

# SPECTEMUR AGENDO

VOL. 39 | SUMMER 2025



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SCHOOL





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**Park Campus**

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T (02) 4925 2121

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**Front cover**

Henry Chaston (Year 11)

**Inside front cover**

Abigaele Bee (Year 2)



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# EXCELLENCE IN ACTION



**2024 was an incredible year at Newcastle Grammar School marked by significant achievements and unwavering dedication from the members of our remarkable community. I extend my heartfelt thanks and congratulations to everyone who strived to overcome challenges and achieve their best.**

The staff team, both teaching and operational, demonstrated exceptional commitment and professionalism throughout the year. Working with young people and helping them grow is truly the greatest job in the world and our staff embodies this spirit every day. To my colleagues, your effort and dedication are extraordinary.

Year 12 students approached their final year with determination and they excelled in many areas. Class of 2024, as you venture beyond the School gates, I wish you every success in walking your unique journey, carrying with you the values that we hold so closely as a school community – Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence.

Perseverance was a common theme throughout the year. Despite feeling tested and uncomfortable at times, our students (and staff) did not let what they could not do interfere with what they could. Some stepped onto the world stage, representing NGS

or New South Wales, and some even became world champions.

Triumphs were also seen in the everyday aspects of school life; our youngest students learning to read with fluency and skill; students undertaking adventurous challenges in Outdoor Education settings – often overcoming tremendous barriers, fears and anxieties.

To the staff at Park Campus – I would particularly like to thank you for all that was accomplished throughout 2024 under unique circumstances. I thank you for your perseverance, endurance and constant flexibility as you navigated the reduced space, increased noise and daily excitement of the construction site. I'm sure you will agree that your patience has paid off with the incredible new building that stands proudly along Union Street.

I am constantly impressed by the calibre of learning and teaching that occurs at NGS. The students are engaged, challenged, stretched and encouraged. They are empowered with skills to communicate, collaborate, study, retain, recall, think creatively and sustainably, innovate, dream and wonder. They learn how to make friends, be a good friend, serve and lead. They have opportunities to investigate, delegate, debate and navigate their world. Long may this continue. For from this foundation, excellence and flourishing is possible.

Service has been a vital part of the NGS culture across generations, with initiatives including the Community Lunch, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Scheme and providing support for community groups. 2024 was no exception – NGS families actively and generously supported various organisations – locally, nationally and internationally.

This is one of the key elements that makes the NGS environment so very special. I believe that we have a responsibility to provide high quality, outstanding, holistic education to students. To assist all who are a part of this School community to truly be positive contributors to the world – now and for decades to come. To use their skills, knowledge, compassion and empathy to strive to make the world a better place. I see this every day through the generosity of our students, staff, parents, families and alumni.

Our theme for 2025 is Excellence in Action. This is not just about achieving great results, but about the process of getting there – the mindset, the attitude and the habits developed along the way. I look forward to walking this journey with you all.

**Mr Matt Macoustra**  
Head of School



*Mr Matt Macoustra with Campbell Williams, Ruby Carter and Gurek Singh Wazir (Year 8).*



# PREPARING STUDENTS TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

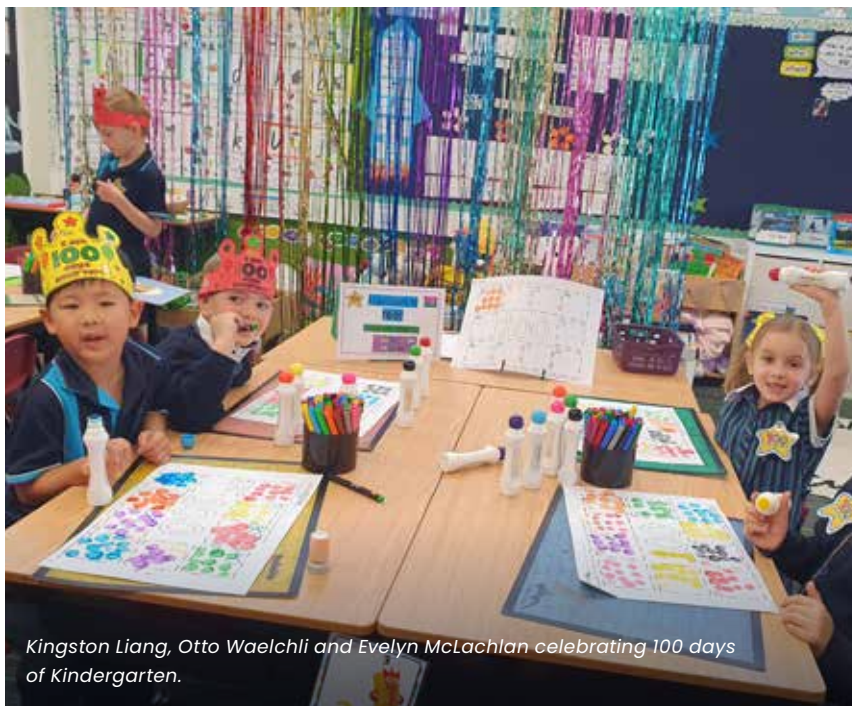


**An inspirational school is one that not only focuses on academic achievement, but also fosters a nurturing environment where students feel valued, motivated and equipped to achieve their potential. Beyond curriculum content, our staff inspire students to develop a love of learning and build resilience, to become engaged, thoughtful and well-rounded individuals.**

At Newcastle Grammar School, we have educators who are passionate about learning and teaching and who motivate students through their enthusiasm. They aim beyond the bounds of traditional teaching by encouraging and developing lifelong skills such as curiosity, critical thinking, communication and creative problem-solving. They take the time to build meaningful relationships with students, recognising and nurturing their unique talents and learning styles.

