

The Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.

'Journey With Joy' as we work towards balancing the scales this **International Women's Day**

Mrs Megan Krimmer
Headmistress

Many girls and I have had the great privilege of participating in a number of events commemorating International Women's Day this week. The theme for each event has been clear and consistent:

'Much has been achieved on the journey towards true equality; however, much is still to be done to truly "balance the scales" of equality, justice and parity, both in Australia and throughout the world.'

Our guest speaker at our Senior School International Women's Day Assembly, Satara Uthayakumaran (2020), was especially powerful. A quintessentially Abbotsleigh Old Girl who lives out her aim of making a very real and positive difference in our world, Satara is a strong advocate who is dedicated to legal and social reform.

Since graduating from Abbotsleigh, not only has Satara been studying Arts/Law at ANU, but she also:

- was Australia's Youth Representative to the United Nations for 2025



- serves on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Youth Advisory Council
- was a National Youth Advisor for Amnesty International
- has worked with the ACT Human Rights Commission
- frequently appears on the ABC
- is a TedX speaker
- writes for the Sydney Morning Herald and The Guardian
- has worked as a Policy Advisor at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

All of this in the space of five short years!

This week's *Shuttle* features Satara's engaging, intensely personal, thought-provoking and very poignant speech, which I warmly commend to you. We will feature some of the other inspirational speakers we have heard this week in next week's *Shuttle*.

With Abbotsleigh's signature statement being:

'Empowering Young Women Since 1885', it is gratifying to see Abbotsleigh Old Girls and our current girls striving to ensure the goal of 'balancing the scales' of true parity, justice and equity can be attained, both in Australia and throughout the world.

As Miss Betty Archdale so famously said:

'With education, women can do and be anything.'



'Balance the Scales'

International Women's Day 2026

Satara Uthayakumaran

I want to begin by acknowledging the First Nations women, the First Mothers of this land, whose strength, wisdom and care have nurtured Country and community for countless generations. I honour their stories, their resilience and their sacred connection to the earth, and I pay my deepest respects to the women who came before, walk with us today and will guide the generations yet to come. Their voices, their leadership and their spirit are the foundation of our shared future.

For me, International Women's Day didn't begin at a corporate breakfast, a policy paper or an assembly. It began at a kitchen table.

It began by watching my mum – a full-time carer for my sister – take time off work, again and again. Sacrificing her own career, her own ambitions, to bathe, feed, dress and care for someone the world often overlooks. There were no applause lines. No awards. Just endless, invisible labour.

My mum taught me that strength isn't always loud. It doesn't always come with a title or an office. Sometimes strength looks like resilience. Sometimes it looks like sacrifice. And sometimes it looks like unwavering love, carried quietly, day after day.

So, I want to ask you something. Who here has a mother, grandmother, aunt, older sister or carer who made sacrifices so you could be sitting here today?

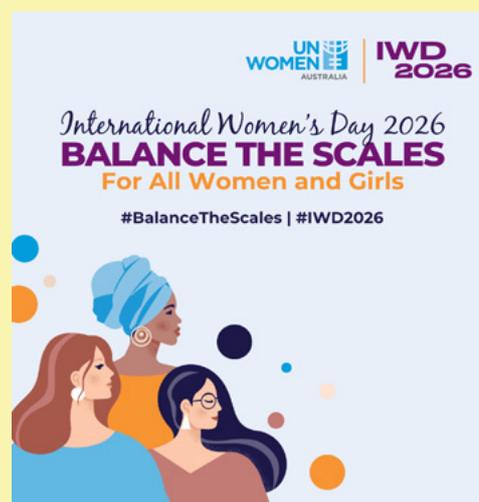
Maybe she worked late shifts and came home exhausted, but still asked about your homework. Maybe she skipped holidays, new clothes, or her own ambitions to pay for books, bus fares or tuition. Maybe she learned a new language alongside you, navigated systems she didn't understand or took on extra jobs so you wouldn't have to.

Please – raise your hand.

