

The Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.

Abbotsleigh's 'Journey With Joy' and sorrow as we commemorate National Reconciliation Week

Mrs Megan Krimmer
Headmistress

'Are you a healer or a hurter?'

This was the powerful challenge First Nations guest speaker Brenda Matthews issued to the Abbotsleigh Senior School after delivering her deeply moving story about being 'stolen' twice – firstly from her Indigenous family, then from her non-Indigenous family, to whom she had been given, by the authorities in the 1970s.

Brenda delivered the tragic story of her childhood in a manner that was an example to us all. It was not delivered in anger or resentment – although, very understandably, it could have been. Instead, it was delivered in a spirit of reconciliation and healing. We need to know these stories to understand, to walk together and to move forward in

reconciliation, harmony and unity – fulfilling this year's theme: 'All In'.

As is our tradition, Abbotsleigh has commemorated Reconciliation Week very powerfully. I warmly commend to you Deputy Headmistress Mrs Rennie's outstanding article highlighting the Senior School Assembly, which featured Brenda Matthews, our First Nations students and our musicians. I also commend Year 12 Prefect and First Nations student Demi Green's superb speech, and Head of Junior School Ms Larissa Cameron's overview of the excellent activities in which our Junior School girls participated to commemorate Reconciliation Week.



Reconciliation Assembly 2026: 'All In' at Abbotsleigh

Mrs Victoria Rennie,
Deputy Headmistress



First Nations guest speaker Brenda Matthews

On Tuesday this week, the Senior School gathered for Abbotsleigh's 2026 Reconciliation Assembly, a deeply moving and powerful occasion that reinforced our collective commitment to reconciliation. While this annual event is always a significant date in the school calendar, this year's assembly held particular resonance through the strength of its voices, the impact of its shared stories and the call to action of this year's theme, 'All In'.

We were honoured to welcome special guest Brenda Matthews, a proud Wiradjuri woman, whose personal story was both confronting and inspiring. We were also delighted that our Chair of Council, Ms Linda Ellis, could join us for the assembly. Her presence, alongside that of our students and staff, highlighted the importance and value of First Nations students and culture as an integral part of the rich tapestry that is Abbotsleigh.

The assembly began with a heartfelt Acknowledgement of Country by Savannah French, a proud Gamilaraay woman from Moree, grounding us in respect and recognition. A powerful introduction by Year 12 Prefect and First Nations student Demi Green followed, reflecting on this year's National Reconciliation Week theme, 'All In'. Demi spoke with insight and conviction about the meaning of reconciliation, reminding us that it is not a passive process but one that requires active participation, honesty and shared responsibility. She highlighted that, for her, true reconciliation involves walking side by side with respect, acknowledging the truth of our shared history, and transforming that understanding into meaningful action.

Demi's words reinforced that reconciliation is not solely the responsibility of First Nations people but a collective endeavour. The theme 'All In' challenges each of us to step forward, to listen, to learn, and to contribute to a future where First Nations cultures are celebrated, voices are uplifted, and communities feel seen, respected and supported.

Demi was followed by Brenda Matthews, who, in her powerful and deeply poignant address, shared her journey, from being taken as part of the Stolen Generations to becoming an author, speaker, filmmaker and Indigenous Director of Learning Circle Australia. It was a profound testament to resilience, healing and reconciliation. Her story, shared with honesty and generosity, was incredibly moving for us all.

Brenda spoke of the importance of sharing these stories – not to evoke guilt but to tell the truth, foster healing and acknowledge history. Her message was one of heartbreak and hope, of forgiveness and unity. She challenged our students to reflect on their role as the next generation of storytellers in this nation, asking them to consider: 'What story will you share? Will it be one of division, or one of healing?' Her closing question, 'Will you be a hurter or a healer?', left a lasting impression.

Our Reconciliation Assembly also celebrated the unifying power of music. After an introduction by First Nations student Lorna Haines (Year 10), the audience was treated to an amazing performance by our Vocal Ensemble and Rock Band of *Beds Are Burning* by Midnight Oil – the 2026 Voices for Reconciliation song. This iconic anthem served as a powerful call to action, urging us all to engage with truth, justice and reconciliation. We thank the Music Department for their support in preparing this performance.



Year 10 student, Lorna Haines

I would like to thank all our First Nations students who contributed to the assembly, as well as Ms Eliza Fitzgerald, Coordinator of First Nations Students and Programs, for her guidance and support in its organisation. Their efforts ensured that the event was both meaningful and impactful.

This year's Reconciliation Assembly was a powerful reminder that reconciliation begins with each of us. It calls on us to listen deeply, act thoughtfully and commit fully. At Abbotsleigh, we remain 'All In' – working together to foster understanding, respect and a shared future grounded in truth and reconciliation.

2026 National Reconciliation Week theme 'All In'

Demi Green,
Year 12 Prefect and First Nations student



Demi Green

The theme for National Reconciliation Week 2026 is 'All In', a call for all Australians to commit wholeheartedly to reconciliation every single day. The phrase 'All In' makes clear that reconciliation is not a spectator sport and that all of us must step away from the sidelines and take action to make change. To me, as a proud Gomeri woman, reconciliation is not just about coming together, that is only the beginning. True reconciliation to me is about walking side by side with respect and honesty – having a shared commitment and willingness to understand and

acknowledge the truth of our history and turning that into meaningful action. It means being heard, respected and valued, not just in words but through everyday actions. It's about creating a future where our culture continues to be celebrated, our voices are uplifted, and our people feel supported, so the next generation and those who will follow can grow up proud of who they are, surrounded by a country where their culture is celebrated, honoured, and valued.

