

The Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.

2025: A wonderful year of connection, community and celebration

Mrs Megan Krimmer
Headmistress

**To everything there is a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven**
Ecclesiastes 3:1 (NKJV)

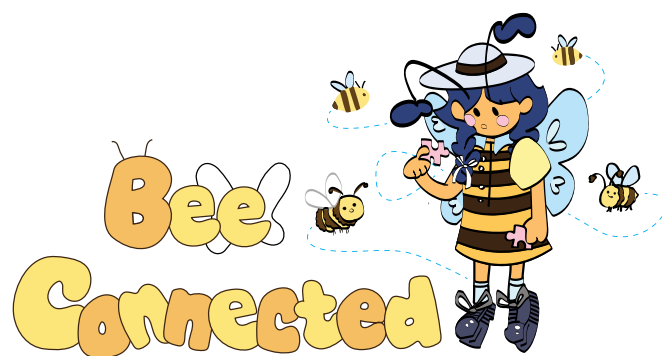
What a sensational year of connection, community and celebration 2025 has been. It has been wonderful to reflect on the rich and unique 140-year heritage of our magnificent school that has certainly stood the test of time. It has been equally delightful to look back over this action-packed year and see what has been achieved by every single girl and every member of staff. Our Abbotsleigh community is amazing.

It will soon be time to slow down, relax, unwind and enjoy time away. It is so important for our girls, staff and parents to have time out to enjoy with family and friends.

For some girls and their parents, who will be navigating the social media delay from 10 December (earlier for Meta platform users), this time could be a little challenging. However, our girls are up for it – they are prepared. Many have downloaded photos and other material, and rather than seeing this as a negative 'big brother' move, have explored ways of re-framing the delay and seeing it as a time to explore positive opportunities. Our girls are determined to live out their Abbotsleigh values of integrity, courage and respect in the face of this change.

I encourage all of us to seize this opportunity, a time to help our young people develop in freedom from manipulative algorithms, the pressure to conform and be someone they are not, and to have fun in different ways.

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg has written an article encouraging all parents to assist their children 'reclaim life in the real



world'. Dr Carr-Gregg calls on parents to 'be the leaders in the room', as he states:

'On December 10, the Australian Government will unplug the algorithm from our children.'

But it's up to parents to plug them back into life.'

It is indeed time for us all to step up and support this well-thought-through delay – after all, you would not give your daughter the keys to your car to drive on the open road at the age of 13! Dr Carr-Gregg has provided some excellent ideas about activities your daughters might like to engage in instead of using social media; he also knows that deep down, your daughters will thank you for this (maybe not now, but in 20 years' time!). I commend Dr Carr-Gregg's very insightful article to you, in this week's Shuttle.

Additionally, I commend Director of Wellbeing, Mrs Liz Cannon's excellent article on the Social Media Delay, in this week's Shuttle. As well as explaining some important aspects of the delay, Mrs Cannon provides some great ideas about how girls can spend their time positively away from their screens.

This week, I have spoken with many Junior and Senior School girls who are excited about their holiday plans – spending time with their families, going on beach holidays, travelling overseas, going skiing; or staying at home planning to read great books, play board games or games outdoors, watch fabulous movies with friends and enjoy all the fantastic things you can do during the summer in Sydney. Our boarders, in particular, are so excited to be going home and spending time with their families. Not one girl said she was excited about looking at her phone for hours on end – there are so many other great things to be doing.

In her second article for this week's Shuttle, Mrs Cannon suggests some really good activities that your daughters might like to do during the break – 'green time instead of screen time'.

It really has been a significant year at Abbotsleigh. I would like to thank every girl, member of staff, parent, Foundation member and Old Girl for embracing our year of 'connection, community and celebration'.



As well as the season to rest (almost), it is the season to celebrate the beautiful gift that God gave to the world – His son.

I wish you and your family a blessed Christmas, a wonderful New Year and a safe and happy holiday break. I look forward to seeing you all when we return to school in 2026 for another fantastic year at Abbotsleigh.

