

# The Shuttle

Time flies faster than a weaver's shuttle.

## Walking together with our **First Nations students and their families** – a 'Journey With Joy'

Mrs Megan Krimmer  
Headmistress

In Term 3 each year, our school community comes together to celebrate NAIDOC Week – a week of deep significance that honours the histories, cultures and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. You would be aware that NAIDOC Week is celebrated in July across the nation; however, as that falls during the school holidays, we hold our commemoration in Term 3, so that our community is able to celebrate, in part at least, this significant week together.

This year's NAIDOC Week theme is '50 Years of Deadly', which 'honours the five decades of NAIDOC Week – the people who built it, the stories that have been shared, the culture that has been celebrated, and the leadership that has inspired.' (**NAIDOC Week 2026 – Auspire – Australia Day Council of Western Australia**). And that is exactly what we did at our Senior School Assembly this week.

We were extremely honoured to welcome our special guest speaker, Shari Sebbens, an incredibly talented First Nations actor and director who has starred in many movies and shows, such as *The Sapphires* (where she played Kay), *Redfern Now*, *Thor: Ragnarok* and *The Office*, just to name a few. Shari inspired our girls with her story. She was equally inspired by our girls who ran the assembly, as well as our Year 11 First Nations students, Jazaria Duncan and Savannah French, who presented on their poignant Aboriginal Studies projects. Both powerfully brought to life the stories of their relatives who experienced unspeakable discrimination and the trauma of being stolen from their families.

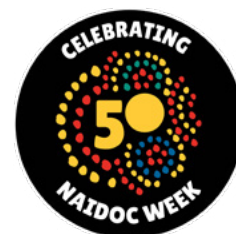


At our assembly, we also honoured Demi Green and Lexie Wilson (Year 12) who were awarded the prestigious Yalari Corri Leadership Awards at the Yalari Gala Dinner last Friday evening. There are only two recipients of these awards each year, and this year, our girls received both, which is unprecedented! We certainly are incredibly proud of Demi and Lexie. Both girls have embraced the opportunities afforded to them at Abbotsleigh, and, in turn, have given so much to the whole Abbotsleigh community as excellent students, role models and leaders.

I know that the whole Abbotsleigh community will join with me in congratulating Demi and Lexie and every First Nations student at Abbotsleigh – they are all simply amazing!

I warmly commend to you the presentations below – you are most definitely in for an inspirational read!

1. Shari Sebbens' rousing speech delivered to our Senior School girls on Tuesday.
2. Jazaria Duncan's and Savannah French's Aboriginal Studies poignant presentations.
3. The Yalari Citations, honouring both Demi Green and Lexie Wilson.



**NAIDOC WEEK**  
**50 YEARS DEADLY**  
**5-12 JULY 2026**



ABBOTSLEIGH

Visit the [Parent Portal](#) to edit your profile, view the calendar and view parent notices.



## Balancing 'First Nations hardship with First Nations joy'

**Actor and director, Shari Sebbens' presentation to Abbotsleigh Senior School**

Hello, young women, young people and staff, parents and teachers of Abbotsleigh. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the Darug or Darramuragal people, elders past and present, the traditional owners of this beautiful land that we are gathered on today. I would like to honour their unbroken ties to the land and waterways surrounding us. I extend my respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present here today.

Raise your hand if you're a blackfulla! Hey, hey, how deadly!

My name is Shari Sebbens, and I am a Bard and Jabirr Jabirr person, my people are from the Dampier Peninsula region of the Kimberleys in Western Australia. My family groups are the Torres and Hunter families; the communities I belong to are Ardyaloon (One Arm Point), Lombadina, Djarroldin, Beagle Bay and Broome. I was born and raised in Larrakia Country, in Darwin and in Nhulunbuy, Yolngu country in North East Arnhem Land.

I know I'm an actor and I should be used to talking in front of large groups of people, but teenage girls are really cool and it's made me a bit nervous to speak about myself in such a direct way, but I'll give it a red hot crack!

