

Autumn/Winter Edition 2023

Nexus

GOULBURN VALLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INSIDE:

Judy Grace

Celebrating 40 Years at GVGS

GVGS Alumni

Sophia Christoe,
Joshua Pennell
& Shane Sali



From the Board Chair

Dear School Community,

I am writing this to you with the feeling that I think many of us have at this time of the year; cannot wait for winter to go. As much as I like the start of winter it is time to bring on spring.

Mark's article gives you all a thorough outline of the School's more definitive, structured and comprehensive approach to student safety and wellbeing. The Board has undergone training in this area over the winter months which has been well worthwhile. For all of us in the School community, it is a "no-brainer" to think that safety and wellbeing are paramount, but we need the detail behind that position to know how we can help in maintaining it.

Meanwhile, our students continue to get themselves involved in all of the activities that the School has to offer over this period. It is the season where the School is well represented by its students in a number of sports.

I hope your child or children have enjoyed getting out there on a Saturday and "doing it for GVGS". For those students who live out of town and play for other clubs, I hope they have enjoyed it too. Participation comes with rewards, win or lose. The Matildas have just given us a great example of the benefits of participation.

I am not confining my views on participation just to sport. I enjoyed our Senior Production of "The Addams Family" and the recent Middle Years Production of "Moana JR" very much. They give students of differing age groups a chance to all get together to dress up, sing, work on the technical aspects and just have fun.

I also witnessed another example of participation. The School's First Nation students ran the School's assembly, providing all who were there with a wonderful package of explanations, songs, stories and poems about Country, their communities and their families. Our First Nations people have a tremendous approach to their community,

their elders and to their family, one that is tried and true for thousands of years. Just something for all of us to remind ourselves about. Well done to those who participated in the annual Yakapna assembly.

I hope you all enjoy the last few months of our School year. Good luck, particularly to our Year 12 students who I will have the privilege to see at Valedictory Dinner soon.

Semper Ulterius



Cover Photo: Judy Grace

Nexus is a GVGS school community publication. We welcome submissions to Nexus from staff, students, alumni and those connected with the school community.

Contributing Writers for this edition:
Elizabeth Mellino (Class of 2012)
Samantha Schelling (Past Parent)
Clare Winter-Irving (Class of 2010)

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From the Principal

The issue of Child Safety and Wellbeing continues to be a critical one for all schools across Australia. The number of abuse cases emerging in recent years in both schools and other places is a stark reminder to us all of the importance of ensuring we place student safety and wellbeing as our number one priority.

Earlier in the year, the School wrote to the current and past school community regarding our commitment to embedding and improving the culture of student safety and wellbeing by undertaking an independent review of the School's practices and performance in relation to student safety and wellbeing. The review was conducted by independent child safety experts. Current and past students and families were welcomed to participate confidentially.

We were very appreciative that a number of people from the present and past school community took part in the review by meeting with the reviewer. In addition, some saw the specialist external counsellor. I sincerely thank all those who gave their time so generously and reflectively to participate in the review. In particular I acknowledge that such discussions were, for some people, very challenging and emotional. The insights and feedback participants provided were key to producing the Student Safety and Wellbeing Improvement Action Plan and continues to inform our policy direction, training and thinking. The actions implemented to date or in progress include:

- The adoption by the School Board of the Student Safety and Wellbeing Improvement Action Plan.
- The provision of Specialist Child Safety Training to all members of the School Leadership Team, the School Board and the Pastoral Care Team.

- Launching an updated student friendly GVGS Student Safety and Wellbeing Framework.
- Implementation of a new system for clear and easy identification of Child Safety Officers by students.
- Initiating an updated Child Safety and Wellbeing Management and Oversight Framework.
- Increasing student voice in Child Safety to ensure that wellbeing processes and practices reflect the diverse needs of our community.
- Implementing a revised Bus Policy and associated Code of Conduct.
- Our consultant will be visiting the School to provide 'speak-up' training to staff and students regarding the identification and reporting of grooming behaviour and reminding us all that student safety and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility - if we see or hear something that seems "not right", then we should speak up.