'For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulders. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor'
Isaiah 9: 6-7



Chaplain

The Greatest Story of All Time

Rev Sarah Hobba
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

We all love a good story, with love, adventure, children as significant characters, animals, suspense, action, and even something supernatural. Our Junior School Chapel focus this term has been the GOAT (the Greatest of All Time), and the Bible tells us the Greatest Story Of All Time. This Story has all of these elements. It shows us the love that God has for the world in sending Jesus to us. Mary and Joseph travelled far to Bethlehem, where the child Jesus was born and laid in a manger surrounded by animals. Shepherds were startled by angels announcing good news of great joy, and wise men followed a supernatural star to worship the newborn King.

But the story doesn't end there. It is the Greatest Story of All Time because Jesus, who loves us, travelled, teaching others about God's kingdom and showing his love, including his care for children. Then, instead of a 'take-over', Jesus humbly gave His life on the cross, and in the most amazing supernatural twist, overcame evil and death, rising again so that we could be God's friends forever.

As we celebrate Christmas, let's remember that this season is about more than getting the right presents and decorations. It's about the Greatest Story of All Time, a child born to save us from our sins, who graciously gives us forgiveness, joy and hope in this life and the promise of eternal life in Him.

May everyone in our community have a safe and joy-filled Christmas as you travel, gather and celebrate. And may we all pause to marvel at the greatest story ever told: God with us, Emmanuel.

Philippians 2:6–8

Jesus being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross.

Upcoming events

WHOLE SCHOOL

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| To Approach the Unknowable exhibition | Saturday 1 November to Saturday 6 December | Grace Cossington Smith Gallery |
| SchoolTV program – student wellbeing resources | Available to all parents on the Parent Portal | Click here to watch |
| Last day of Term 4 | Wednesday 3 December | |
| Abbox Sony Foundation Camp | Friday 5 to Sunday 7 December | Senior School locations |
| Years 7 and 12 boarders arrive | Tuesday 27 January 2026 | |
| T, K and new students in Junior School Orientation Morning | Wednesday 28 January 2026 | |
| Year 7, Year 12 and new Senior School students commence | | |
| Years 8-11 boarders arrive | | |
| Term 1 2026 commences | Thursday 29 January 2026 | |

JUNIOR SCHOOL

| | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Year 6 Farewell and Dance | Friday 28 November 6-10 pm | Hornsby RSL Club |
| K-3 Variety Concert | Tuesday 2 December 11-11.45 am | Everett Hall |
| APA Junior School BBQ | Tuesday 2 December 12.30-1.30 pm | |
| Junior School Speech Day | Wednesday 3 December 2-3.30 pm | Senior School Sports Hall |

SENIOR SCHOOL

| | | |
|--|---------------------------|---|
| Saturday sport | Saturday 29 November | Click here for times and venues |
| Senior School Christmas Carols Service | Sunday 30 November 7-8 pm | Senior School Chapel |

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Boarder Christmas Banquet | Monday 1 December 7-9 pm | Dining Hall |
| House Theatresports | Tuesday 2 December 2.10-3.25 pm | Assembly Hall |
| Senior School Speech Day | Wednesday 3 December 9-11 am | Senior School Sports Hall |
| Boarder Travel Day | Thursday 4 December | |



WELLBEING MATTERS

Australia's new 'social media delay': what parents need to know

Mrs Liz Cannon
Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

Australia is taking a courageous **world-first** step to help young people stay safer online and to support their wellbeing.

From **10 December 2025**, new legislation will require major social media platforms to **prevent children under 16 from having specific social media accounts**. Platforms face significant fines of up to \$49.5m if they fail to comply.

WHAT IS CHANGING?

Children under 16 will no longer be able to create or maintain accounts on platforms such as **Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube, Threads, Reddit, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Kick**.

It is not yet confirmed whether **Roblox** and **Discord** will be included.



Messaging apps like **WhatsApp** and **Messenger** are **not affected** at this stage.