I was born in Darwin in 1984. I am the second youngest of six children, a proud Auntie to 18 nieces and nephews and gollie, or grandmother, to 17 gorgeous kids. When my mother, Annarella, was 12 years old, a careers counsellor came to her class and told her and the other young Aboriginal girls to go outside and play, as 'you'll only be domestics anyway'. She had her first child at 15, four kids by the time she was 21; she had me at 38 and my little brother at the age of 40.

When my mother was 44, she enrolled at university and got her bachelor's degree in Aboriginal Community Development and Management, which led to her building a career in education. My mother worked as an AIEW – Aboriginal Islander Education Worker – in high schools across Darwin for 27 years. She implemented Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal language classes in several high schools and supported thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through their education. She understood the importance of this support because it was denied to her. She also understood that while education is key, the western schooling system isn't organic to our knowledge ways as Indigenous people and one of her greatest skills was recognising what a child needed to succeed and how different that success can look for each young person, whether it was making it all



the way to graduating high school or assisting them in transitioning from school into vocational learning and other career pathways.

She knew personally, as a mature-age uni student, that there is more than one way to gain an education and build a career, but she always emphasised the importance of acquiring knowledge and education and the belief that every young person has something to offer to society. So it is truly an honour to stand here today and address you, our future generations.

When I was 11 years old, my best friend joined a youth drama group, and so naturally, I did too because we had to do everything together. My friend dropped out, but I had been bitten by the acting bug, a much less stable option than if I had been bitten by the accounting or lawyer bug, but it was too late. I had my sights set on being an actor and, at 13 years of age, I strode into the lounge room full of confidence and naivety and declared to my mother and father, 'I want to be an actor.' Without missing a beat, my mother replied, 'Well, go on then,' and off I went with no clue how to actually make that happen.

This moment has stuck with me because my mother never once made my dream seem silly or impossible, despite being denied education and support in her own childhood. The next day she asked me in the car after school, 'What do you have to do to be an actor?' I had no clue, but only a few months later I learnt about NIDA – the National Institute of Dramatic Art – and, from the age of 13 onwards, getting there was my singular goal in life.

I had some detours along the way; I didn't graduate high school. I'd say don't tell my Mum, but she knows. I got into a performing arts school in Brisbane at 17, but I only lasted a few months because being away from home was hard. My Year 11 drama teacher once told me, 'Shari, you'll never amount to anything with all the daydreaming you do.' But the joke's on him because today, daydreaming is one of the most important parts of my job!

I was also diagnosed with ADHD just this year, and I mention that because it makes so much sense of the difficulties I faced trying to keep up the facade of being a good student. I would implore any of you here today to let your teacher, or fave staff member, know if you are



struggling. I guarantee you are not alone, and asking for help is one of the quickest ways to realise that and make the changes needed to gain support.

My last detour before getting into NIDA was my acceptance into the Aboriginal Theatre course at WAAPA, Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts. This one-year Certificate IV course gave me an understanding of what would be required in the three-year bachelor degree at NIDA, and it taught me the importance of telling Indigenous stories. It was here that I realised being an actor isn't only about having fun and entertaining people or doing Shakespeare. As actors, it is our job, in the bard's own words, 'to hold as twere the mirror up to nature'. It is our job to truthfully reflect life in all its beauty and ugliness and complexity, and this has been my objective ever since graduating from drama school.

But it's not all serious; I have been fortunate in my career to balance truth-telling with entertainment, tragedy with comedy, First Nations hardship with First Nations joy. We must find this balance in all that we do in life, no matter what industry we find ourselves in. I think it's worth noting that the week-long observance of NAIDOC Week as we know it today – a week of celebrating the historical and ongoing contributions of First Nations people was born out of speaking truth to power; it was born out of protest and the day of mourning. We must remember

where we have come from as a nation if we want to know where we are going. Denying our history denies us all the opportunity to envision and build a society that is safe and just for everyone.

