

# The Loom



ABBOTSLEIGH OLD GIRLS NEWSLETTER APRIL 2026

## 2026 EVENTS



### AOGU Old Girls vs Current Girls Debate

**Thursday 23 April**

6.30 pm start

Venue: Peter Duly Concert Hall,  
Senior School or via Zoom

Free event

Click [HERE](#) to RSVP  
by Monday 20 April

Old Girls or current girls – who  
will claim the trophy in 2026?  
Come cheer on your team in this  
fun, spirited showdown.

### Speakers Spotlight – 2025 Anniversary Grant Recipient – Louise Stevens

**Friday 29 May**

8 am

Via Zoom

Free event

Click [HERE](#) to RSVP  
by Monday 25 May

Louise will share the story  
behind Together in the First  
Year – a new national initiative  
providing free, one-to-one  
emotional support to new  
mums during their baby's first  
year.

### Abbotsleigh Alumni Lunch – Orange NSW

**Friday 29 May**

12-3 pm

The Union Bank, Orange

\$85 per person

(2-course lunch)

Click [HERE](#) to RSVP  
by Friday 15 May

Come and enjoy beautiful  
Orange in Autumn. Enjoy  
lunch with Old Girls of all  
ages, reconnect and support  
regional NSW.

### AOGU Archibald Wynn and Sulman Prizes Tour

This year we have 2 tours  
available – one morning and  
one evening tour:

**Morning tour:**

**Friday 19 June**

9.15-10.30 am

**Evening tour:**

**Wednesday 24 June**

5.45-7 pm

Art Gallery of NSW

Click [HERE](#) to RSVP  
by Friday 12 June

## Senior School Musical- *Freaky Friday*

### SHOWS:

Thursday 30 April, 7 pm

Friday 1 May, 7 pm

Saturday 2 May, 1 pm

Saturday 2 May, 7 pm

Abbotsleigh Assembly Hall

*Special Old Girl discount for the Thursday Opening Night – see separate item below for details.*

Click **HERE** to RSVP by Monday 20 April

## Abbotsleigh Community Event – Dubbo

### Saturday 16 May

4-6.30 pm

Goldies, Dubbo

Free event

Click **HERE** to RSVP by Friday 8 May

This event coincides with the Boarding Schools Expo and it is for the whole community of current, past and future parents, and Old Girls.

## Abbotsleigh Community Event – Wagga Wagga

### Saturday 30 May

6 pm

Victoria Hotel, Wagga Wagga

Free event

Click **HERE** to RSVP by Friday 22 May

This event coincides with the Boarding Schools Expo and it is for the whole community of current, past and future parents, and Old Girls.

## Announcement of Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith Art Award Winners

Join us for the announcement of the 2026 Grace Cossington Smith Art Award winners on:

### Wednesday 22 July

6 pm

Grace Cossington Smith Gallery

Please RSVP **HERE** (for catering purposes)

The exhibition of finalists will run from 18 July to 15 August.

CLICK **HERE** FOR A COMPREHENSIVE CALENDAR OF 2026 EVENTS FOR OUR OLD GIRL COMMUNITY TO ATTEND

CLICK **HERE** FOR A LIST OF THE GRACE COSSINGTON SMITH GALLERY EXHIBITIONS



## President's Message

Hello Old Girls,

For the many of you who don't know me, I'm Bron Cooper (Ross-Jones) the new President of the AOGU. A 1980 leaver, grateful for the long friendships and opportunity Abbotsleigh gave me (and that it gave my two daughters who were boarders and day girls). After studying law and practicing commercial litigation, I spent 18 years overseas before returning to Australia. Alongside my AOGU role, I run an Angus breeding operation near Dungog and love travelling, especially if skiing is involved.

The AOGU is in a strong position – financially and directionally.

My focus is 'reconnection' and 'preservation'. Preserving the rights and traditions of our century old Union and reconnecting you and the school, and you with each other.

On reconnection, each year we start the school term with a welcome breakfast for the daughters of Old Girls who've just started at Abbotsleigh, and to celebrate International Women's Day we held an online pop up self development workshop #IAmRemarkable – a reminder to celebrate the uniqueness in each of us.

Upcoming events that will bring you back on campus include, the Old Girls vs current student debate, art exhibitions and openings at the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery, the school's musical production of *Freaky Friday* and the Senior

and Junior Band Festival. For new mums join us online for the Speaker's Spotlight with Louise Stevens (1985), as she presents 'Together in the First Year' - a powerful new initiative supporting new mothers at one of life's most vulnerable and transformative times. The very popular day and evening Archibald, Wynne and Sulman art tours are back, and we're organising a regional multi-generation lunch for old girls in Orange. More will follow.