This change may have a major impact on how young people connect, communicate and spend their time. As parents and educators, our role is to **help and to empower them to navigate this transition calmly and confidently**.

WHY THIS CHANGE MATTERS

Social media can offer creative, educational and social benefits – but heavy use has been linked to increased **anxiety, disrupted sleep, stress, body image concerns, fear of missing out (FOMO) and compulsive use**.

Research shows that around **95% of teens aged 13–17** use social media daily, and **40% of children aged 8–12** already have accounts despite the age



restrictions. Those who spend more than **three hours per day** on social media face a **higher risk of mental health problems**.

Adolescents' developing brains are especially vulnerable. Their need for **peer approval** and **social feedback** means the constant loop of likes, comments and comparisons can deeply affect **emotional regulation and self-esteem**.

This delay allows children the time to develop the skills to use social media in a safer way. Just as we set an age limit for driving so that we can sit alongside our young people and teach and guide them to be safe on the roads, the delay in social media use also provides a time for adolescent brain development to occur and for parents and educators to teach and guide them so they can use social media with greater awareness and safety. (**Mary Alvord**, Clinical psychologist American Psychological Society).

Psychologist **Dr Justin Coulson** (Happy Families) adds:

'Social media – while fun, connecting and sometimes educational – can also be deeply dangerous for children and teens. These platforms are deliberately designed to capture attention, keep users scrolling, and reward comparison. They expose children to cyberbullying, unrealistic ideals and a steady stream of social pressure that erodes wellbeing.'

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO NOW

Over the coming weeks, months and years, parents have a valuable opportunity to guide their children toward **healthier digital habits** and a more balanced life.

Here are some practical strategies adapted from online experts: the **eSafety Commissioner**, **Dr Justin Coulson**, **Kirra Pendergast** (Safe on Social), **ySafe**, and **Choicez Media**.

1. Start the conversation early and before Wednesday 10 December 2025

- Find a calm moment to talk about the change. Explain *why* the law is being introduced – it's about **safety and wellbeing**, not punishment. Keep it warm and factual and revisit the topic over time. It is an ongoing conversation not a one-time conversation.
- Reframe the delay as a positive reset:** As Kirra Pendergast advises: *'Don't wait until the ban kicks in and have it feel like punishment. Frame it as a chance to reset. Help them find healthier ways to stay in touch and understand why this is happening. Remind them that social media isn't*

a human right – it's a business model they're better off avoiding for now.'

- Teach your children how social media feeds and algorithms are designed to hook attention. Discuss body image, scams, sextortion and comparison culture.
- Help them understand that **platforms** – not children – must follow the law. They will not be breaking the law – the social media platforms will be. Children will not be breaking the law, neither will parents.

(Source: *Safe on Social*, *Choicez Media*)

2. Expect emotions – and coach and guide them through the transition

For some children, social media has been a big part of daily life. Listen first, validate feelings such as anger, frustration, sadness and fear of missing out (FOMO) and help them brainstorm new ways to stay connected. Stay calm, listen, don't judge or overreact. Instead, validate the feelings, then talk about ways forward. Try saying, 'I know this feels unfair, but we'll find fun ways to keep in touch.'

3. Plan a gentle transition with replacements

- Help your child identify which accounts they use. Together, review privacy settings, download any photos or memories, let friends know new contact methods and deactivate accounts before December 2025.
- Explore safe ways to communicate – calls, texts, school platforms or supervised group chats.
- Consider a 'basic' phone or an app-limited smartphone with strong parental controls. Review screen-time settings together each term (Source: *eSafety Commissioner*, *ySafe*)
- Replace the scroll with real-world connection:** Explore safe alternatives. Encourage weekly 'connection anchors' such as sport, being in nature, walks, beaches, parks, hobbies, music, movies, youth groups, volunteering or shared family time. Create a 'social without socials' list with your teen. (Source: *eSafety Commissioner*)

4. Model healthy habits

Show your own boundaries – device-free meals, no scrolling in bed, shared phone-free times. Even small routines like a nightly chat or a walk send strong messages.