This complements the work the School commenced in 2022, prior to the review, recognising and responding to current student voice and introducing a revised curriculum which explicitly teaches Child Safety and Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships knowledge in both Health Studies and the Pastoral Care Programme for all students from Years 5 to 12. This programme is being implemented for the second year, having been informed by particular feedback from the review and includes education of teaching staff, parents and students from specialist external consultants including Elephant Ed. (consent and sex education) and Susan McLean (Cyber safety).

While the review is complete, the School is committed to ongoing iterative improvement in student safety and wellbeing. This will involve open-ended review and reflection. Therefore, we will continue to welcome current and past members of the school community to share feedback with our external Child Safety Liaison Officer, Angela Cannon, who will also be able to offer access to a specialist external counsellor.

We will continue to update the school community with more information regarding the implementation of the Student Safety and Wellbeing Improvement Action Plan.

Finally, we acknowledge the recent media coverage in relation to an historical sexual abuse matter involving the School and a past student of GVGS and inform you that I am unable to comment further while this matter is before the courts. However, I wish to recognise that irrespective of the passage of time, the reports have undoubtedly been distressing to all. We continue to offer support to all of those in our school community affected.

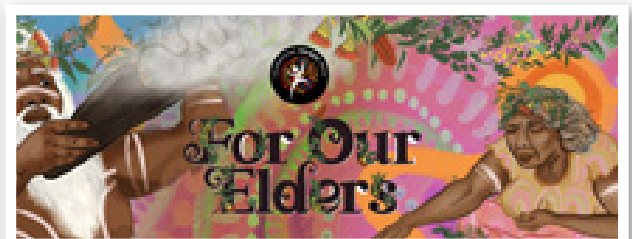
I take this opportunity to remind all members of our alumni, should anyone wish to raise any issue of concern with me, either past or present, please contact me.

Semper Ulterius,

Mark Torriero
Principal

Mark.torriero@gvgs.vic.edu.au

The 2023 Yakapna Assembly was based on the NAIDOC theme 'For Our Elders'



The Yakapna Assembly was planned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Congratulations to the VCE Class of 2022

21% in the top **5%** of the state (ATAR 95+)

34% in the top **10%** of the state (ATAR 90+)

outperformed **92%** of Victorian schools
ranked **2nd** in regional Victorian schools

Outstanding Achievements

The School community sincerely congratulates the entire Class of 2022. They endured two full years of pandemic restrictions and a major flood event causing the loss of their last week of school. The Class of 2022 persisted and demonstrated true resilience.

The Class of 2022 were particularly diverse while remaining supportive of group initiatives. They showed a genuine and infectious excitement and appreciation for being part of the school community.

They made an enormous contribution to the school music and production programme despite the pandemic. A large number remained active performers throughout their time including in Year 12.

The Class of 2022 has left a fine legacy demonstrating the qualities of Semper Ulterius.



Outstanding Achievements L-R:

Hazera Akan (97.05), Ashwath Ragade (99.65), Sasith De Abrew (99.6), Anna Howell (99.75), Edward Miechel (99.15), Sharon Anthony (98.15), Albatool Abdulmir (99.0).

INSET: Alice Davidson (97.65)

Anna Howell

In 2023 Anna commenced a Bachelor of Science at The University of Melbourne, afterwards she plans to complete a Masters of Engineering. Anna is a resident of the St Hilda's College community following her Uncle Bryce Binnie (Cl. 1992) who studied Engineering at the University of Melbourne and lived at St Hilda's College.

Amidst a global pandemic, one-in-100-year floods sweeping through her hometown of Benalla and the standard complexities that come with being a high school student, Anna Howell still managed to achieve an ATAR of 99.75. "Even with all the challenges over the past few years, nothing was going to stop me. It had an impact on me, of

course, but I never lost motivation - I had goals for myself and I knew what I wanted to achieve," she says.

"I walked out of most of my final exams pretty happy and even though I thought I could have done better in a few of them, I was hopeful that I would do well. When I logged in and saw my final results, I was blown away. I had my sisters (Kiera, Class of 2016 and Ella, Class of 2018) sitting next to me and parents on FaceTime: I was screaming and crying, they didn't know if it was good or bad news."