The theme also reminds us that reconciliation and advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights isn't a passive activity, and it is not solely the responsibility of First Nations people, who have carried the weight of championing, explaining and acting for far too long. Reconciliation will not happen by itself, and it will not happen without all of us.

The 2026 reconciliation week artwork displayed on the screen is by Gumbayngirr/Bundjalung artist Otis Hope Carey, who applied his distinctive style to create a colourful and optimistic visual representation of people from all walks of life being 'All In' to make change.

Reconciliation in the Junior School

Ms Larissa Cameron,
Head of Junior School

The girls in the Junior School commemorated Reconciliation Week in their classes this week in the following ways:

- Kindergarten students explored significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, building awareness of identity, culture and contribution through stories linked to their HSIE learning
- Year 1 students investigated Aboriginal artworks, learning about symbols and representing special places around Abbotsleigh through their own symbolic paintings
- Year 2 students explored Dreaming stories through creative clay modelling and reflection, and also investigated First Nations' toys as part of their History unit on Toys through Time
- Year 3 students learnt about the importance of Country through literature and created sea-inspired bracelets to reflect care for the environment
- Year 4 students engaged in learning about Aboriginal storytelling through art, including an incursion focused on Dreaming stories and symbolic artwork
- Year 5 students examined significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander figures, including freedom fighters such as Tarenorerer, and created symbolic representations of leadership and courage
- Year 6 students explored connection to Country through weaving, learning about the cultural significance of traditional practices. They also participated in a virtual session with a First Nations guest speaker.



Chaplain

Reconciliation

Rev Sarah Hobba
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

Common Grace is a movement of individuals, churches and communities pursuing Jesus and justice together for the flourishing of all people and all creation. For Reconciliation Week, Safina Stewart, a Wuthathi and Mabuig Island woman, and Gamilaroi woman Aunty Donna Meehan spoke about what it means to be 'All In' for reconciliation.

At the heart of this year's message was the principle of reciprocity: living in right relationship with one another, where we 'give and receive', walk together and ensure that what we offer brings life and dignity to others. It is a call to listen deeply, to learn from one another and to enter into relationships marked by mutual respect, humility and shared responsibility.

Reciprocity reflects the life of the body of Christ, where each part belongs, each part contributes and all share in one another's joy and suffering. As Aunty Donna Meehan reminds us, 'we give because we have received' and 'we love because we have been loved' through Jesus. This vision speaks powerfully to reconciliation as something done not for others, but with one another. Our hope is

that, as a community, we continue to grow in this way by listening, learning and walking together under God.

To watch Safina Stewart and Aunty Donna Meehan speak about All In: Reciprocity as Reconciliation, please **click here**.

Colossians 1:19-20

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.



Upcoming events

WHOLE SCHOOL

Parent Wellbeing Hive – parent wellbeing resources	Available to all parents on the Parent Portal	Click here to visit
Pacific Highway pedestrian overpass overnight closure	Tuesday 28 April to Friday 31 July 9 pm-5 am	15 temporary overnight closures to complete work on pedestrian overpass
Young Curators exhibition	Thursday 4 to Saturday 13 June	Grace Cossington Smith Gallery
King's Birthday public holiday	Monday 8 June	

JUNIOR SCHOOL

Year 5 Micro:bit Market	Thursday 11 June 9 am-12 noon	Junior School Library Plaza
JS Production dress rehearsal and photos	Saturday 13 June 2-5 pm	Everett Hall
Year 4 Judith Krause session	Monday 15 June Sessions during morning periods	Year 4 classrooms
Junior School Production matinee	Wednesday 17 June 12.45-1.45 pm	Everett Hall
Junior School Production	Thursday 18 and Friday 19 June 7-8 pm	Everett Hall

SENIOR SCHOOL

IGSA Archdale Debating round 5	Tuesday 9 June 4-8 pm	Various locations
Years 9 and 10 Junior Science Olympiad exam	Wednesday 10 June 11.15 am-1.45 pm	Online exam
Museum of Feisty Females – Parent viewing	Wednesday 10 June 3.30-5 pm	iHub
Year 8 language excursions/incursions	Thursday 11 June	Various locations
Years 7 and 8 Junior Science Olympiad exam	Friday 12 June 11.15 am-1.45 pm	Online exam
Interschool Chess competition	Friday 12 June 4-6 pm	Library seminar rooms
Art Space/Left2Write Art and Literary Fair	Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 June 1.15-2.10 pm	iHub
House Football	Monday 15 June 1.20-2.10 pm	Synthetic and Top Oval
Celebration Concert	Monday 15 June 7-9 pm	PDCH
Year 7 Geography field trip	Tuesday 16 June	Bondi Beach
Year 7 History excursion	Tuesday 16 June	Chau Chak Wing Museum
IGSA Archdale Debating round 5	Tuesday 16 June 4-8 pm	Various locations
House Football	Wednesday 17 June 1.20-2.10 pm	Synthetic and Top Oval