(Source: *Dr Justin Coulson*, *ySafe*)



5. Support for the girls at school

Social media age restrictions: Get-ready guide for under-16s | eSafety Commissioner

- Through our wellbeing programs we have utilised the services of ySafe, who have presented to our girls from Years 3-9 over the year to help educate them in safe and healthy digital habits. These habits are reinforced in classrooms and in tutor groups.
- Deputy Headmistress and Head of Senior School, Mrs Rennie, presented to all the Senior School girls earlier in the term about the social media delay and how the girls can set up a plan now to ensure a smooth transition.
- I spoke with our Years 7 and 8 girls on their Wellbeing Days to help them understand the delay and how they can positively reframe this and take control of how they manage this moving forward and how they can find wonderful opportunities rather than seeing it only as a negative. The girls were given a copy of a plan to help them:

SMAR-young-people-action-plan_3.pdf.

We also focus on The Resilience Project's pillars of Gratitude, Empathy, Mindfulness and Emotional Literacy (GEMEL), to help us positively manage this transition.

6. Stay informed

- Bookmark the official website esafety.gov.au for current updates, webinars and family guides. New platforms will continue to emerge – so stay curious and connected.
- The SchoolTV site, which is available to all Abbotsleigh parents has a special section dedicated to the social media delay. The information on this site can be translated into 40 language for easy access, [SPECIAL REPORT: New Social Media Regulations: What you need to know | Abbotsleigh.](#)

7. Final important thoughts

- The upcoming social media delay gives Australian families a rare and wonderful opportunity to **pause, reset and strengthen digital wellbeing and overall wellbeing**. We are the adults and we must seize this opportunity to help our young people with this important change.
- With calm communication, empathy and planning, we can help young people build healthier habits – and remind them that real connection happens most meaningfully **off-screen**.

- Please do not allow your daughter to find ways to get around this delay, and if she does, please help her to see why she needs to remove it.
- Please make sure your daughter does not have her phone or devices in the bedroom or bathrooms and that all phones are recharged in a space away from bedrooms.
- Lastly, and most importantly, please make sure that if your daughter finds herself online and is feeling unsafe, uncomfortable, bullied or exposed to inappropriate content, she knows she can talk to you and seek help from you or from school. By setting up open and safe conversations now, where your daughter can talk to you about anything, and you will listen, stay calm, not overreact or judge, she will feel you are a safe and trusted adult she can come to for help. Please remind your daughter that support is also available online from places like Kids Helpline **1800 551 800** and Reachout.

This Social media delay may cause some changes for your daughter but with strong support from the adults in her life, this can be a positive and beneficial change.

Should you need to contact the School during the break, please do not hesitate to do so, on **02 9473 7777**. Key staff will be available for urgent situations.

I wish all our families a wonderful and safe holiday and a joyous Christmas and New Year.

Liz Cannon

Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

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RESOURCES

esafety.gov.au

[Social media age restrictions and your family | eSafety Commissioner](#)

[Social Media Ban | 2025 FAQs – ySafe](#)

[SPECIAL REPORT: New Social Media Regulations: What you need to know | Abbotsleigh-SchoolTV](#)

[Articles | Happy Families](#) – Dr Justin Coulson

['social media delay' – Safe on Social](#) – Kirra Pendergast

[The Anxious Generation](#) – An excellent book for parents by Jonathon Haidt

[Raising Anxiety](#) – Dr Judith Locke and Dr Danielle Einstein



Parents – It's Time to Get our Kids Back into the Real World

Dr Michael Carr-Gregg
Adolescent psychologist, author, CanTeen founder

michaelcarrgregg.com/articles/parents-its-time-to-get-our-kids-back-into-the-real-world

On December 10, Australia will take one of the most significant steps in child protection we've seen in decades: banning social-media platforms from allowing under-16s to create or maintain accounts.

Predictably, the tech giants are complaining. Influencers are wailing. Even some teenagers are staging tiny (and frankly adorable) digital rebellions.

But this isn't a moment for parental panic.

