School Care are charged $17 and After School Care are charged $21 per day. If you are yet to book your daughter in for 2017 or need to change your enrolment for 2017, please send an email to the above email address.

Casual bookings
We understand that not all families are able to book in for permanent days due to changing schedules. Due to our increasing numbers we ask that you contact Before and After School Care on the day your daughter requires care by phoning 9473 7622 or by using the above email address. Casual bookings for care are $19 per morning and $24 per afternoon.

Year 4 Father Daughter Dinner
Ms Sally Ruston | Head of Junior School

I am very much looking forward to the Year 4 Father Daughter Dinner on Thursday evening 9 March 2017. The dinner is being held in the beautifully appointed Senior School Dining Room while a number of the boarder year groups are out on camp and excursion.

This is always a delightful evening as the girls host their fathers on this special occasion as we are presided over by Abbotsleigh’s previous Headmistresses in this most attractive, heritage space in the Senior School.
Music sparkles at Twilight On The Plaza
Ms Kimbali Harding | Director of Music

On the evening of Friday 24 March, more than 500 members of the Abbotsleigh community gathered on the Senior School Reception Plaza to reconnect and celebrate the start of a new academic year. One of the highlights of the new year for the Music program 2017 is a concert tour of Europe involving a bespoke chamber orchestra and chamber choir.

This tour will see girls from Years 7 to 12 perform over three weeks in all the major Italian cities, Ljubljana and Vienna. They will present a challenging program of all contemporary Australian music in a true showcase of Australian artistry and talent. The preparation for such a tour requires an extremely high level of dedication and commitment applied over a long period of time, with performances building the girls’ stamina and polish.

At Twilight On The Plaza, the tour ensemble had their first public outing with a wonderful performance of Paul Stanhope’s Songs of Innocence and Morning Star, Michelle Leonard’s Karoa Calling, Mathew Hindson’s Lullaby and Katy Abbot’s This Is My Home. Although all pieces were ensemble works, special mention must be made of solos from instrumentalists Amy Upton (Year 12), Cheryl Kwon (Year 11) and Stella Leonardi (Year 10), as well as vocalist Josephine Brereton (Year 11). Also of note was the versatility of many of the ensembles members, some of whom are just 12 years old, who ably switched between performing on their instrument and singing in the choir.

When one also considers that chamber ensembles are designed for indoor ‘chamber’ performances, the girls’ performances are even more remarkable. Well done girls.

In the second half of the evening, the gathering was regaled with the sparkling tones of the Symphonic Winds. This ensemble is the advanced Abbotsleigh band, performing repertoire that often graces the program of professional ensembles. This particular combination of girls only came together in Week 2, 2017, learning Sovereign Variants by Cumow, the soundtrack from ‘How to Tame your Dragon’ and The Big Cage by King in record time, and then stunning the audience with some lush brass sounds and dynamic rhythms from the woodwinds.

What a spectacular evening – congratulations to all involved.

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IGSSA Saturday sport: wet weather
Mrs Kate Howitt | Head of Sport

For all girls playing a Saturday morning sport in the senior school, IGSSA has several ways to get information out in regards to cancellations. It is up to each venue to call off their games in the case of wet weather. Please know that quite a bit of sport can be played in the rain, so never assume anything is called off.

There are several ways to check for cancellations on a Saturday
• SMS your venue code: e.g. softball at Abbotsleigh would be ‘softballa’ to 199 25465.
  ◦ You will get a bounce-back response for all venues starting with that letter. If it says ‘open’, your game is still on. If it says ‘closed’, your game has been cancelled.
  ◦ Once your venue is closed, it will not reopen for the rest of the day. (Please note these SMS messages cost 55c.)
• You can check the IGSSA website and click on ‘WET WEATHER INFORMATION’.
  ◦ This lists all venues and their current status – just scroll down for your sport/venue.
• Use the IGSSA mobile site (or app); on your phone, go to the internet and type in the following address: http://m.ahigs.nsw.edu.au/
  ◦ Click on ‘Venue Closures’ for a list like the one displayed on the website.
  ◦ This mobile site or app is excellent to have on your phone. You can look up everything – your team, draw, results, ladder, and of course wet weather!

I highly recommend that you all save the IGSSA mobile site to your phone for all future terms and sports. It is very useful indeed.