I have told many stories as an actor, and in the last few years I made the transition into directing, where I hope to continue to tell our stories and guide the next generation of storytellers on their way. Stories are how we change hearts and minds, and we, as the original storytellers, have so much to offer the world.

I want to let you know how powerful it was to sit there and listen to that group of deadly young black women share their stories and their family's stories. It reminded me how far we have to go as a nation, as we see and experience the rise of racism everywhere in our lives, especially after the Referendum. The group of young Aboriginal woman and their solid allies at Abbotsleigh gives me such hope for the future. Fierce, staunch, intelligent and strong in their culture and who they are; I know the future is in safe hands. It was truly an honour to share the assembly stage with you all and share yarns with you and your families afterwards.

Big love, stay deadly.

– Shari Sebbens

## Aboriginal Studies – Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up!

Savannah French, Year 11

*'If it can take just a busload of uni students to challenge racism in the 1960s and create change, how might we also challenge racism by our actions and words?'*

Jazaria and I are both in Year 11 doing Aboriginal Studies. A core component of the course in both Years 11 and 12 is a research project. Students create their own focus question and conduct research, observing cultural protocols around Intellectual Property and consulting with Aboriginal community members. This year, we each developed a focus question inspired by the NAIDOC Week theme and will now share a summary of our projects with you.

Considering this year's NAIDOC theme is '50 Years of Deadly', the focus of my Aboriginal studies research project was the 2022 NAIDOC theme, Get Up! Stand Up! Show Up! Ryhia Dank designed the poster. She is a young Gudanji/Wakaja artist from the Northern Territory. The 2022 NAIDOC Week theme urged all Australians to amplify First Nations voices, push for systemic and institutional change and honour generations of past Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resistance leaders. This theme was a good fit for my research into the 1965 Freedom Rides, led by Arrernte man Charlie Perkins.



In 1965, a group of students from the University of Sydney drew national and international attention to the living conditions of Aboriginal people and what racism was like in New South Wales country towns. Known as the Freedom Ride, this 15-day bus journey through regional New South Wales would become a defining moment in Australian activism. The Freedom Ride targeted towns where there were Aboriginal reserves and came to my hometown in Moree. To find out more, I interviewed my Uncle Edward and my Pop Darryl because they were both there at the time. There was a lot of discrimination and racism in the town, such as being able to go to the movie theatre but not being able to have a choice of where to sit; they had to sit at the front, being the last served in shops and cafes and being denied entry to the local pool, except on certain days, just before the pool was cleaned.



When the Freedom Riders arrived, many white residents reacted with hostility and aggression, believing the students were causing trouble. But the strong local, national and even international media presence brought huge attention to the injustice happening in these towns. Although change didn't happen immediately, the Freedom Ride shone a spotlight on discrimination and pushed communities to slowly shift their attitudes. Over time, it helped open up public spaces, challenged racist

rules, and encouraged greater acceptance. It remains a powerful symbol because it involved Aboriginal children and families standing up for their rights and revealing the truth about how they were treated.

Racism and discrimination still exist in 2026. If it can take just a busload of uni students to challenge racism in the 1960s and create change, how might we also challenge racism by our actions and words?

## Aboriginal Studies – Our Children Our Future

Jazaria Duncan, Year 11

*As we celebrate NAIDOC today, let the theme from 2003, 'Our Children Our Future' challenge us to not only examine the stories of harm, but also the incredible resilience and survival of our people.*

As we celebrate '50 Years of Deadly' this NAIDOC, I want us to reflect on the history of Australia, a history that still impacts First Nations peoples today. I chose the 2003 NAIDOC theme 'Our Children Our Future' because it forces us to ask a difficult question: how can we talk about the future of Aboriginal children when so many of our Elders, parents and grandparents were denied the basic rights every child deserves – safety, love, education, protection and a fair start in life? For my Aboriginal Studies project, I created a focus question that asked me to describe the government policies in NSW during the 1950s and 60s that led to the Stolen Generations, and to explore how we might create a hopeful future for children who still carry the weight of that history.

