

Spring / Summer 2023

# Nexus

GOULBURN VALLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Prue Dobson,  
Departing Board  
Member

**INSIDE:**

**GVGS Alumni**

Aimee Bolton  
Shane Nanayakkara  
Nathan Edwards



## Nexus

*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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**COVER PHOTO:** After some 45 years of involvement and service at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, Prue Dobson has formally retired from the Board. Her story is on Page 10 & 11.

## Hello to you all

Another great year is drawing to a close. If students have the same thoughts I had when I was a student then I am sure they are looking forward to the holidays and I suspect the staff are too!

It looks like 2023 is the year clear of floods and pandemics. What a relief. Of course, there are still many people within the wider community who remain impacted for one reason or another. I trust we will think of them over the break and hope that things clear up for them early next year.

I want to congratulate our new group of student leaders for 2024. Our house captains, school prefects and to our two new school captains, Denise McCarthy and Felix Dom. Looking forward to seeing you in your roles next year.

I am proud of the fact that the School, through the instigation and effort of our Principal Mark Torriero and his leadership team, continues to assess and improve on the ways that the School enhances its learning program so that students are well equipped with the skills to be respectful, tolerant and rational with argument when fronting the issues that will face them as adults. Hopefully they will continue to read and become informed before acting, no matter what the issue is. Mark's article in this edition helps you see where the School is coming from on this important process and I commend him for always having the development of student well-being not just at school but in future years, as a top priority.

This edition also has an important article on our departing Board member, Prue Dobson. She has been a wonderful contributor to the School for so many years. Well done and congratulations to you Prue.



Our Board has recently appointed two new members, Natasha O'Callaghan and Dr Karyn Ferguson. Both are current parents and you will all know Natasha's daughter, Layla, was school captain this year. I hope they enjoy their tenure on the Board and I can see that they will be important contributors.

By the time you receive this, our Year 12 cohort will have received their results. Good luck to you all with the offers that come your way. There seem to be many ways these days for students to fulfil their dreams, even if it does not come their way initially. I was heartened by the many students at Valedictory Dinner who were clear about what they wanted to strive for.

My thanks to all of our staff once again. To Mark and his leadership team, thanks once again from me, personally and on behalf of our Board.

I hope you all enjoy the break.

*Semper Ulterius*  
Andrew Galbraith, Chair of the Board

## The Learning that Matters

Our School aim is to positively change the lives of young people through learning. We strive towards providing students with an education which promotes respect for reason, evidence, civility, tolerance, diversity, honesty, kindness and the value of hard work and self-discipline. We believe that such an education will support fulfilling lives which contribute to improving the quality, equity and sustainability of our future world.

The School has been developing a curriculum framework that is specific, cohesive and identifies the learning that will matter most in the lives of our students. This year a cross departmental working group completed a thorough and detailed research informed investigation into international curriculum standards and the implications for our curriculum. The working party recommended the School move to an explicit knowledge led curriculum for intrinsic, moral and practical reasons. This recommendation has been endorsed by the School Leadership Team. Initial trials have commenced and extensive planning and expansion will continue throughout 2024 and 2025.

Our reformed curriculum framework aims to ensure that students leave school with a deep and wide knowledge base grounded in a rigorous and extensive liberal arts education. Such essential knowledge will enable students to read critically, write lucidly, think openly with an inquiring mind and improve their capacity for future learning. It also raises the quality of their conversation, social analysis and capacity to navigate complex issues in their future lives. Students' core learning will focus on the fields of English, Mathematics, Science, History, Literature and the Arts.

Strong evidence supports the view that a knowledge rich curriculum fosters the growth of students into adults who will become ethically motivated, respectful and responsible members and leaders of our future society. Such a curriculum is also closely aligned with our commitment to embedding a culture of Student Safety and Wellbeing.