Our approach to education is very much based on developing students as whole individuals, not just academically, but socially, emotionally and ethically.

**“...we have educators who are passionate about learning and teaching and who motivate students through their enthusiasm...”**



*Kingston Liang, Otto Waelchli and Evelyn McLachlan celebrating 100 days of Kindergarten.*

This involves explicitly teaching life skills, empathy, having a growth mindset and what it means to be a leader. The wellbeing of our learners is paramount and is consistently and intentionally prioritised. Mental health support through our psychologist, teacher wellbeing support and social-emotional learning programs help students deal with the pressures of school life and personal challenges.

Every learner has unique needs, and we are committed to providing the necessary assistance to help each student thrive. This includes differentiated instruction — teaching in a way that meets the requirements and interests of students using varied course content, activities and assessments — and tailored support from the Learning Enhancement Team.

We aim to assist our students to understand the ‘why’ behind their education. They are not just learning set content because they must; they are learning because they recognise the importance of education for their personal growth, future aspirations and contribution to society. An inspiring educational environment will provide students with the opportunity to gain a global perspective and encourages them to connect their learning with personal actions that can make a difference in their community.

An inspiring education is one that creates a supportive, inclusive and stimulating environment where students are inspired to reach their full potential, not only academically but in all aspects of their lives. Here, we emphasise the development of character, creativity and resilience, preparing students not just for seven years of Primary Education, but for life.

**Ms Alisha Dyer**  
Head of Primary

## CLASS OF 2024

## CONGRATULATIONS

**Well done Year 12! We are very proud of your achievements and the wonderful results you have attained in the HSC, with outstanding individual successes across a diverse range of subjects. More importantly, we celebrate the thoughtful, compassionate, and outward-looking individuals you have become – ready to make a positive impact in the world.**

Your HSC results reflect not only your efforts but also the support and collaboration of parents, teachers and peers along the way. Thank you for the lasting contributions you have made to the life and culture of Newcastle Grammar School.

**Congratulations to Samuel Rowland who achieved an ATAR of 98.5, Zoe Weddin 98.35, William Jeffery 97.95, Thomas McGrath 97.75 and Ava Horn 97.05.**

Mitchell Franks was named on the NSW All-Rounders list, meaning he received a score of 90% or higher in at least 10 course units. Mitchell studied English Advanced, Geography, Mathematics Standard 2, Modern History, PDHPE and Business Studies (accelerated in Year 11). Samuel Rowland was named as a Top Achiever for Engineering Studies which means he was in the top 20 students in New South Wales.

Some subjects have a practical component called Major Works. Across various disciplines, our students have produced some wonderful projects. Congratulations to Maya Agostino-Morrow, Lachlan Dunning, Lauren O'Reilly, Mika Pace, Catherine Stanley, Olivia Wildschut and Jade Willis whose works were nominated as outstanding. These results reflect diligence, planning, research, creativity and the significant time invested throughout their senior year.

**Please scan the QR code below to view all Major Works.**

Year 11 students participating in the NGS Acceleration Program (undertaking a Year 12 subject whilst in Year 11) also achieved outstanding results: 14 students in Advanced Mathematics, 13 students in Business Studies and 10 students in Extension 1 Mathematics achieved a Band 6 (a mark of 90-100).

More than half of the Year 12 cohort received early entry offers across a range of industries and universities.

Congratulations Class of 2024; we wish you every success for the future.

**Mrs Leanne Lynch**

Head of Curriculum Administration



**Scan the QR code to view all Major Works.**

## NOMINATIONS

**English Extension 2**

*Young Writers Showcase Nomination – Mika Pace*

**Visual Arts**

*ArtExpress Nomination – Jade Willis*

*First Class 24 Art Exhibition Selection – Lachlan Dunning and Mika Pace*

**Drama**

*OnSTAGE Individual Performance Nomination – Olivia Wildschut*

*OnSTAGE Group Performance Nomination – Maya Agostino-Morrow, Lauren O'Reilly, Catherine Stanley and Olivia Wildschut*

## HIGHLIGHTS

**Over 40%**

of students received an ATAR of 90 and above

**One student made the All-Round Achievers list**

(obtaining 90% or more in at least 10 course units).

**Top ATAR**

The top ATAR was 98.5

**Eight students**

were nominated for HSC Major Works and Performances

**Median ATAR**

The median ATAR was 87.5

## ATARS ABOVE 95



**ATAR Dux**  
**Samuel Rowland** 98.50  
Top Achiever Engineering  
Studies 98%



**School Dux**  
**Zoe Weddin** 98.35



**William Jeffery** 97.95



**Thomas McGrath** 97.75



**Ava Horn** 97.05



**Mitchell Franks** 96.95  
All-round Achiever



**Lucy Nightingale** 96.70



**Jade Willis** 96.40  
High Achiever  
Visual Arts 96%  
Nomination: *ArtExpress*



**Madeline Nelson** 95.35

## NOMINATIONS AND HIGH ACHIEVERS\*



**Mika Pace**  
High Achiever  
English Extension 2 49/50  
Nomination: *Young Writers  
Showcase First Class  
24 Exhibition*