Look around this room. That sea of hands is the invisible infrastructure of our lives. It is the unpaid, unrecognised work that holds families together, props up economies and keeps the world turning. And yet, when we talk about power, we so often forget it.

These are the people whose work we must recognise if we are serious about balancing the scales – the theme for this year's International Women's Day.

I learned about strength from another woman in my life too – my sister, Karuka. Karuka is deaf, non-verbal and has Down syndrome. In Auslan, the sign for feminist looks like this (*brush your face with your fingers down to form an empowering fist*). It's something gentle, which turns into something empowering. This is how my sister claims space in the world. This moment of communication, of dignity, is what International Women's Day looks like inside my home.



It is not polished. It is not performative. It is deeply human. And it is a reminder that **balancing the scales begins with seeing and valuing every form of strength**, no matter how quiet it may seem.

But today, I want to take us beyond my four walls. As Australia's Youth Representative to the United Nations, last year, I travelled across the 7.7 million square kilometres of this country. I walked through detention centres and sat with children behind locked doors. I listened to students in classrooms in Western Sydney and in remote Central Australian town camps. I met with young people on Christmas Island and in the Tiwi Islands. I facilitated youth roundtables in regional towns. I collected thousands of letters addressed to the Prime Minister.

And I took their voices all the way to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, sharing their experiences on the global stage.

But coming back to the most important thing – the communities, the classrooms, this country – I realised something confronting: for many young women, that bridge of support simply doesn't exist. **The scales are not balanced. Opportunities are not shared equally.**

I want to share part of a letter written by a 15-year-old girl named Hannah, who I met at the Bimberi Youth Detention Centre in the ACT. This is her reality of girlhood.

She writes:

Dear PM

My name is Hannah. I'm 15 and I'm writing from Bimberi Youth Detention Centre in the ACT.

In Bimberi, most of the time we are locked in our cells for up to 17 hours.

Bimberi Health doesn't listen to or help with female problems like endometriosis. They refuse to give heat packs or adequate medication.

I haven't been to school in over two years due to lack of support.

The system isn't working. End of story.

Imagine that. A 15-year-old girl – criminalised, locked away, uncertain if or when she will be released – denied basic healthcare for a condition that affects millions of women. Feminism is meaningless if it stops at the prison gate. Equality is hollow if it only applies to women who are palatable, educated or free. **If we truly want equality, we must balance the scales for girls like Hannah.**

But injustice doesn't only live behind bars.

I met a young woman from Christmas Island, who told me that education made her dreams feel out of reach. She wrote:

Dear Prime Minister

It's hard not to feel like I've had to let go of something I've worked towards, simply because of where I live.

She is grieving a future she hasn't even had the chance to begin. **The scales are tipped against her because of geography and circumstance. We must actively work to balance them.**

And her grief is echoed by Charlotte, from regional Victoria, who wrote:

Dear Prime Minister

I have big dreams ... but I'll have to leave my hometown to chase them. My family can't afford the rent, the travel, the debt. Our future is bright – if only we can reach it.

Different postcodes. Different lives. Same imbalance. One girl is locked behind a cell door. Another is locked out by geography. Another by cost.

The scales are not broken by accident. They are tipped by systems that decide which girls are worth investing in – and which ones are expected to shrink their dreams. **International Women's Day challenges us to right this imbalance. It challenges us to balance the scales.**

Balancing the scales requires more than pointing out what's unfair – it demands stepping beyond the classroom and learning to move the world. Leadership is not theory, slideshows or essays; it is tested in action, forged in experience and sharpened through challenge.

That's why the new Women in Leadership Academy here at Abbotsleigh is so thrilling. This isn't just about talking leadership – it's about living it. It's about meeting students from other schools, connecting with people across your community and seeing firsthand how change really happens. Leadership grows when you step into rooms that feel unfamiliar, when you collaborate across differences and when you confront challenges bigger than yourself.