The School has formalised a comprehensive Child Safety and Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships (RRRR) learning programme. The School's programme is informed by student voice and includes age appropriate content including

topics of child safety, gender, identity, sexual education, respect and consent. The lessons are incorporated into the curriculum of both the Health and Pastoral Care Programme from Years 5 to 12. This is complemented by the revised Student Safety and Wellbeing framework, as a result of the 2023 review which included recommendations made by students, staff and families. It is also supported by a range of external partners including the Elephant Ed programme focussing on sexual education and consent.

Our evolving knowledge forward curriculum together with our Student Safety and Wellbeing framework, aims to ensure that our departing students leave the School with critical life and wellbeing knowledge as well as the foundations for futures that are fulfilling, positive and engaged in respectful citizenship.

*Semper Ulterius*  
Mark Torriero, Principal



### ICCES Success

The School has had a successful year at ICCES Events with shields presented by students to the Principal.

*BACK ROW:* Intermediate Girls Tennis (Ruby O'Callaghan Year 10), Junior Girls Volleyball (Maya Pearson Year 7), Junior Girls Tennis (Miriam Ford Year 8), Intermediate Girls Softball (Martha McKellar Year 9).

*FRONT ROW:* Junior Boys Volleyball (Patrick McCarthy Year 7), Intermediate Boys Volleyball (Claude Nelson Year 9), ICCES Summer Tour Cup and Volleyball (Montanna Burke Year 10), Intermediate Girls Volleyball (Mia Wheaton Year 10) and Intermediate Boys Cricket (Gerry McCarthy Year 9).



## 2023 School Captain Xavier Schmedje

As 2023 School Captain, Xavier Schmedje hoped he could bring the school community together and ensure all students felt included and welcomed.

As he approaches the end of his time in the role, Xavier can proudly say he has done just that.

Throughout his time at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, Xavier was inspired by the School Captains who came before him, eagerly watching them step up as a role model and leave a lasting legacy on the school.

It was this experience watching previous School Captains which drove him to strive for the position when his time came around.

“When I found out that I was appointed as School Captain, I was incredibly honoured and excited about the opportunity to give back to the school community and follow in the footsteps of some of my role models,” he said.

“Throughout my years at GVGS, I have seen the impact that past Prefects and leaders have had on the school culture, creating a

sense of inclusivity and community within the School.”

This strong sense of community is one of the things Xavier loves most about GVGS.

He proudly acknowledges the support students show to one another and their ability to celebrate the achievements of their colleagues.

“There is a sense of collective pride in our school and in the success of GVGS students,” Xavier said.

“Everyone is important, no matter who you are. The school community, particularly the teachers, want the best for you and help you to succeed. The School creates an environment where anyone can achieve success.”

Xavier said this is one of the things he will miss the most as he approaches life after high school.

“I will miss the supportive culture of the School, the feeling that no matter what you are doing people are happy to offer a hand and point you in the right direction,” he said.

Having studied Specialist Maths, Mathematical Methods, Physics, Chemistry, English, and fast-tracking Indonesian as a second language last year, Xavier has his eyes now set on his dream career – an aerospace engineer.

“I would love to be involved in designing and researching anything related to rockets, satellites and space travel, particularly for NASA,” he said.

With the year now almost over, Xavier is getting ready to pass the baton over to the next School Captains.

When asked what his words of advice would be to the class of 2024, he said it was simple.

“Enjoy every moment of it. There are highs and lows, but Year 12 is an incredible experience, and you should make the most of it,” Xavier said.



# 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. During 2023 we thank and congratulate the following staff on their outstanding contribution to the School.

## 40 YEARS

Judy Grace



Judy Grace

## 30 YEARS

Glen Edwards  
Cheryl Mechkaroff  
Nicole Sleeth  
Kim Stokie



Cheryl Mechkaroff



Glen Edwards

## 20 YEARS

Nicole Bensch  
Tanya Jones  
Rebecca Morris  
Shane McDonald



Kim Stokie



Nicole Sleeth



Nicole Bensch



Rebecca Morris



Shane McDonald



Tanya Jones



# Tournament of Minds

Tournament of Minds is a problem solving program for teams of students. Tournament's aim is to enhance the potential of our youth by developing diverse skills, enterprise, time management and the discipline to work collaboratively within a challenging and competitive environment. The students are required to solve demanding, open ended challenges.