**Lachlan Dunning**  
Nomination: *First Class  
24 Art Exhibition*



**Siena Latham**  
High Achiever  
Year 11 Accelerated Student  
Mathematics  
Advanced 96%



**Barnabas Toth**  
High Achiever  
Year 11 Accelerated  
Student Mathematics  
Advanced 96%  
Mathematics Extension 1  
49/50



**Maya Agostino-Morrow**  
Nomination: *OnSTAGE  
Group Performance*



**Lauren O'Reilly**  
Nomination: *OnSTAGE  
Group Performance*



**Catherine Stanley**  
Nomination: *OnSTAGE  
Group Performance*



**Olivia Wildschut**  
Nomination: *OnSTAGE Group  
Performance  
OnSTAGE Individual  
Performance*

\* **All-round Achievers** – students who obtain 90% or higher in at least ten course units.  
**Top Achievers** – students who obtain a placing in the top 20 in the State for their course.



# CLASS OF 2024

# CHERISH THE MEMORIES

**With lessons completed, achievements recognised and a fun final week, family and friends gathered to celebrate the Year 12 Class of 2024. This moment marked not just the end of their schooling, but the beginning of a new chapter filled with endless possibilities and exciting adventures.**

The past years have been a tapestry of experiences, woven with threads of hard work, perseverance and camaraderie. From their first day filled with nervous excitement, to the confident strides taken in Year 12, our students have grown in ways that are both profound and inspiring. They have faced challenges head-on, overcome failures, celebrated victories and learned invaluable lessons that will guide them in the years to come.

The memories created within these walls are innumerable. From lively classroom debates to the laughter shared during lunchtimes, every moment has contributed to the unique fabric of our School community. The effort on sporting fields, curiosity

and creativity fostered through cultural pursuits and academic outcomes reflect the students' resolve and determination. These experiences have not only shaped the academic journey but have also forged lifelong friendships and a sense of belonging and inclusivity.

Throughout their time at Newcastle Grammar School, our students have learned more than just academic content. They have discovered the centrality of relationships — that other people matter. Through facing challenges and overcoming struggles inside and outside of the classroom, they have developed resilience, become inclusive and empathetic and employed the power of collaboration. They have learned the benefit of what Aristotle describes as the path to true happiness, or eudaimonia. The happiness that comes not from external achievements, but from living a life of values, making meaningful connections and striving to be the best version of themselves. Our graduates have learned to embrace each challenge as an opportunity to grow and pursue a flourishing life.

These lessons, often learned outside the confines of textbooks and classrooms, will serve as their compass as they navigate the complexities of the future.

As our graduates step into the world beyond the School gates, they carry with them the hopes and dreams of their families, teachers and the entire School community. Some will pursue higher education, diving deeper into their chosen fields of study. Others will take gap years, exploring new cultures and gaining life experiences that broaden their perspectives. Meanwhile, some will enter the workforce, eager to apply their skills and talents to make a difference.

The future is a vast landscape waiting to be explored. It is a place where our graduates will encounter new opportunities, face unforeseen challenges and continue to learn and grow. There has never been a more exciting time to be a young person growing in maturity and independence ready to explore their world. With the foundation they have built at Newcastle Grammar School, supported by their families, friends and teachers, they are well-equipped to navigate this journey with confidence, style and grace.

As we bid farewell to the Year 12 Class of 2024, we do so with immense pride and heartfelt wishes for their future. May they always remember the lessons learned, cherish the memories made and embrace the adventures that lie ahead. As a School community, we are richer for having had the opportunity to share in your stories.

Congratulations graduates — may your future be as bright and boundless as your dreams.

**Dr Alan Parsons**  
Deputy Head of School







Scan the QR code  
to view the Class of 2024  
Clapout video.





# UNION STREET BUILDING INSPIRED BY THE LAND

**As part of our commitment to honouring the heritage and culture of the Awabakal and Worimi people, Newcastle Grammar School engaged in a Connecting to Country process for the new Union Street Building at Park Campus under the NSW State Government Guidelines.**

This initiative ensured that our School community, including both staff and students, became more aware of, and connected to, the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, learn and play. The process began with presentations by renowned local artist, Saretta Fielding, an award-winning Aboriginal artist of the Wonnarua Nation of the Hunter, who has grown up, worked and been a part of the Awabakal community her entire life. Saretta shared insights into the rich customs of the Awabakal people, the native animals of the area and traditional uses of the land. This allowed our community to gain a greater appreciation of the land's significance, respecting the history and importance of Aboriginal culture.

As an extension of this knowledge-sharing, Saretta, alongside Aunty Gloria, hosted a series of workshops with our students. Providing hands-on opportunities to engage with Aboriginal art symbols, they created pieces that reflected their understanding and respect for Aboriginal customs. Through guided exercises, the students explored storytelling through art, learning to convey connection to the land and its natural features.

The culmination of these activities is a striking digital artwork, representing the shared journey of learning and respect undertaken by our School community. This final design will be featured in Park and Hill Campus building projects in the years to come, serving as a lasting tribute to the Awabakal and Worimi people and an everyday reminder of our commitment to reconciliation and cultural respect.