My thanks go to past-President Sarah Franks for her four years of unstinting service, and to both old and new committee members whose enthusiasm and generosity keep the AOGU thriving.

I look forward to our paths crossing soon.

Warm regards,

*Bron Cooper (Ross-Jones, 1980)*

**President, AOGU**

Abbotsleigh's production of  
Disney  
**FREAKY FRIDAY**  
A NEW MUSICAL

Book by  
**Bridget Carpenter**

Music by  
**Tom Kitt**

Lyrics by  
**Brian Yorkey**

THUR 30 APRIL 7PM | FRI 1 MAY 7PM | SAT 2 MAY 1PM | SAT 2 MAY 7PM  
Senior School Assembly Hall

Based on the novel *Freaky Friday* by  
Mary Rodgers and the Disney films  
Licensed exclusively by Music Theatre International (Australasia)

The poster features a stylized illustration of a staircase with yellow and red railings. Two women are standing on the stairs, one in a black blazer and the other in a grey t-shirt. In the background, there are two doors, one of which has a 'KEEP OUT' sign.

## Senior School Musical - *Freaky Friday* - Opening Night special offer for Old Girls

The Abbotsleigh Musical *Freaky Friday* is showing from Thursday 30 April to Saturday 2 May in the Senior School Assembly Hall.

As important members of the school community we are offering access to tickets via the link below. Old Girls receive an Opening Night special offer of a 25% discount when ordering four tickets or more for Thursday 30 April only.

**Apply the Discount Code OGGROUPSPECIAL when booking four or more tickets for Thursday 30 April.**

### Abbotsleigh Musical 2026 - *Freaky Friday*

Based on the 1972 novel by Mary Rodgers and the Disney films, this contemporary musical is the story of busy mother Katherine and her teenage daughter Ellie who magically and unexpectedly switch bodies.

With just a day before Katherine's wedding, chaos and hilarity ensue as mother and daughter desperately try to break the spell. Experiencing their lives from the other side, the pair gain a greater appreciation and respect for each other, developing an even stronger bond. The story is supported by an uplifting and catchy score by Tom Kitt and Brian Yorkey, the Pulitzer Prize-winning composers of *Next to Normal*.

We hope you can attend this heartwarming, entertaining musical comedy performance



## Speaker Spotlight: 2025 Anniversary Grant Recipient- Louise Stevens

Join us at 8 am on Friday 29 May for an inspiring Speakers Breakfast featuring Louise Stevens (1985), recipient of the 2025 AOGU Anniversary Grant, as she shares the story behind Together in the First Year – a powerful new initiative supporting mothers at one of life’s most vulnerable and transformative times.

An extension of the charity Mum for Mum, Together in the First Year will provide free, confidential, one to one emotional support to new mums across Australia through an online program. Each mother is paired with a trained volunteer for her baby’s first year, helping to ease isolation, anxiety and exhaustion when support matters most.

Hear firsthand how a ‘pay it forward’ idea is being transformed into a national pilot program – and how a modest grant can create meaningful, lasting change for families everywhere.

Don’t miss this opportunity to hear how one idea can create lasting impact.

RSVP **HERE** to book your place at the AOGU Speakers Breakfast Zoom event on Friday 29 May at 8 am.

# 2026 AOGU

## Abbotsleigh Alumni Lunch

*Orange*



## 2026 AOGU Abbotsleigh Alumni Lunch – Orange

All Old Girls are warmly invited to our AOGU regional lunch in Orange on Friday 29 May at the Union Bank, with a special welcome to those living locally. We’d love to see a strong gathering across all ages and year groups – so why not rally a few friends, form a little group, and come along together. And if you’ve been looking for a reason to visit Orange, this is the perfect excuse.

RSVP **HERE** to book your place at the AOGU Abbotsleigh Alumni Lunch in Orange on Friday 29 May 12-3 pm, The Union Bank, Orange.

## Help us bring Abbotsleigh alumni events to your regions

We're excited to grow a program of Abbotsleigh alumni events held across regional areas – creating opportunities for Old Girls to reconnect locally in ways that feel welcoming, relevant and meaningful. We know these events are most successful when they're co-hosted with local Old Girls, and we're seeking volunteers based outside Sydney to help bring them to life.

We're looking for Old Girls willing to act as an on-the-ground contact in their area. This role is light-touch but essential: suggesting an appropriate local venue and helping promote the event to generate attendance. The AOGU and Old Girls' Office will retain full organisational responsibility, including planning, coordination, invitations and event management.