This year one GVGS team went through to the State Finals and received Honours, we congratulate:

- Semilore Awosolu
- Mollie Chambers
- Chloe Chong
- Sumeet Kaur
- Petra Turnbull
- Annabelle Ford
- Dougal McGregor



## Country to Canberra

Denise McCarthy in Year 11 earned herself a trip to Canberra through the Country to Canberra Competition. Country to Canberra is a programme which aims to empower young rural women to reach their leadership potential.

Denise along with only 14 other competition winners from across regional and rural Australia entered the competition by responding to the question: Strong communities, stronger futures: How do diverse young leaders strengthen rural communities?

Denise was one of two students from Victoria chosen to attend the event held in November. Denise received an all expenses paid 5 day 'Power Trip' to Canberra which provided her with leadership and empowerment training, careers coaching as well as many networking opportunities.

For more information regarding the programme or to read Denise's entry visit: [countrytocanberra.com.au](http://countrytocanberra.com.au)



*L-R: Jenna Birchall, Year 11. Imogen Templeton, Year 12. Sharanya Senthil Kumar, Year 11. Layla O'Callaghan, Year 12. Molly Chambers, Year 5.*

## Furphy Literary Awards success

The Furphy Literary Award has been established to promote and extend the tradition of storytelling, both factual and fictional, that is so much part of Australian life. The Furphy Literary Award includes award winning judges, generous prizes and most importantly the platform and opportunity for all writers to use their talents to compete at the highest standard.

In 2023, the following GVGS students were awarded a Furphy Literary Award and Prize:

### Youth Short Story

- 1st** Imogen Templeton (Year 12) – Story titled "Here"
- 2nd** Layla O'Callaghan (Year 12) – Story titled "Her"

### Youth Poetry

- 1st** Sharanya Senthil Kumar (Year 11) – Poem titled "Ravens Bring Lavender"
- 2nd** Jenna Birchall (Year 11) – Poem titled "Spun Through Time"

### Junior Poetry

- 3rd** Mollie Chambers (Y5) – Poem titled "Floods"



## ICAS Medal achievement

For many years GVGS students have had the opportunity to participate in the ICAS competitions. ICAS is an independent skill based assessment programme which tests primary and secondary school students in a variety of subjects. The test assesses skills and learning abilities in students across Australia.

Medals are awarded to the individual student from a year level who achieves the top score in the state for a subject. In 2023, Year 10 student Alice Bouchier was awarded the ICAS English Medal.

ICAS assessment results:

### ICAS English



### ICAS Science



### ICAS Mathematics



### ICAS Writing



L-R: Nicholas Grant, Felicity Grant and Amelia Petrie.

## GVGS Equestrian Team success at National Championships

The Interschool National Championships were held in Werribee where over 600 competitors represented all states of Australia. Year 12 student Nicholas Grant was selected as Victorian Team Captain.

Amelia Petrie (Year 8) placed 1st in the Show Horse event, Nicholas Grant (Year 12) placed

2nd in the Senior Working Hunter and Felicity Grant (Year 9) placed 2nd in the Working Hunter event. Overall, Victoria won the Perpetual Shield which was proudly received by Nicholas Grant. The success at this event capped off a successful year for the GVGS Equestrian Team.



## The Australian Geography Competition

The Australian Geography Competition is a contest for Australian

secondary school students, assessing their geographical knowledge and skills. The Competition aims to encourage student interest in geography and to reward student excellence. The Competition is open to students in all Years of secondary school. In 2023, more than 73,000 students from 720 schools entered the competition.

The Competition was held online, with students having 35 minutes to answer

questions based on the content of the Australian Geography Curriculum. The questions test both geographical knowledge and skills.

All students in Years 7 and 9 at GVGS take part in the competition during their scheduled Humanities classes. In 2023, we had 18 students achieve a Distinction or High Distinction in the competition. We were also pleased to be informed that Year 7 student Jace Joseph, who achieved a High Distinction, was placed in the Top 1% of students across the entire country for Year 7 level.