True leadership is not a title you wait to be handed – it's a habit of action, a posture of service and the courage to act when it matters most. Through this academy, you will not only analyse inequality but learn to confront it. By nurturing emotional intelligence, empathy and resilience, you are preparing to advocate not just for yourselves but for the Hannahs and the Charlottes of the world. You are equipping yourselves to stand beside others, to challenge systems and to make change real.

I encourage everyone here to build a culture where you are empowered to raise your hands, stand firm in your values and challenge things that don't seem right or fair.

So today, I ask us to radically redefine what a powerful woman looks like.

Yes – she might be the CEO. But she is also the mother washing her child who has a disability. She is Hannah, demanding dignity from inside a cell. She is a student mourning her future before it begins. She is Charlotte, standing on the edge of possibility, wondering if she'll ever be allowed to cross.

International Women's Day is not about celebrating how far some women have come.

It is about how seriously we are willing to **balance the scales for all women.**

Because when we lift the girls furthest from power, when we actively weigh opportunity and support equally – when we **balance the scales** – we don't lose anything. We gain a fairer, more just world.

And that is the kind of feminism worth standing for.



Chaplain

Women of the Bible

Rev Sarah Hobba
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

With International Women's Day this week, we take time to acknowledge and celebrate the women who have gone ahead of us, whose journeys have been marked by courage, faith, leadership, resilience and a deep trust in God.

Throughout the Bible, there are remarkable women through whom God worked powerfully: Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the women who were the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Joanna. We remember the matriarchs Sarah and Rachel, whose faith shaped a people; the outsiders like Ruth, Rahab and Tamar, whose stories shine with redemption and bravery; and Esther, whose courage in exile saved lives. These women lived through uncertainty and danger, yet stepped forward with strength, showing us that

God often works through unlikely people in unlikely places. And in each of their stories, we catch glimpses of Jesus, the One to come, who honours the lowly, restores the broken and welcomes all into His hope.

Proverbs 31 describes a woman of noble character. A few of those verses are:

- ¹⁷ *She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.*
- ²⁰ *She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.*
- ²⁵ *She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.*
- ²⁶ *She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*
- ³¹ *Honour her for all that her hands have done,
and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.*

Upcoming events

WHOLE SCHOOL

SchoolTV program – student wellbeing resources	Available to all parents on the Parent Portal	Click here to watch
ART NORTH exhibition	Saturday 7 - Saturday 28 March	Grace Cossington Smith Gallery
NAPLAN testing	Wednesday 11 to Monday 16 March	Junior and Senior School locations

JUNIOR SCHOOL

Year 6 Cuppa and Connections	Monday 9 March 8-9.30 am	Bundarra Lawn
Year 4 Father Daughter dinner	Thursday 12 March 6-8.30 pm	Senior School Dining Room
Year 3 Taronga Zoo excursion	Thursday 19 March	Taronga Zoo
Cinema Under the Stars	Saturday 21 March 5-8 pm	Junior School campus

SENIOR SCHOOL

Saturday sport	Saturday 7 and Saturday 14 March	Click here for times and venues*
Year 12 assessment block	Monday 9 to Tuesday 17 March	Senior School locations
Senior School Challenge Week	Monday 9 to Tuesday 17 March	Various locations
Year 7 DigiEd claymation workshop	Monday 9 to Tuesday 10 March	iHub
Year 11 RYDA excursion	Tuesday 10 March	RYDA St Ives
Year 10 Canberra excursion	Tuesday 10 to Thursday 12 March	Canberra, ACT
Year 11 Urban Challenge	Wednesday 11 to Friday 13 March	Various locations
Year 12 elective music workshop days	Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 March	PDCH
Year 10 Red Earth parent information session	Tuesday 17 March 6-7 pm	Online
Abbotsleigh Shakespeare Festival	Wednesday 18 March 6.30-8.30 pm	PDCH
Tildesley Tennis competition	Wednesday 18 to Friday 20 March	Pennant Hills Park
Year 12 Mother Daughter breakfast	Friday 20 March 7-9 am	Year 12 Common Room
Annual Boarder Parents round up	Friday 20 March 6-10 pm	