Your local knowledge and connections – including insight into ideal timing, or alignment with existing local events – can make all the difference. If you have (or know of) a great venue, or you'd be happy to assist with planning support in your regions, we would love to hear from you.

If you are interested in being involved, please contact Heidi Grout, the Old Girls' Relations Manager on [aogu@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:aogu@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au) to find out more.

Make sure your region is the next one to bring the Abbotsleigh Alumni community together to reconnect and reminisce.



## AOGU Archibald Wynn and Sulman Tour Prizes

Reserve your spot at this year's private tour, held before the Gallery opens. This is a sell out event each year and Old Girls from a range of years attend. Tickets are the same cost as attending the exhibition. A morning tour will be held **Friday 19 June at 9.15 am** and an evening tour will be held on Wednesday 24 June at 5.45 pm. Click [HERE](#) to RSVP.



Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith art award 2026  
National art award supporting contemporary Australian artists

Announcement of the winner Wednesday 22 July 2026  
Exhibition of finalists 18 July to 15 August 2026



## Enter the Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith Art Award

We invite you to enter the Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith Biennial art award 2026 – entries are via the GCS website – click [HERE](#) to enter. The closing date for entries is 14 April.

## Announcement of Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith Art Award Winners

Join us for the announcement of the 2026 Grace Cossington Smith Art Award winners on:

**Wednesday 22 July 2026**

**6 pm**

**Grace Cossington Smith Gallery, Abbotsleigh**

Please RSVP [HERE](#) for catering purposes.

The exhibition of finalists will run from 18 July to 15 August 2026.

### About the Award

The Abbotsleigh Grace Cossington Smith Art Award is a prestigious \$25,000 acquisitive biennial prize celebrating outstanding two-dimensional artworks that explore the theme 'Making Connections'. The winning artwork becomes part of Abbotsleigh's celebrated collection of modern and contemporary Australian art.

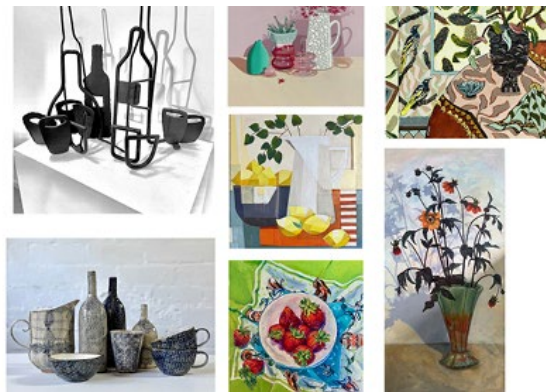
Three additional non-acquisitive awards will also be presented in 2026:

- \$5,000 Early Career Artist Award
- \$5,000 Local Artist Award (Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai)
- A finalist will be selected for a 3:33 Art Projects collaboration.

Established in honour of notable Abbotsleigh Old Girl and leading Australian modernist Grace Cossington Smith (1910), the award continues the School's long tradition of supporting artists and creative education. The award attracts a strong national field of emerging and established artists, with around 40 finalists selected this year by esteemed judges Barry Keldoulis (Artbank) and Anna Davis(MCA).

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## Visit upcoming exhibitions at the Grace Cossington Smith Gallery



### Beyond Utility

**9 April to 2 May 2026**

**Opening event Saturday 11 April 2026, 2-4 pm**

Bethany Macdonald Tucker, Libby Moore, Kobie Bosch, Clare Unger, Judy Denby, Suzie Rix, and Paul Macdonald share an exploration of contemporary still life practice. Through diverse approaches in painting, collage, ceramics and sculpture, the group reflects on the enduring relevance of Still Life in today's complex world.

Emphasising materiality, composition and the meditative act of making, the exhibition invites viewers to pause and find meaning in the everyday. By looking beyond objects, Beyond Utility reaffirms the quiet power of presence, beauty and contemplation in art.

Enquiries: [gcsgallery@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:gcsgallery@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au) or (02) 9473 7878.

**Come and enjoy a coffee and something to eat after at the new cafeteria in the dining precinct next to the gallery. Best to avoid recess (11-11.20 am) and lunch (1.10-2.05 pm) as it will be very busy with students.**





## How can the AOGU support your career and study?

The AOGU has launched a new Careers Sub-Committee to develop our approach to supporting Old Girls' careers and study. To celebrate International Women's Day we held an online #IAmRemarkable self development workshop. More of these #IAmRemarkable workshops will be offered during the year. We really want to put on events that are of the most interest to you – mentoring, industry nights, topics and discussions such as entrepreneurship, worklife balance and debates – we are open to your ideas. Please email your ideas on what you'd like the AOGU to organise to Sarah Franks on [franks.sarah.aogu@gmail.com](mailto:franks.sarah.aogu@gmail.com).