I was drawn to this research because this isn't distant history for me; it's my family. As a Gamilaroi and Wailwan girl from Moree, standing here at Abbotsleigh, I'm reminded every day of the privilege of simply having access to education, safety and opportunity. That privilege wasn't given to the generations before me. The system that claimed to 'protect' Aboriginal children was designed to erase them. And the trauma it created didn't disappear when the policies ended.

To answer my question, I interviewed my Aunt Rita, Uncle Sooty, Uncle Wayne and my Nan. Their stories didn't just inform my project; they changed me. Aunt Rita told me about being taken without her mother even knowing, sleeping in a chook pen, surviving on oranges, and being bullied in the institution. She told me how her own grandchildren were later taken, how her granddaughter was taken from the hospital 'like thieves in the night'. These aren't stories from a textbook. They are lived experiences that match exactly what the Bringing them home report described: trauma that repeats across generations because the harm was never properly addressed.



Uncle Sooty told me how being taken at four years old wiped out his childhood memories, how returning home as a teenager felt like stepping into a world he no longer recognised, and how the trauma filtered down through his mother into all her children.

Uncle Wayne explained how his father's removal shaped their whole family, creating emotional distance, cultural disconnection and a childhood lived 'between two worlds'. Their voices echo the statistics: survivors are more likely to experience poor health, violence, imprisonment and financial stress, not because of personal failure, but because the system was built to set them back.

What I learnt is confronting: the Stolen Generations didn't end in the 1970s. The trauma didn't stop. Today, Aboriginal children are still overrepresented in out-of-home care, often placed away from kin and culture, repeating the same cycle of removal that Australia claims to have left behind.

So as we celebrate NAIDOC today, let the theme from 2003, 'Our Children Our Future' challenge us to not only examine the stories of harm, but also the incredible resilience and survival of our people.





image courtesy of Yalari facebook page

## Yalari Gala Dinner citations – 21 August 2026

### Alexandra (Lexie) Wilson

Our JLL Yalari senior Corrie award winner is Alexandra Wilson.

Alexandra 'Lexie', a Prefect at Abbotsleigh this year, has been a strong and committed leader across many different areas of school life. She has taken on leadership responsibilities within the Boarding House, at school and on the sporting field, consistently demonstrating maturity, reliability and a willingness to support others. Her leadership is grounded in respect; she listens to those around her, values the contributions of others and leads by example.

Travelling to the Northern Territory with other First Nations students, as well as her experience travelling to Cape York, have broadened her understanding of culture, community and the world around her. She has embraced these opportunities with an open mind and a willingness to learn, reflecting the respect she holds for the people and communities she encounters.

As Lexie prepares for the next chapter of her journey, she is hoping to attend university in Queensland, with aspirations to study either Business or Criminal Justice.

### Demi Green

Our second Yalari senior Corrie award winner is Demi Green.

Demi is a determined young woman who gives everything her all, embraces challenges and consistently strives to make a positive difference to those around her.

From her first year as a Boarding Representative in 2021, Yalari Captain in 2025, and through to her roles as Prefect and Tennant House Captain over the past 12 months, Demi has embraced every leadership opportunity with warmth, maturity and a strong sense of responsibility. Her passion for sport has also seen her represent Abbotsleigh, serving as Rugby 7s Sports Captain.

With all her achievements, she says she's most proud of her commitment and part in the increased understanding and celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture within the Abbotsleigh school community.

With aspirations to study a Bachelor of Media and Communications at the University of Sydney, attend St Andrew's College and, one day, hopefully work with an NRLW team in sports media, Demi has a bright future ahead of her.