It's a moment for leadership.

Because for far too long, social media has been raising our children – and not doing a very good job of it.

As a child and adolescent psychologist, I've spent nearly four decades listening to what young people tell me behind closed doors. I can tell you this: nothing has warped childhood more than the algorithmic slot machines sitting in their pockets.

And yes – removing that digital dopamine drip is going to cause withdrawal, pushback and dramatic sighing worthy of a Netflix teen drama.

But here's the good news:

You can absolutely do this.

And your kids will thank you for it – eventually.

1. Talk to your kids before December 10

Don't wait until Instagram or Snapchat locks them out.

Sit down – no phones, no screens – and say something like:

'This new law is about protecting young people, not punishing them. Your job is to grow up safely. My job is to help you do that.'

Be firm. Be calm. Be collaborative.

This is not the moment for apologetic parenting.

2. Expect grief – but don't negotiate reality

When social media disappears, many kids will go through the same psychological stages I see when I ask teens to detox:

- Denial
- Anger

- Bargaining ('But what if I just check TikTok for homework?')
- Sadness
- Acceptance.

Your job is to shepherd them through this process, not install loopholes.

3. Replace the online world with the real world

Children don't cope well with a vacuum – they fill it.

So YOU help fill it with what childhood used to have in abundance:

Board games. Card games. Real conversations. Cooking. Music. Walking the dog. Crafts. Sport. Riding bikes. Learning a skill.

Remember those? They still exist – and they're still brilliant for developing brains.

In my consulting room, the teens who thrive are the ones whose parents invest in real-world rituals:

- family dinners
- weekend activities
- shared hobbies
- bedtime reading
- even a Sunday morning café hot chocolate.

These are not quaint relics. They're protective psychological architecture.

4. Reintroduce boredom – yes, boredom

One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is the ability to be bored.

Boredom is the birthplace of creativity, problem-solving and resilience.

Social media never allowed boredom – it surgically removed it.

On December 10, boredom becomes your new best friend.

5. Prioritise connection, not supervision

Don't turn your house into a surveillance state.

Turn it into a family.

Talk. Walk. Play. Listen.

Model offline life.

Show them what joy looks like without a screen glowing between two people.

Our kids don't need a digital parole officer.

They need adults who are present.



6. Remind them: their value is not measured in likes

For a whole generation, self-worth has been tied to algorithms designed by Silicon Valley engineers who wouldn't let their own children near the products they built.

December 10 is your chance to reclaim the narrative.

Tell your child:

'You are worth more than any number on a screen. Real people who love you matter far more than strangers who scroll past you.'

7. Make December 10 a turning point, not a punishment

Celebrate it.

Mark it.

Create a family tradition:

- a board-game night
- a special dinner

- a digital-detox day
- a picnic
- or a sunset walk.

Let your child feel the shift not as a loss, but as a return – a return to childhood as it was meant to be: messy, playful, creative, curious, connected.

On December 10, the Australian Government will unplug the algorithm from our children.

But it's up to parents to plug them back into life.

And I can promise you this:

Twenty years from now, your children won't remember the likes they lost.

But they will remember the conversations you had, the walks you took, the games you played and the time you gave them.

That's the stuff that builds resilient kids – and lifelong humans.

Now's our chance.

Let's take it.

WELLBEING MATTERS

Holiday wellbeing and safety

Mrs Liz Cannon

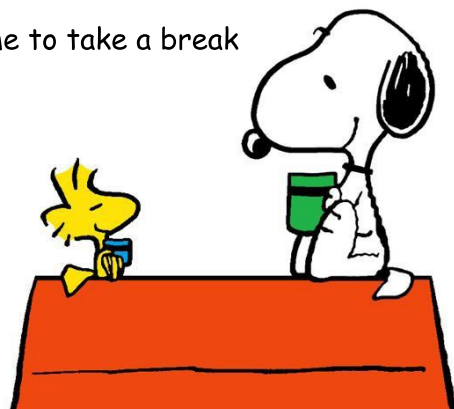
Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

The lovely, long summer holidays are on our doorstep, which is great news for all. I know that our girls are looking forward to a well-earned rest after such a busy and productive year.