**Mrs Amy Falconer**

Head of Operations and Development K-6







# ACTIVITIES WEEK FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

**Week 7 of Term 4 was packed with excitement for our Primary students, offering a mix of fun, fitness and creativity to end the term on a high. The week was designed to ensure students across all year levels had a range of enriching experiences. While students enjoyed a whirlwind of memorable and engaging activities, our Primary staff began preparing for the big move to Park Campus, where K-6 students are united in a single location.**

The Athletics Carnival was a highlight for Kindergarten and Year 1 students. Little athletes ran, jumped and cheered for their peers, showcasing incredible energy and team spirit.

For Kindergarten to Year 2 students, a trip to Kids World Indoor Play Centre brought endless laughter as they tackled climbing frames, slides, and ball pits (whilst also building friendships and developing collaboration skills).

Students in Years 3 to 6 took part in masterclasses, exploring everything from creative arts and yoga to an escape room challenge and STEAM workshops. Older students also joined leadership sessions that will serve them well into the future.

Excursions added another layer of excitement, including a visit to the Museum of Art and Culture where students were captivated by contemporary and Indigenous exhibitions, with interactive activities drawing plenty of enthusiasm.

Music played a central role in the week, with 100 students from Years 3 and 4 participating in a ukulele incursion. From learning basic chords and strumming techniques, to some students performing short songs together, the sessions were filled with burgeoning musical talent.

Springloaded (gym and active play facility) was a hit, with students

bouncing on trampolines and conquering obstacle courses. Meanwhile, pool days provided the perfect way to cool off, sharpen swimming skills and enjoy water games with friends. Some students also enjoyed a trip to the movies to see *Moana 2* or *Runt*.

For enthusiastic problem-solvers, World of Maths and Science incursions proved a success, sparking curiosity and teamwork in hands-on STEM activities.

None of this would have been possible without our amazing staff, who worked tirelessly to create such a safe and memorable week. With laughter, learning and countless special moments, Week 7 was a resounding success!

**Mrs Amy Falconer**

Head of Operations and Development K-6









# OUTDOOR ADVENTURE COLLABORATION, CONFIDENCE, CONNECTION

**Nature's classroom awaits through the NGS Outdoor Adventure Program. Students are immersed in the rugged beauty of nature, whether navigating forests, conquering peaks or paddling rivers. These experiences challenge individuals and forge bonds with fellow adventurers. Students conquer fears, encounter challenges, embrace the elements and return with a deeper understanding of the world and their place in it.**

## **Stage 3**

Year 5 and 6 students experienced an unforgettable camp at CCC Central Coast, where they were treated to glorious weather and a wide range of exciting adventures. The sunny days added to the enjoyment, as students immersed themselves in nature and took on challenges that encouraged teamwork and personal growth.

The camp was packed with activities designed to challenge and inspire. Rock climbing tested students' strength and resilience, while the trampoline bungee allowed them to soar into the air and experience weightlessness. Canoeing was a hit, with students learning to navigate the water and work together to keep their boats on course. Orienteering developed navigational skills and teamwork as the groups worked to find their way through a mapped course. BMX riding provided an adrenaline rush as fears were overcome, and bushwalking, laser tag and bush cooking created opportunities for the development of essential outdoor survival skills.



The evenings offered a perfect blend of relaxation and engagement. On the first night, students had the choice between watching the State of Origin or enjoying a movie night, allowing everyone to unwind after a day of physical activity. The final evening was particularly special, where students learnt about First Nations culture and history, followed by a lively trivia competition to test their knowledge.

Throughout the camp, students displayed leadership, helped one another, encouraged peers and tackled new challenges with enthusiasm. The experiences not only strengthened friendships but provided invaluable opportunities to connect with the outdoors, build resilience and create memories that will last a lifetime.

## **Stage 2**

Year 3 and 4 students enjoyed the Great Aussie Bush Camp at Tea Gardens as part of the Outdoor Education Program. Their days were filled with adventure, skill-building and teamwork with the camp offering an array of engaging activities including archery, bushwalking, canoeing, fossil hunting, a giant swing, high ropes, low ropes and orienteering. Each activity challenged the students in different ways, encouraging them to develop resilience, bravery and a sense of accomplishment.

Archery sessions were a highlight, where students demonstrated their focus and precision as they aimed for the bullseye. For the high ropes course, courage and persistence were essential





as they scaled the climbing frame, pushing them out of their comfort zone, while low ropes tested balance, bravery and trust in one another. Orienteering required critical thinking and teamwork, as groups navigated through trails. Canoeing on the calm waters provided a mix of tranquillity and cooperation as students paddled in pairs. The giant swing was a thrilling test of courage as they soared through the air, cheered on by friends. Fossicking offered a hands-on experience, allowing students to tap into their curiosity.

To conclude the adventure-filled camp, students participated in the County Fair which had them bursting with excitement and laughter, no doubt making memories that will last a long time. These enriching experiences help to build essential life skills, form closer friendships and build self-confidence, all in the beauty of the great outdoors.

### Thank You

A huge thank you to the dedicated staff who worked tirelessly to prepare and organise these wonderful camp experiences – from planning the schedule and coordinating the activities, to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every student – their commitment was evident at every step along the way. Their efforts made it possible for students to enjoy each challenge, grow in confidence and connect with their peers in a positive setting. We're incredibly grateful for their hard work, enthusiasm, support and dedication.