# Chaplain

## Think about these things

Rev Sarah Hobba  
Senior Chaplain and Head of Christian Studies

*These words are an extract from the NAIDOC Week reflection by **Safina Stewart**, a proud Wuthathi and Mabuig Island woman who works with the group called Common Grace.*

You can find the full article at **50 Years of Deadly: Holding Truth and Hope Together – Common Grace**.

This year's theme is '50 Years of Deadly'. You may have heard the word deadly and wondered what it means. In Aboriginal communities, deadly is a term of high praise. It means awesome, excellent, strong, impressive, something to be proud of...

As I reflect on this year's theme, I am reminded of Paul's words in Philippians 4:8:

*Now dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true and noble and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*

These words carry even greater weight when we remember that Paul wrote them from prison. He wasn't ignoring hardship or pretending everything was okay. He was writing to encourage people to remain grounded in hope and God's goodness even in difficult circumstances.

I think there is something powerful in that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our communities



know what it means to persevere through hardship. We continue to live with the impacts of dispossession, discrimination and injustice...

Our story is one of resilience. It is a story of people who continue to care for one another, pass on culture, nurture future generations and remain connected to Creator, Country and Community. Paul's words remind me that we can hold truth and hope together. We can acknowledge injustice while also celebrating the beauty, strength and dignity of our people. We can tell honest stories about the past while continuing to look towards the future with courage and hope.

Videos can also be found at **NAIDOC Week 2026 (short version)**  
**NAIDOC Week 2026 (full length version)**.

# Upcoming events

## WHOLE SCHOOL

|                                                           |                                               |                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Parent Wellbeing Hive – parent wellbeing resources</b> | Available to all parents on the Parent Portal | <a href="#">Click here</a> to visit         |
| <b>HSC Showcase exhibition</b>                            | Tuesday 25 to Sunday 30 August                | Grace Cossington Smith Gallery and the iHub |



## JUNIOR SCHOOL

|                                                  |                                                 |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>ELC Father's Day breakfasts</b>               | Tuesday 1 and Thursday 3 September 7.30-8.15 am | ELC               |
| <b>T-6 Father Daughter breakfast</b>             | Wednesday 2 September 7-8.15 am                 | Library Plaza     |
| <b>Year 1 Walking Around Wahroonga excursion</b> | Wednesday 9 September 8.30-10.30 am             | Wahroonga village |
| <b>Year 4 Convict Day camp</b>                   | Thursday 10 September                           | The Rocks         |
| <b>Year 5 Chinatown and Chinese Gardens</b>      | Friday 11 September                             | Sydney CBD        |
| <b>Year 2 Roald Dahl Day</b>                     | Friday 11 September 8.30 am-12.45 pm            | Year 2 classrooms |

## SENIOR SCHOOL

|                                             |                                  |                   |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Saturday sport</b>                       | Saturday 29 August               | <b>Click here</b> |
| <b>Year 11 assessments</b>                  | Tuesday 1 to Friday 11 September |                   |
| <b>Japan Concert Band rehearsal</b>         | Tuesday 1 September 3.30-5.30 pm | PDCH              |
| <b>SDN Debating competition – round 7</b>   | Friday 4 September 4-9 pm        | Various locations |
| <b>Catch a Rising Star Gala Concert</b>     | Friday 4 September 6.30-8 pm     | PDCH              |
| <b>Year 12 Integration Bee</b>              | Monday 7 September 12.40-2.10 pm | Assembly Hall     |
| <b>Japan Concert Band rehearsal</b>         | Tuesday 8 September 3.30-5.30 pm | PDCH              |
| <b>Prefect Dinner 2025-2026</b>             | Thursday 10 September 5.30-7 pm  | RSR               |
| <b>Year 11 New Leaders Workshop day</b>     | Friday 11 September              | GLC               |
| <b>Years 7-11 Father Daughter breakfast</b> | Friday 11 September 7-8.15 am    | Cafeteria         |
| <b>SDN Debating competition – round 7</b>   | Friday 11 September 4-9 pm       | Various locations |