Family time is very precious, especially when celebrating the Christmas season. What the holiday season looks like and can be, is vastly different from family to family. Regardless of these differences, our girls need downtime – time to rest, time to recharge their minds and bodies, time to read, and 'green time' rather than 'screen time'. Girls need time to be 'bored' so that they can be creative in finding constructive things to do and think about. Girls need time away from studying – even our Year 12 girls need a good block of time away from studying. Girls need time to reflect on the year and to reflect on how fortunate they are and show gratitude for all their blessings. They need to recharge their batteries!

Parents often ask me about ways to manage this balance, especially in relation to technology use.

Time to take a break



Providing some clear age-appropriate boundaries as well as some negotiable areas, again age appropriate, appears to be the most effective way.

'Balance kids' screen-time and green-time. Kids need outdoor, unstructured play every single day. Unplugged time is essential for their visual development, helps to regulate their circadian rhythms required for sleep and allows them to enter the mind-wandering mode of thinking (which will enable them to come up with creative ideas and solve problems).'' Dr Kristy Goodwin

In the following article, Dr Kristy Goodwin provides suggestions for parents around managing screen time during the holidays: [How parents can manage their-children's screen time during the holidays](#)



There are excellent ideas in [Raising Anxiety](#), a book by Judith Locke and Danielle Einstein, in which they give active ways parents can manage screen use (one idea being no screen use by children under the age of seven).

There are some great resources in the SchoolTV site [Managing Screen Time | Abbotsleigh](#). This site can be translated into over 40 languages so please have a look.

The eSafety Online Safety booklet [Parents | eSafety Commissioner](#) is available in a number of languages and covers some of the key online safety issues for young people. It includes a range of practical tips and advice on what to do if things go wrong. You can also find a list of important services that can offer extra support.

Girls need time to have fun and to be engaged in enjoyable events with both family and friends, and to experience the Christmas traditions that each family has developed. Traditions are important to a child's wellbeing. Traditions lend a certain spirit that nurtures the family connection and provides a sense of belonging. Traditions can help us celebrate generations of family. Importantly, traditions create positive memories for children. It is never too late to start a family tradition – do it once and it can become a tradition!



Whilst time out from the regular school routine during holidays is generally very beneficial, this lack of routine and regular peer social contact can, unfortunately, cause stress for some girls. Holidays can also be a time when, due to family circumstances

or other events, things are not as easy as we would like them to be. Holidays may also present a challenge for families as to how to manage activities and ensure that children are provided with the right number of activities to keep them engaged but also provide the right amount of downtime – sometimes finding this balance is difficult. The [Headspace website](#) includes excellent resources on 'Keeping healthy over the holidays for friends and family'. Additionally, please read this Headspace article [How To Stay Healthy Over The Holidays](#), which will equip you with tips on how to provide support, as well as practical suggestions to help all young people have balance and fun over the summer. Please remember to regularly check in with how your daughter is feeling. A simple 1-5 scale (5 being really great) can be very useful and helps to start a conversation about strategies to manage, as well as seeking help if needed.

With safety in mind, the NSW Government has recently updated and released the [NSW Child Safety Handbook 2025](#). This 94-page handbook is a very comprehensive resource to assist parents on a range of topics essential to child safety, including safety at school, home and online, bush-fire safety, drugs and alcohol, street safety and more.

For parents of older teenagers, you could have a look at [Kids Helpline – Partying Safely](#). This article includes links to a number of excellent resources for parents and teenagers to help keep them safe.

[ReachOut](#) also has excellent resources to support parents with parenting teenagers as well as an [online 1:1 support service](#).

Should you need to contact the School during the break, please do not hesitate to do so, on **02 9473 7777**. Key staff will be available for urgent situations.

I wish all our families a wonderful and safe holiday and a joyous Christmas and New Year.

Liz Cannon
Director of Wellbeing and Counselling

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