### Mrs Amy Falconer

Head of Operations and Development K-6





# ICAS: RECOGNISING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

**ICAS (International Competitions and Assessments for Schools) is a global academic competition in an online environment, engaging over 10 million students from more than 16,000 schools across 41 countries. The competition features thought-provoking questions designed by psychometricians, education experts and experienced teachers.**

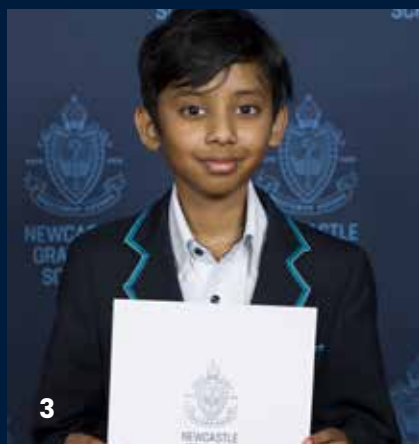
The results provide valuable insights into a student's strengths and areas for improvement. Our teachers use this feedback to help students accelerate their learning and identify key areas to focus on to foster their growth. This year, 55 Primary students from Years 2 to 6 undertook assessments in six areas: English, Digital Technologies, Mathematics, Science, Spelling and Writing.

Congratulations to the students who received an impressive 48 Distinction certificates. A special congratulations to Seth Withanage who was awarded an ICAS Medal for his outstanding achievement in Mathematics. The following students received a High Distinction certificate, placing them in top one percent of participants.

- Harper Cui – High Distinction in Mathematics, Year 4.
- Abrielle Hazell – High Distinction in Spelling, Year 5.
- Jessie Horn – High Distinction in English, Year 6.
- Kian Lim – High Distinction in Science and Mathematics, Year 6.
- Zara Rahman – High Distinction in Mathematics, Year 4.
- Eran Withanage – High Distinction in English, Year 3.
- Seth Withanage – High Distinction in Digital Technologies and an ICAS Medal in Mathematics, Year 6.
- Steven Zhao – High Distinction in Mathematics, Year 6.



## MATHEMATICIAN IN THE MAKING



**Year 6 student, Seth Withanage, enjoyed great success in a number of Mathematics competitions in 2024.**

Seth received a medal in the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) Mathematics Competition, which means he achieved the highest score in the region. He also placed second in the Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition, which had over 15,000 entrants from more than 300 schools across regional New South Wales.

Additionally, Seth performed well in other ICAS competitions, earning a High Distinction in Digital Technologies and a Distinction in Science and Spelling. Congratulations, Seth, on a wonderful year of learning.

1. High achieving ICAS awardees Years 3 and 4.
2. High achieving ICAS awardees Years 5 and 6.
3. Seth Withanage (Year 6)



# NEWCASTLE PERMANENT PRIMARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS COMPETITION 2024

Each year, the brightest young minds from across the Hunter Region come together for the Newcastle Permanent Primary School Mathematics Competition.

The competition's major award winners were celebrated at the Newcastle Permanent Centre of Excellence. Our students achieved outstanding results, with Seth Withanage achieving second place in the Year 6 Division and Steven Zhao placing third. In the Year 5 Division, Kian Lim was awarded joint second place. Year 4 student, Zara Rahman, achieved a District Award for her hard work and problem solving abilities. Overall, Newcastle Grammar School students were awarded 16 High Distinction and 45 Distinction certificates.

We are delighted with the achievements of our young mathematicians and are inspired by their desire to continue learning and developing important skills for the future.

**Ms Belinda Nichols**

Deputy Head of Primary and Head of Learning and Teaching K-6



Newcastle Permanent awardees Zara Rahman (Year 4), Kian Lim, Seth Withanage and Steven Zhao (Year 6).



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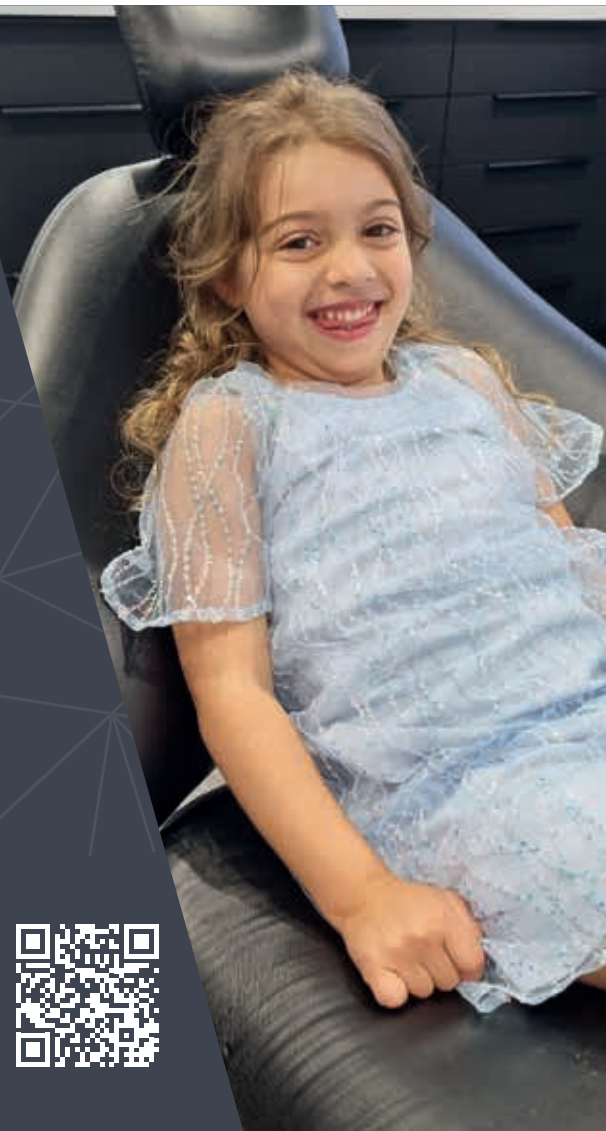
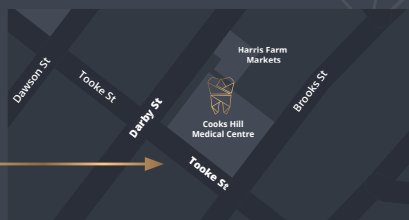
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# LEARNING ENHANCEMENT