# Catching up with Aimee Bolton

From Congupna to the Royal Melbourne Show, Goulburn Valley Grammar School class of 2015 alumni, Aimee Bolton, has taken her passion for agriculture to the national stage.

Growing up showing cattle alongside her father David, Aimee is now a seasoned local at agricultural shows around the country through her involvement in livestock competition and judging.

Showing cattle from a young age, Aimee says she was taught many important skills which set her up for a successful career in the industry.

“It taught me to be on time, respectful and considerate. It also helped me to create connections that I run into everywhere I go,” she said.

Aimee always knew she wanted to work in the agriculture industry, with her favourite subjects at school, Outdoor Education and Art, allowing her to incorporate her passion for agriculture and the outdoors.

After graduating in 2015, Aimee studied a Bachelor of Agricultural Business Management at Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, before receiving a scholarship to study at Texas A&M University in America where she specialised in meat science subjects.

This education, alongside her passion and knowledge of the industry, helped her secure her current role with JBS Foods Group, the world’s largest animal protein processing company as a Farm Assurance and Supply Chain Manager.

“I look after the grass-fed beef and lamb program, comprising of 3,000 producers across the eastern states

of Australia. This sees me identifying new opportunities across compliance, performance and sustainability,” Aimee said.

“I am privileged to work right up and down the supply chain, from farmers through to customers.”

It is a role which she says challenges her every day and is one which she sees herself remaining in for many years to come.

“I am in a unique role that exposes me to all areas of the supply chain in Australia and across the globe. So, for the next 5 years I plan to continue soaking that up and seeing where it takes me,” Aimee said.

“Agriculture is cool and even when it wasn’t, back when I was in high school, following my passion is the best thing I ever did.”



Aimee encourages other students to give it a go, saying the field is abundant and allows you to experience many areas.

While for some Agriculture may seem a male dominated industry, Aimee said this is rapidly changing and will continue to do so into the future.

“Results from the 2023-24 Women’s Budget Statement show 60 per cent of Agriculture and Environmental Studies graduates are women and it is one of only two industries where female graduates earn more than their male counterparts,” she said.

“The important thing is that these women are retained through career progression and development. Personally, I have always felt that if you are willing to put your hand up and give anything a crack, male or female, you will see great opportunities and progression come your way.”





GVGS Alumni

## Shane Nanayakkara

Born in Sri Lanka, Shane Nanayakkara and his family lived in New Zealand, as well as rural New South Wales and Queensland, before settling in Shepparton, where he commenced Year 6 at GVGS in 1997.

Shane can vividly recall his early days at the School.

“The classes were so small back then - there were only seven boys in my Year 6 class and we all got along so well because it was just us,” he says. “The whole school could fit in the Copulos Area for the weekly assembly.”

After completing Year 12 in 2003, Shane moved to Melbourne and studied medicine at Monash University. Today, he works as a cardiologist at The Alfred and lives in Melbourne with his wife Pav, a gynaecologist at The Royal Women’s Hospital, and their three sons.

Shane is currently undertaking research into the use of artificial intelligence to treat disorders of the heart and cardiovascular system.

“Cardiology simply makes a lot of sense to me,” he says reflecting on his steadfast passion for his career. “As soon as I started reading about it at university, it all came together and I knew I wanted to help people. The privilege to change someone’s life, it’s incredible - I’ve never lost my love for what I do.”

Shane’s interest in the medical field runs in the family - his sister Natalie (Class of 1998) is an endocrinologist and his father is a general physician in Shepparton.

“When we came to Shepp in the late 90s, my dad started his practice and my mother managed it. Now, I get the

opportunity to come back every fortnight and work together with them, which is a humbling opportunity to give back to the community I grew up in and join the family business,” he says. “One of my favourite things is coming back to Shepp and bringing my skills home. Sometimes I see patients who taught me at GVGS all those years ago - it’s surreal to be able to help someone who has helped you.”