## Mark in the diary upcoming events

### Community Event – Tamworth

A dinner will be held in Tamworth on Saturday 25 July at 6 pm at the Deco Bar & Restaurant coinciding with the Boarding School Expo. The Abbotsleigh community of current, past and future parents, and Old Girls are invited. The event is free of charge. Enquiries: **Heidi Grout** on 02 9473 7740. Click **HERE** to RSVP (for catering purposes).

### The Joy of Giving – Abbotsleigh Foundation Gala Dinner

Get your Old Girls year group together and make a table on Saturday 15 August at Doltone House, Darling Island. Raising funds for means tested scholarships and state of the art learning environments.

### Community Event – Hong Kong

Abbotsleigh is excited to announce that it will host a Community Event in Hong Kong on Friday 21 August. The Abbotsleigh community of current, past and future parents, and Old Girls are invited. The event is free of charge and dinner and drinks will be served. The venue is TBC. Enquiries: **Heidi Grout** on 02 9473 7740.

## Year group reunions

Each year the 5 and 10 year reunions, and some regional reunions, are organised by Abbotsleigh Old Girls with the support of the AOGU and the Old Girls Office. We already have Invitations available for the reunions listed below. Information about all other reunions to follow in due course.

- **2016 Leavers 10 Year Reunion** – Saturday 4 July (1-5 pm) – The Tilbury Hotel - Click **HERE** to RSVP
- **2011 Leavers 15 Year Reunion** – Saturday 17 October (3-6 pm) – The Tilbury Hotel - Click **HERE** to RSVP
- **1961 Leavers 65 Year Reunion** – Friday 12 June (12.30-4 pm) – The Queen's Club - Click **HERE** to RSVP

A full list of reunions can be found **HERE**. This document will be periodically updated as details are confirmed.

If you are interested in being involved in organising your year group's reunion, please contact **Heidi Grout** on (02) 9473 7740.

## Check out the latest Abbotsleigh and Old Girl news

The latest issue of *Around Abbotsleigh* has just been released and is full of school news from the first half of the year. **Click here to download it.**



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140 Years



## Rosie Fordham (2020) at the Winter Olympics

**Rosie Fordham (2020)** has had a remarkable few years, bringing a big focus to Cross Country skiing in Australia that culminated in some amazing results. If you're not yet following her journey on Instagram, Alaska is Rosie's current homebase, enabling her to train consistently (when she is not travelling to Europe for competitions). And while she doesn't get many opportunities to head back to Sydney or the Snowy Mountains where it all started, Rosie says it's still odd to see a full sized poster of herself in the Nordic Shelter in Perisher, and reminders of the many Interschool ski comps that sparked her love for skiing and exposed her to the rigours of the cross country discipline.

Rosie made history in February 2025 at the FIS U23 World Championships taking the Silver medal – the first Australian to win a medal in an international cross-country event. Then a top 20 finish in the 50k at the World Championships, and 13th in the 10km Freestyle at Davos WC in December, another first for an Aussie. Then of course the 2026 Milano-Cortina Winter Olympics in January, finishing 29th in the gruelling 50km mass start (yep, another first – highest individual Olympic placing) and an integral part of the women's relay team. Most recently Rosie became the 2026 NCAA National Champion in the 7.5k Classic and also took out back-to-back wins as the 20k freestyle National champ in what was called 'a dominant victory'!

The Australian cross country team had impressive results at the Olympic Games and we are so proud to see another Old Girl representing so incredibly at the international level (while keeping her genuine sense of humour and fun!). A massive congrats to Rosie, her support team and family for all her achievements so far, and we will be watching with great interest to see what the future brings.

## Merchandise

During the 140th birthday year, the AOGU refreshed our merchandise. We are especially excited to have expanded our range through the launch of the stunning Chapel Window scarves in honour of the Chapel's 60th birthday. All merchandise is available here with all profits from the sale of merchandise donated to the Kathleen McCredie Award Fund, which was inaugurated in 2001 by the AOGU to provide an opportunity for girls to attend Abbotsleigh in Years 10-12 who otherwise wouldn't have been able to.



### Please note

if you unsubscribe from this email, you will be unsubscribing from all Abbotsleigh Old Girls' Union and Old Girls Office communications.

### Stay connected

Contact the Old Girls Office: [aogu@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au](mailto:aogu@abbotsleigh.nsw.edu.au) or 02 9473 7740

Contact Bronwyn Cooper: [aogu.president@gmail.com](mailto:aogu.president@gmail.com)