**From curiosity springs wonder, research and innovative ideas that nurture Problem Solving and Critical and Creative Thinking Skills, essential for navigating the complexities of life.**

The Learning Enhancement Program offers students the chance to develop higher-order thinking skills and expand their knowledge. Newcastle Grammar School offers a variety of pathways to expand and develop these skills, both in the classroom, in specialist lessons and through co-curricular experiences. Students from Kindergarten to Year 9 have participated in a number of such activities this year. Through hands-on projects and thought-provoking challenges, students have engaged deeply in English, Mathematics and individual projects, helping them explore their unique strengths and interests.

## **Mathematical Adventures: Exploring Zeno's Paradox and the Ulam Spiral**

In Mathematics, we delved into intriguing concepts that challenged students' thinking and problem-solving skills. Recently, our Year 3 and 4 students explored Zeno's Paradox, where they engaged with abstract ideas about infinity and motion. They also investigated the Ulam Spiral, discovering fascinating patterns within prime numbers. These topics not only encourage mathematical exploration, but also foster critical thinking and perseverance.

Year 1 and 2 students enjoyed participating in activities from Mary Ann Carr's book *The Great Chocolate Caper: A Mystery That Teaches Logic Skills*, which is designed to enhance their reasoning and evidence-gathering skills. In the activities, students learn to make informed assumptions based on supporting evidence they uncover through clue analysis, working systematically to solve a challenging scenario.

Seeing wonder and curiosity develop as the students progress in their understanding is such a joy.

## **HICES Gifted and Talented Camp**

In Term 3, 10 Year 6 students attended the Heads of Independent Co-Educational Schools (HICES) Gifted and Talented Camp, which was held at the AGH campsite, Douglas Park, south of Sydney, and included students from 20 different HICES schools from around NSW.

"We had such a great experience meeting new people and pushing each other out of our comfort zone. We did lots of activities such as a mathematics challenge, engineering and writing as well as outdoor activities." – Hermione Folpp and Dassaniya Dani (Year 6).

## **Silver Medals for Junior Eth-letes**

Teams from Years 5 and 6 proudly represented NGS at the Ethics Olympiad, competing against other teams from around

Australasia, discussing topics such as friendship, caring for the environment and technology. Congratulations to the Year 5 team (Ari Alexander, Jake Avery, Arianna Stephen, Olive McKay and Mary Johnson) who placed fifth overall and the Year 6 team (Jessie Horn, Alex Cowan, John-Carlo Olivares-Green, Max Liang and Eve Taylor) who placed second overall and received silver medals.

## **Future Problem Solving**

2024 saw the largest number of NGS students involved in the Future Problem Solving program to date, with 48 entering this year from Years 5 to 9. Congratulations to all who participated in this academically challenging program, with special mention to the following students on their achievement at National Finals:

- Matilda Dyer (Year 9) – First in group writing at the on-site competition and first nationally in Scenario Performance.
- Poppy Kinnane (Year 8) – Second nationally in Scenario Writing.
- Emma Murphy (Year 5) – Fourth nationally in Scenario Writing.
- Arianna Stephen (Year 5) – First nationally in Scenario Writing.

Following the National Finals, Matilda, Poppy and Arianna have been invited to represent Australia at the International competition to be held in the USA in June 2025.

The collaboration, enthusiasm and teamwork displayed throughout the year in competitions and classrooms has been exceptional. Well done to all students for your effort, curiosity and out-of-the-box thinking!

**Mrs Jessica Parsonage**  
Enrichment Teacher K-8

**Mrs Tracy Pickford**  
Enrichment Teacher K-8



Emily Hayes, Sofie Halland and Sanjitha Chitragar (Year 6)



# SECONDARY ACCELERATION PROGRAM

**Whilst most students in Year 9 are enjoying the freedom of studying Mathematics at a comfortable pace and level of challenge, there are some students who learn the coursework for both Years 9 and 10 in one year. Why would they choose to do this? Because they LOVE Mathematics. They thrive on it. They are equipped, both emotionally and cognitively, for the challenge of studying more sophisticated concepts, at a much faster pace.**

Many Year 10 students do not think about their senior subject selections until late in Term 3, however, some embark on their Year 11 courses in Business Studies and Biology early. These students have been accepted into the Acceleration Program because they have demonstrated sophisticated writing skills, interest in the subject and show self-regulation and maturity to seek critical feedback from their teachers.

Biology is a new addition to the Acceleration Program at Newcastle Grammar School and the first group of Year 10s completed the Year 11 course in 2024. Common traits amongst these students are evident; they all share a passion for biological science, they are self-motivated and they are ready to learn independently at a more rapid pace. For 2025, we have expanded the Acceleration Program to include Studies of Religion 1.