Over the years, Anna has taken advantage of the various opportunities available to her, including travelling to Sumatra, Indonesia for the GVGS

World Challenge in 2019/20 and the role of 2022 Social Justice Prefect.

Anna says she has thoroughly enjoyed her time at GVGS and looks back fondly on her six years at the School. "I've been so fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend GVGS; I truly believe the School has a unique culture that fosters a love for learning and achieving your absolute best,"



Premier's VCE Award

Each year the Victorian Department of Education and Training recognises excellence in learning achievement demonstrated by students undertaking the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

The Premier's VCE Awards were presented on Thursday 27 July at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. There were 331 awards presented based on outstanding 2022 VCE study scores.

Premier's VCE Awards are presented to the students attaining the highest achievement in each VCE study in a given year. Over the years a substantial number of GVGS students have achieved this outstanding distinction. This year we are delighted to announce that

Layla O'Callaghan has received a Premier's VCE Award for her study of Indonesian Second Language which was taught by Ibu Ruci Dewi.

Layla undertook acceleration studies in VCE Unit 3&4 Indonesian Second Language in Year 11, 2022.

Layla's achievement is all the more impressive given the extensive level of involvement in the full co-curricular life of the School. Layla's involvement in 2022 included Symphonic Band, Eisteddfod Dance and Debating leadership and in the Presentation Ball. Layla has also been a keen participant in the School Netball Team, playing in the Under 17 Team and coaching an All Abilities Netball Team. Layla represented the School in ICCES Athletics, Debating and Swimming.

Layla has seized the opportunities presented and made the very most of them. I am sure Layla can take confidence from this recognition. This example is certainly one that inspires students and staff alike.

This exceptional achievement reflects both Layla's commitment and discipline but also the School's culture of learning and personal growth. It also reflects the outstanding quality of teaching provided by our staff. On behalf of the school community, I congratulate Layla's teacher Ibu Ruci Dewi for her hard work, encouragement and commitment to learning that inspires our students.



20 Years of Service

Long Serving Staff

Long term staff hold the institutional memory and culture of the School and therefore play a

particularly important role in the School's stability and evolution. At the conclusion of 2022 we thanked

and congratulated Rachel James for her outstanding contribution to the School.



School Leaders 2023



BACK ROW L- R: Principal Mark Torriero, Hannah Onley, Nicholas Grant, Gus Thiel, Zachary Ranson, Benjamin Shelton, Boyd Newnham, Millar Carter, Alexandra Kleinig and Year 12 Coordinator Brooke McLeod

FRONT ROW L- R: Chatra Kahawage, Elizabeth Locke, Nikita Alexandrow, Elizabeth Tivendale, Layla O'Callaghan, Xavier Schmedje, Erin Hicks, Imogen Templeton, Lillie Walker

House Captains 2023



LEFT TO RIGHT: Ryall House Captains – Heidi Smith and Reuben Priestly, Dunlop House Captains – Isabelle Wallace and Maddison Hodges, McLennan House Captains – Keshi Ruska and William Savage and Fairley House Captains – Macey White and Maia Roberts

School Captain Profile

Layla O'Callaghan

Throughout her time at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, Layla O'Callaghan always valued the kindness and guidance offered by past Prefects and School Captains'.

It was this sense of belonging which encouraged her to apply for a Prefect position when entering Year 12. "I applied to be a Prefect because I wished to have the same kind of impact that past Prefects and School Captains' had on me," she said. "They would often smile and wave or take the time for a chat, which made me feel important and like my ideas mattered."

Layla had always hoped to be given the opportunity to be a School Leader and was delighted to be offered the position of 2023 School Captain alongside Xavier Schmedje.

The talented netballer and long-time ballet dancer has taken the opportunity in her stride, aiming to make the most out of every opportunity the role presents. "My

goal is just to try my best every day, with whatever capacity I have at the time, to help people feel like they belong," Layla said. "I hope to be able to help each person feel as though school is a place where they can feel safe, where they are valued and where they feel heard."

Currently studying Literature, English, Mathematical Methods, Psychology, Legal studies and fast-tracking Indonesian as a second language last year, Layla said the school community is what makes GVGS so great.