Shane says he has fond memories of his time at GVGS from beginning to end, especially the culture generated by the students and the passionate staff who were always willing to help.

“I had amazing teachers the whole way through and I’m so grateful to the people who gave their time to get me to where I am today,” he says. “Now that I have my own kids, I know if we ever settle in Shepp I would absolutely be sending them to GVGS.”

Departing Board Member

# Thank You Prue Dobson



After some 45 years of involvement and service at Goulburn Valley Grammar School, Prue Dobson has formally retired from the Board.

Prue's contribution can be traced back to the late 1970s when she was involved in early discussions on the creation of an independent school in the Goulburn Valley. As these dreams became reality, Prue continued to be intimately involved in the formation and development of the School. She produced the initial prospectus, chaired the enrolment committee and was involved in selecting the uniform. She was a member of the Interim Council in 1979 and the first Board in 1981.

In 1984 Prue stepped off the Board as her husband Geoffrey became heavily involved in the Parents and Friends Association. Geoff was equally as committed to the School as

Prue and led an outstanding fundraising team for the next decade.

Prue rejoined the Board in 1994 and continued her tireless efforts in support of the good governance of the School. She accepted the appointment as Board Chair in 2010 and continued this role until 2017. During this period she led the establishment of the Foundation in 2011, including chairing it from 2021.

Prue was involved in the key appointments of three Principals; Vic Ryall as inaugural Principal in 1981, followed later by Ian Rule in 1997 and Mark Torriero in 2008.

Prue's three sons all attended the School, Alistair was School Captain in the Class of 1994, James a member of the Class of 1997 and Christopher the Class of 2000. All have gone on to have distinguished careers and provide Prue and Geoff with much pleasure.

Prue's role in the development and strength of the School in the present time cannot be overstated. She has been intimately involved in its establishment and maturity over many years. She has seen through tough economic times and has never wavered in her support and commitment.



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## Class of 2003

**PICTURED RIGHT L-R:** Campbell Carter, Stephanie Inglis, Zoe Morris, Penny Laidlaw (Crow), Jacoba Nasveld, Pip Renshaw (Earle), Carly Marriott (Brooks), Matthew Brooks.



## Class of 1988

**L-R:** Tracy Close, Olivia Barrie (Clarke), Sandy Jensen, Peter Stephens, Ann Cornish, Belinda Downs, Leonie Bennett (Hunter)



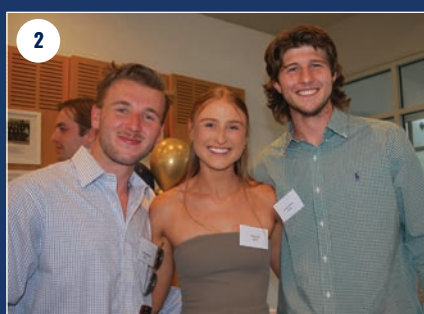
## Class of 1998

Melita Giummarra (Taylor),  
Fiona Davis (Harwood)



## Class of 2013

**Back L-R:** Fraser Werner, Mitchell Oliver, Shaun Collins, Henry Galbraith, Alex Schwarz, Simon McDonald, Ryan Davey.  
**Front L-R:** Rumer Aldous, Amanda Heard, Laura Pogue, Catherine Serra.



## Class of 2018

**1.** Celeste Droop, Adele Prescott, Stephanie Sorraghan and Lexie Nolen. **2.** Nick Hammond, Chloe Hill and Jordon Butts. **3.** Georgie Devine, Gemma Collins, Ed Adams and Daisy Bowmaker. **4.** Mackenzie Griffin, Olivia Di Petta, Gracie Knight and Chelsea Jones. **5.** Harry Powell and Nick Hammond.



GVGS Alumni



## Building his own environment

Driven by curiosity and inventiveness, past student Nathan Edwards (Class of 1990) found his niche within the built environment.

“I’ve liked solving problems from a young age, so civil engineering was appealing.”