Alumnus, Connor Henderson (Class of 2019), was one of the beneficiaries of the NGS Acceleration Program. He studied HSC Mathematics Advanced and Extension 1 while he was in Year 11 and upon completion of Year 12, he commenced a Bachelor of Secondary Education and Science (Mathematics/Physics) at the University of New South Wales.



*Accelerated Mathematics students, Molly Boyle, Mitchell Chung and Annabelle Miller (Year 11)*

Assistant Head of STEM, Ms Andrea Ferguson, sat down with Connor to gauge his experience of the acceleration opportunity and the impact it had on his future.

## **Why did you want to study the Acceleration Program?**

I initially wanted to take this opportunity for the benefit of freeing up my workload for Year 12. The secondary advantage, which I found to be more prominent than I expected, was instilling a good work ethic and applications in other STEM subjects. Studying the Acceleration Program allowed me to access a range of post-HSC choices.

## **What was the most daunting or difficult aspect of studying accelerated Mathematics?**

The most daunting part was that I was never the top student in Mathematics, so I doubted myself. I sometimes felt like the content didn't come to me as easily as other students. The more I reflect on my time in the program, the more I realise that the program isn't designed (necessarily) for the most capable Mathematics students, but for those who are motivated to work hard and get ahead early.

## **What were the main benefits of studying accelerated Mathematics?**

One of the most challenging components that turned out to be the biggest benefit of the program was juggling HSC subjects with Preliminary

(Year 11) subjects. This was a very busy time in my schooling, but it gave me a fantastic trial run of the HSC process and an invaluable sense of perspective.

## **What advice do you have for students considering this path of study?**

I highly recommend it! If you are like me (perhaps not the top student), I would recommend it even more. The Acceleration Program instilled in me a positive attitude to study, a strong work ethic and this definitely shaped my career. It is a challenging process but was the most rewarding decision of my high school experience.

## **What advantages does acceleration provide to students?**

Acceleration provides high-performing students with a level of challenge and pace of learning more suited to their interests and needs in a supportive environment. It provides them with the chance to pursue an area of interest at a higher level, developing a deeper understanding of more complex concepts in areas they are already familiar with and passionate about. Accelerated students often develop strong bonds with their classmates, building a sense of confidence and cohesion that supports success. Acceleration can also support a student's social and emotional development, building a sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

**Ms Andrea Ferguson**  
Assistant Head of STEM

# INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENTS

**In 2024, Mia Kearney, Year 11, was presented with the opportunity to be the Member for Newcastle, at NSW Youth Parliament. This advocacy program enables participants to engage in leadership, policy development and democracy through the writing of parliamentary bills, which are then debated and presented to politicians.**

When she first considered applying for the role, Mia says she felt a mixture of excitement and apprehension, wondering whether she had what it took. "The idea of representing the young people in my area and contributing to such important discussions sounded amazing, yet daunting," she said. She accepted the position and found that being surrounded by so many amazing people, with incredible life

stories was somewhat intimidating. Mia said, "Balancing my schoolwork, four parliamentary meetings a week, interviews with politicians, writing our committee bill and attempting to have some sort of social life, required me to be brave and to persevere."

She presented her advice to other students at an assembly, including, "Sometimes being brave is as simple as saying yes to an opportunity, even when you're scared. So, whatever challenges you're facing, whatever goals you want to achieve, don't let fear hold you back. Be brave, have courage and face the unknown." Wise words, Mia!

Later in the year, Mia was asked to join an international charity operating in East Timor and a student-run charity



Mia Kearney (Year 11) with  
The Hon Jodie Harrison MP

that tutors underprivileged youth with limited access to resources.

She also had the amazing honour of speaking to politicians and conducting interviews with them. She met with The Hon Jodie Harrison MP, Member of the Legislative Assembly, Member for Charlestown, Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and Member of the Australian Labor Party. What an incredible year, exemplifying service to the community.

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Sadie Smart, Year 11, was one of only 26 students honoured by Her Excellency, The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales, at Government House in October 2024. She was presented with a Youth Community Service Award for exceptional engagement with the local community.

Sadie has a strong commitment to serving disadvantaged communities, both local and international. Her journey began at Soul Hub, a local organisation that supports disadvantaged people, where she served coffee and engaged in conversation with customers outside school hours several days a week. She fosters a sense of empathy in these interactions and has developed an understanding of their kindness and resilience under trying circumstances.

One elderly man who walks a distance to Soul Hub daily told her of his brother, a WWII veteran, who struggles to attend the Anzac Day service in Sydney each year. Sadie travelled to Sydney herself and attended the service to support and help him through the day.



Sadie Smart (Year 11) with Her Excellency, The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC QC, Governor of New South Wales.

She also volunteers regularly at Sunday Community Lunches run by NGS and Christ Church Cathedral, serving meals to people in need. Additionally, she participated in the School's Vietnam trip, organising and leading art classes for the students at the Long Hai school. These service experiences

have influenced her to pursue tertiary education in Law and Psychology so she can continue to assist the vulnerable in society more effectively through humanitarian law and legal aid avenues. Sadie, you exemplify the RISE values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence. Well done!



Siena Latham (Year 11).

Siena Latham, Year 11, was selected to participate in the 2024 NSW Schools Constitutional Convention held at NSW Parliament House in Sydney. Celebrating its 30th year, the event saw nearly 100 students from across the state engage in workshops and discussions that encouraged critical thinking around the topic 'Limits on freedom of political expression'. Applicants were required to describe a piece of legislation they would like passed by the Parliament of NSW and explain why they wanted to attend the NSW Schools Constitutional Convention. Congratulations, Siena, for making the most of this incredible opportunity.