She acknowledged how fortunate each current and past student was to attend a school which provided such a positive environment to learn. "Our teachers are so dedicated to continually improving their skills and expanding their knowledge and it allows us as students to know that we are being given the best opportunity to succeed," Layla said.

"Everyone has the same value for education and learning." This value for education has inspired Layla

to head to university in Melbourne next year, where she hopes to study Arts and explore her love for creative writing.

Before this can happen, Layla is looking forward to seeing out the rest of Year 12 and leaving behind a school legacy which she can be proud of. She hopes to be a mentor for upcoming Year 12's, while teaching younger students how best to prepare for the highs and lows that come with the senior years of high school.

"It is important to prepare yourself well for each day and when it all gets too much, it is okay to leave your work and responsibilities and spend some time doing something that makes you feel good," Layla said. "Year 12 often gets likened to a marathon, but I think that it is a lot like a rollercoaster too. Motivation is definitely not linear and neither are emotions or energy."





Judy Grace

Celebrating 40 Years of Service

Judy Grace moved to Shepparton after meeting her husband at a wedding in Sydney. "You can move the girl, but you can't move the farm," she says looking back on her relocation to the Goulburn Valley from northern NSW in 1982. "I really didn't think about the move too much when it happened - I fell in love and that was that. The town I grew up in is a similar size to Shepparton, so it was OK."

Judy started teaching at GVGS in 1984, shortly after the School was founded in 1981. She considered her options when looking for work in her new home town, but has never second guessed her decision to spend four decades working at the School. "Those early days were great - I loved it, it was terrific. We didn't have much, but it was exciting and the parents were so supportive. We were all working together to create something that the community really wanted and we were happy teaching all these great local kids," she says.

"In the beginning we developed so many of the events and traditions that are happening now, like the annual Eisteddfod and the Valedictory Dinner. Now those things are part of our academic year and they were established all those years ago by the students and teachers who went through the School first."

Judy says her favourite thing about GVGS is the people, her colleagues, the students and their families. "Being here all these years, you get to know how the School operates, you know how it all works and you get used to being part of a great workplace. Particularly at the moment, the grounds are beautiful and it's so lovely. Early in the morning when you first get to work and look over Kings Lake, it really is something special," she says.

Although she has taught Legal Studies, Industry & Enterprise and Humanities over the years, VCE Economics is where her true passion lies. After years of experience in her field, virtual learning and Zoom

lessons during the pandemic were a challenge that she quickly adapted to, with the help of a bit of humour along the way. "You had to quickly adjust to teaching from home and using your computer for every class. All the students and teachers had to be very organised and put in a real effort to stay connected," she says. "I had a white board at home and I'd turn to the camera and ask the kids to give me a thumbs up if they could see. It all worked out in the end, but you had to laugh your way out of some situations because it was difficult at times."

As for the future, Judy doesn't have any plans on slowing down just yet. "I have no idea what's next," she says. "My retirement will happen one day, but I don't have any plans at the moment. I still enjoy what I do so much. I love teaching Economics because it changes all the time and it's such a unique subject. We've just had the first ever female head of the Reserve Bank of Australia announced, so that will be on the agenda next time I see the students."



Sophia Christoe

Sophia Christoe (Class of 2006) remembers her final years of high school fondly, recalling how the breadth of subjects she undertook in VCE helped keep her career options open.

“I went into Year 11 and 12 really focused on what’s important to me. I took on a diverse range of subjects, including chemistry and outdoor education, because I didn’t want to get too focused on any one topic. That unrestricted mindset has followed me throughout my career and in my current job. I have a vast and multi-disciplinary approach to my work,” she says.

Sophia currently works at the Open Food Network (OFN) as a Food Systems Project Manager.

Founded in Victoria, the OFN is a not-for-profit organisation that builds tools and resources that communities can utilise to create resilient food systems that are fair, local and transparent.

Through their digital platform, food producers can sell online and wholesalers can manage supply through networks of hubs and shops.

“At the OFN, we work with local farmers and community food enterprises to enhance regional food systems, ensuring everyone has equitable access to high quality local produce. We’re always looking to find innovative solutions to complex problems in the current food system. It’s a big task going from paddock to plate in a sustainable way and then managing avoidable waste along that journey too,” she says.