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House Choir 2017 – Girl Power!
Ms Kimbali Harding | Director of Music

Friday 17 February heated up with the scorching tunes of Aretha Franklin, Beyonce, Cindy Lauper and Shania Twain as every girl in Abbotsleigh Senior School competed for title of best House Choir of 2017. The event is held every year and is designed to foster House spirit, connection, team work and some pretty fabulous music skills. The Year 12 students lead the entire program, from choosing the annual theme, to leading rehearsals, conducting their choirs and staging the final event. The theme of 2017 was Girl Power! Everyone was given a set work to prepare. This year the students were required to present a hymn transcribed by Catherine Winkworth (1872-1878). The hymn Now Thank We All Our God is often sung at Abbotsleigh assemblies and chapel services, however little notice has been paid to the original transcriber. Through the House Choir process, the Year 12s discovered how Catherine Winkworth was not only a staunch advocate for girls education in 19th Century England, but was also responsible for translating hundreds of German hymns for the Anglican Church to sing in English – an astonishing undertaking for a woman of the time.

From the beautiful two-part chorale of this traditional hymn to the energetic riffs of Tina Turner’s Proud Mary, the girls were responsible for arranging, teaching and rehearsing a vast range of styles. The standard was extraordinary and the spirit truly inspiring. Congratulations to Tennant who came out slightly ahead of a very close competition!

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Senior School Library closing early during Challenge Week
Mrs Bronwyn Foxall | Head of Senior School Library

The Betty Archdale Library will have reduced opening hours during Challenge Week. Hours will be from 8 am to 4 pm.
Out and about with music
Ms Kimbali Harding | Director of Music

Our girls have kicked off 2017 with a very musical start to the year. Whilst the House Choir competition caused much excitement, other events were of particular note.

• The Senior School Choir joined Junior School Cantare (2016) to perform a beautiful interpretation of John Rutter’s For The Beauty of the Earth at the Induction of our Headmistress, Megan Krimmer. The girls were very proud to be performing at such an important event in the life of Abbotsleigh, and they worked exceptionally hard to present a performance that was uplifting and technically polished.

• Auditions and ‘play days’ for ensemble placements took place in Week 2 with more than 500 ensemble places filled and now rehearsing for the year’s program ahead.

• Many of the Symphonic Winds students (the advanced Abbotsleigh Band) continued on after the excitement of the swimming carnival to attend a concert at Sydney Town Hall with Ms Harding and Mrs Little. The concert was presented by Scarsdale High School Concert Band from New York, USA. The standard was exceptionally high and our students were inspired by the 100 plus ensemble who performed world premières of USA composer John Mackey’s new work Wanderlust. Abbotsleigh girls were astounded to find out that their American colleagues rehearse five times a week!

• Congratulations to Sophie Looi for being selected as one of the represented artists in the Theme and Variations Emerging Artist Series. Sophie will be performing a recital at the Steinway showrooms to a public audience and master teacher Professor Michael Brimmer.

Abbotsleigh Senior School welcomes a new instrument to its family with a Flemish model harpsichord currently on display in the Peter Duly Concert Hall. It is very rare for students to have access to this type of period instrument. Elective Music students are very pleased to be learning about Baroque performance practices and hearing music on authentic instruments. In taking advantage of our newly introduced harpsichord, the Year 11 Music class and senior cellists will be participating in a masterclass with Professor Zoltan Szabo in late Term 1.
Ruth Sanger Awards
Headmistress Mrs Megan Krimmer highlights the School’s annual Ruth Sanger Awards to celebrate and be inspired by the girls’ exceptional achievements in mathematics and science.

On a Handball high
Year 10 student Caitlin Oschadleus competes in the 2017 Australian Open Beach Handball Club Championships in Adelaide.

Evening seminar
Featuring guest speaker Amy Orr-Ewing presenting ‘Making Sense of the Gospel in a Postmodern World’. Wednesday 29 March, from 7 pm (canapés) and 7.30 pm presentation.

Boarder parent round up
An informal gathering for the boarder parents to mix and welcome new boarder parents of 2017. Friday 17 March, 6.30 pm.

Australian New Music Festival
This inaugural festival will give students the opportunity to participate in the world premiere performance of a new orchestral and choral work (SATB) by Australian composer Nicholas Vines under the baton of Richard Gill. 19-21 October.

Year 7 Father Daughter Breakfast
Fathers of girls in Year 7 are warmly invited to come and join their daughter at school for breakfast. Friday 24 March, 7 am.