Focusing on environmental management and corporate social responsibility saw Nathan work in the finance sector, facilities management, risk and insurance, and a carbon-trading start-up. But it’s his first job that is a career highlight.

“Being an exchange student to Switzerland at the end of school gave me a taste of life outside Benalla and Shepparton, so after finishing uni I worked in Germany as an environmental consultant. In my mid-twenties, in a non-English-speaking country, I grew professionally and personally; it really helped me set up a career platform.”

He describes his second career highlight as the bookend to that: establishing his own business, Macutex, in 2007, employing 40 people nationwide.

“I saw it as a platform to create the life I wanted. Looking back, the highlight is also having created that for the people who are in it, and those we’ve touched. Being a relatively small business, we created an environment where we can do what we want to.”

“I see life activities and achievements as setting up an ecosystem of various interests and opportunities. Rather than a lineal life of working then retiring, I’ve been fortunate to combine business opportunities and travel, live in the country and do further study – I went back to uni a couple of years ago, and did post-graduate studies in public art.”

Contrasting the Melbourne CBD office, Nathan and his wife Kate have a farm in Central Victoria, growing lavender for cut flowers and products inclusions. Kate, who hails from Ireland, runs floral workshops and drives this venture.

Nathan has fond memories of GVGS, having begun during its early years, joining his older brother, Glen – who still works at the school – in Year 7.

“We lived on a small property outside of Benalla, so it was 1.5 hours, door to door. Time spent on that minibus with fellow students gave me many life lessons too.”

“Favourite school memories include being in productions of Bye Bye Birdie and Hair. That was an eye-opener for a young student and unlocked a new world of things.”

“And we certainly learned how to lose big-time on the footy field – the team back then wasn’t producing AFL stars like they are now. I learnt how to throw things too. I think my javelin record still stands 30 years later.”

This year, Nathan was pleased to give back to the School, having driven a special project using Macutex’s skills in creating a 3D virtual tour.

“There were a lot of portable buildings when we were there; it looks very different now!”

“I’m certainly glad and enriched that my parents sent me to GVGS; it’s helped shaped me as a person.”

# Photos from the Archives



# GVGS Community News

## Community announcements

Thanks to GVGS teacher, Alumni Coordinator and past student (Class of 1987) Mr Glen Edwards for sourcing many community news items. If you would like to share your news items with Glen, please email him on [GVGS.Alumni@gvgs.vic.edu.au](mailto:GVGS.Alumni@gvgs.vic.edu.au)



Jessie Duff (Class of 2010) and partner Michael welcomed their second child Daisy in September. Sister to Archie (2 years).



Jessie Doxey (Class of 2008) and partner Steven welcomed their daughter Penny in May. Sister to Thomas (3 years).



Alannah O'Kane (Class of 2004) and husband Sam welcomed Norah in October. Sister to Beatrice (5 years), Theodore (4 years) and Frances (2 years).



Lyndon Galea (Class of 2005) and wife Belinda welcomed daughter Marley in March. Sister to Luca (2 years).



Georgia Innes-Irons (Class of 2010) married Nick Castles in December 2022 on a property on the Broken River, Shepparton



## VALE - Taina Scott (Class of 1991)

Taina commenced in Year 7 in 1986 and completed Year 12 in 1991. During her time at GVGS, Taina played netball for the School, enjoyed participating in Productions and was a Peer Support Leader in Year 11.

Taina graduated from University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Forestry degree and worked for the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action since 1996.

Our deepest sympathies are extended to her parents Carolyn and Graham and her brother Jeremy Scott (Class of 1993).

# Moana JR

The Middle Years Production performed Disney's Moana JR. at Westside performing three shows in August. All were a great success with an enthusiastic and supportive audience appreciating energetic performances from the cast and ensemble.

The many months of rehearsal and planning were clearly evident through the level of confidence and polish in the student performances. From the opening number students delivered self-assured performances and the whole ensemble demonstrated high quality singing, acting and dancing. The quality of performance was all the more impressive, given the youth of the cast who are all in Years 5 to 8 and for many students this was their first time on stage.