Recently, Sophia has been working with the Merri-Bek City Council in Melbourne’s northern suburbs to establish and develop the Food Leadership Action Group (FLAG), using a collective impact approach to addressing food insecurity and supporting local production.

“The FLAG is all about providing dignified access to local food for those in need in the northern suburbs, such as lower income, culturally and linguistically diverse people. The group is designing collaborative, systemic and sustainable solutions to increase the food that is produced and accessed locally in the community,” she says.

Throughout her career, Sophia has worked across the agriculture supply chain, including working at an organic goat dairy and artisan cheesemaking enterprise, as well as a fruit orchard in Gippsland, Victoria and Melbourne farmers’ markets. She says her long-term goal is to create a world where food and farming come together to sustain and reconnect people to the earth.

“I have always done work I find meaningful and rewarding and I think that’s so important – do what you enjoy and explore what your curious about. I took that mentality from high school right through to my current working life. If you follow your passions, you’ll end up doing something you really love.”





GVGS Alumni

Shane Sali

From the excitement of a remarkable sporting high, to being met with one of the community's most significant challenges in the past 50 years, Councillor Shane Sali remains undaunted.

The born-and-bred local has experienced a rollercoaster of events since being elected Mayor of the City of Greater Shepparton in June 2022. "These past 12 months have been a baptism of fire certainly, but really, I wouldn't have it any other way. The time has been full of such learning opportunities. Being mayor has been everything I expected and more."

In late October the region was inundated by the highest flood levels in decades, which saw the Goulburn River peaking at 12.09m on 17 October.

Through it all, he has relied on his council team around him, his family and his own personal drive and measure of what he would expect the Mayor to do. Shane says his guide of this standard is deeply personal. "I've not

asked anyone what they expect the mayor to do, it's driven by me and me alone and would no doubt be different for every person."

What is clear though, is that his actions and self-measure have root in his view of family, community and business as all being paramount.

The father of three, who together with his wife Lirie operates businesses in Shepparton, became interested in running for local politics in 2020 after spending six years on the Shepparton Show Me Committee. However, he puts the origin of that political interest to growing up in a tight-knit extended family, whose business interests encompassed transport, retail and fruit growing.

"These industries are big drivers in our local economy, so as I got older, I became more and more interested in aspects that affected them."

Shane has fond memories of school, having attended

GVGS from Years 7-10 (2000-03). "When I look back, I appreciate how engaged with our age group the teachers at GVGS were. Right from Year 7, they were welcoming and helpful.

Mr Edwards and Mr McLeod are particular standouts."

Shane says, "I don't think any kid dreams of being the Mayor, but I consider myself very fortunate to have this opportunity. Being born and bred here, I thought I was connected to most things happening in our community, but the mayoral role has pulled back so many more layers of our community that I didn't previously know were out there."



GVGS Alumni

Joshua Pennell

Class of 2000 alumni, Joshua Pennell, can remember a conversation he had in Year 11 with the School's Careers Advisor. Having a passion for sports and finance at the time, he was encouraged to pursue a career in finance due to the greater job opportunities it could present.

Just over two decades later, Joshua is now an Amazon and Kindle number one best-selling author who runs a business and financial advisory firm in Melbourne.

The father of four has very fond memories of his time at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, including being a proud Ryall House Captain who represented the School at many different sporting carnivals.

"I enjoyed my time across all facets of school life - academically, friendships, sports and the amazing school spirit and community," he said. "Having excellent teachers and a supportive learning environment helped me to get good results and then pursue university and a course that fitted well with the areas I was interested in."

After graduating from GVGS, Joshua moved to Melbourne to study a Bachelor of Business in

Economics and Finance at RMIT. In his third year, Joshua managed to secure a job with a large international firm where he stayed for two years, paving the way for many great opportunities.

After finishing his degree, Joshua completed a post graduate course to become a Certified Financial Planner which led to his current role as Director at Prosper Advisory.

A career as an author was not on the cards until around three years ago when Joshua completed a 12-month business course with London and Australian based group, DENT. "They recommended writing a book to help boost your profile and grow your business in order to share valuable content. So, during COVID-19 lockdowns I thought it was a great time to get to work on that project," Joshua said.

"About a year later I had completed the book which then went to number one on the Amazon and Kindle book charts." The book, *What Parents Want*, aims to help busy parents achieve financial freedom, a better lifestyle, balance and all the happiness and success they desire.

Joshua said he thoroughly enjoyed the writing process, with the book opening the door to many new rewarding and fulfilling opportunities. "For anyone considering doing it, definitely make it happen," he said. Becoming an author has validated Joshua's passion for finance.

The opportunity to turn a passion into a career while using the knowledge to develop positive, personal lifestyle and financial outcomes is something he said was truly invaluable. "My advice would be to embrace the learning and pursue it further, then employ the lessons for yourself and your own life, as well as to create a great career," Joshua said. "There are a lot of reasons it can be a great and rewarding field to work in."

GVGS Archive - Music through the Years





Alex Ainsworth (Class of 2010) and wife Alba welcomed daughter Aralai in October, 2022.



Fiona née Barnes (Class of 2005) and husband Grant welcomed their fourth child Faith in November, 2022. Sister to Chelsea (7 years), Nicole (5 years) and Hannah (3 years).



GVGS staff member and past student Laura Johnson née Pankhurst (Class of 2011) and husband Jacob welcomed their first child, Harriet Allyce, in February.



Alice née Weston (Class of 2006) and husband Sebastian welcomed their first born, Oliver, in March.



Lachlan Garrick (Class of 2009) and wife Jessica welcomed their first child, Charlie Edward, in March.



GVGS staff member Laura and husband Craig welcomed their second child, Revie Lee, in May.



Callum Mollpatrick (Class of 2013) and Olivia Derby were married in September, 2022 at Ballara Receptions, Eltham.



Chris Wijesingha (Class of 2015) married Shanilka née Leitan (Class of 2016) in January at Quat Quatta in Brighton.



Simon Boundy (Class of 2002) married Paul Bain in February at the Trawool Estate.



Michael Farrer (Class of 2011) married Mollie Beresford in February on the Sunshine Coast.



Mikaela Hutchins (Class of 2014) married Nicholas Foster in April at Fairview Homestead in Strathmerton.

Vale - Christopher Lee (Class of 2005)

Christopher commenced in Year 7 in 2000 and completed Year 12 in 2005. During his time at GVGS, Christopher was a proud member of Ryall House. He had a keen interest in music, performing in various musical concerts and productions as well as representing the School in

badminton. Christopher was a School Prefect in his final year at GVGS.

He attended RMIT University completing a degree in Nanotechnology and later completed a Masters in Radiotherapy at Monash. He worked at the Canberra Hospital as a radiotherapist

before taking time to travel overseas with his wife Sam.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to his parents Harold and Elizabeth, siblings, Andrew (Cl. 1998) and Geoffrey (Cl. 2000) and his wife Sam.



Vale - Paul Freeman former staff member 1982-1990

Paul commenced in 1982 as one of the foundation staff and resigned in 1990. He was a teacher of English, Drama and French. Paul coordinated productions and was instrumental in the establishment of the initial

library. When the School started he was head of Fairley House and coached the School's Football team. He also served as Staff Association President, member of the Curriculum Committee and the School

Leadership Team from 1987 to 1989.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Paul's wife Kathy and children Emily (Class of 1991) and Christopher.



Vale - Alan Willey former part-time French Tutor 1997-1998

Alan tutored students who were undertaking French as a VCE subject on a part-time basis during 1997 and 1998.

Alan passed away in hospital on June 30, 2023 after a brief illness.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his family.

The Addams Family

During May the GVGS Senior Production for 2023 'The Addams Family' impressed audiences across three nights at the Riverlinks Westside Theatre. After many months of dedicated rehearsals and practice the entire cast presented with energy and confidence and provided the audience with a great family night out.

Director Helen Janke praised the cast for their efforts. She particularly noted the wonderfully positive and enthusiastic approach of the students throughout the rehearsals.

The production brought to life the much loved characters of Morticia, Gomez, Wednesday, Pugsly and of course Uncle Fester. The production was enhanced by excellent costumes, make-up, lighting and sets, all made possible by a Production Support Team, comprising of students, parents and staff.