## STAFF FEATURE



The excellence continues in our staff and we are pleased to share that Mr Drew Collins, Geography Teacher and Director of Operations and Experiential Learning at NGS, was recognised for his contribution to the Geography Teachers Association NSW & ACT and received an Outstanding Professional Service Award (OPSA).

Congratulations, Mr Collins – we are grateful for all you do at NGS!

“... you exemplify the RISE values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence. Well done!”

## YEAR 12 GRADUATION

# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

**The Class of 2024 enjoyed a wonderful evening of dancing, celebration and reflection at their Graduation Dinner.**

Head of School, Mr Matt Macoustra, set the tone of gratitude by thanking parents and carers for their support throughout the year. He encouraged the graduates to embrace the adventure of life and assured them they would always be a part of the School community. "I truly hope that your time at Newcastle Grammar School has been more than just academic content – I hope that you have discovered the importance of resilience, the power of collaboration and the value of empathy."

The School Captains, Olivia Prickett and Thomas McGrath, acknowledged the NGS staff for their unwavering support, noting that the powerful relationship between teacher and student goes beyond academics – teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the character of their students.

Head of Languages and Literacy, Mr Andrew Back, spoke on behalf of the teaching staff and highlighted the privilege of watching students grow and flourish during their time at NGS.

Students Ava Horn and Luke Talley thanked parents and carers for all their support over 13 years of education. "From the very beginning, you've been there: packing our lunch boxes, tying our shoelaces, and keeping track of which days were for which uniforms. Your patience, love and unwavering belief in us have shaped us into who we are today, and for that, we will forever be grateful. We truly appreciate you and we will carry your support with us as we step into the next chapter of our lives. You have celebrated our wins and helped us through our challenges."

NGS father of five, Dr Minas Petrelis, whose youngest son, Arthur, graduated with the 2024 cohort, expressed heartfelt emotion on behalf of the parents. "Thank you to all the teachers

for your unwavering support and guidance to help our children achieve their goals, pursue their interests and grow as individuals. Thank you for creating a safe space where students can take risks and explore their potential." He encouraged the students to let their character, integrity, curiosity and hard work define their future.

It was then time to dance!

The Year 12 Graduation was a jubilant celebration of achievement, the closing chapter of a memorable journey and a hopeful look towards the future.

Congratulations and farewell Class of 2024.







# AN UNFORGETTABLE ADVENTURE

# ROUND SQUARE

# COLOMBIA

**In September, five adventurous Newcastle Grammar School students embarked on a journey of a lifetime to attend The Round Square International Conference in Colombia, South America. This unique opportunity began with vibrant pre-conference activities in the historic city of Cartagena, nestled on the Caribbean coast. One of the highlights was a visit to Castillo de San Felipe de Barajas, a 16<sup>th</sup>-century fortress built by the Spaniards, which provided a treasure trove of stories featuring pirates, gold and revolutionary uprisings and displayed fascinating artifacts from the Spanish Inquisition and the African slave trade.**

Students prepared traditional Colombian dishes, danced to the rhythm of salsa, explored vibrant street art, sailed on a replica pirate ship and cruised to nearby islands for swimming and snorkelling. They immersed themselves in the rich culture of the vibrant city, spotting monkeys and sloths in the trees and savouring local delicacies like arepas (a type of flatbread), fried fish, mango biche (a common street food where unripe green mangoes are served with salt) and patacones (fried green plantains).

This incredible introduction set the tone for student-led activities in and around the bustling capital of Bogotá, where students experienced the warmth of Colombian hospitality by staying with local host families. The Grand Opening Ceremony welcomed nearly 1,000 participants from over 60 countries to the 56<sup>th</sup> Round Square International Conference, the first held in South America. A lively marching band played as participants entered the auditorium, and the first keynote speaker shared inspiring insights into the struggles and successes of Colombia's peace process.

The NGS delegation then travelled to the picturesque town of Paipa, Boyacá, about three hours from the capital, for a four-night stay. Each day was filled with meaningful service activities such as replanting native trees, and constructing sustainable chicken coops, to beautifying small villages with stunning murals. Witnessing the impact of mining and deforestation firsthand gave our students a profound understanding of the challenges of sustainable land management in a developing country.

Evenings were spent listening to captivating guest speakers from diverse backgrounds, followed by student-led baraza groups (the coming together of different people) where the day's activities and key takeaways were discussed. Upon the return to Bogotá, participants were greeted by a festive carnival atmosphere at the Anglo Colombian School for the Conference Closing Ceremony and final activities. It was difficult to farewell new friends from around the world, but some of those connections will last a lifetime.

In the few remaining hours, the group took a breathtaking cable car ride to the Sanctuary of Monserrate sitting 3,000 metres above sea level, where they gazed out over the twinkling lights of Bogotá.

It was a magical end to a memorable and rewarding trip. I encourage all students to take up the opportunity to attend a Round Square International Conference at least once in their schooling life — your life will be forever changed.

**Mr Simon Halpin**  
STEM Teacher





# ROUND SQUARE AT NGS BRINGING IDEALS TO LIFE



**The Round Square committee at Newcastle Grammar School has had a dynamic year, bringing the IDEALS of Internationalism, Democracy, Environmentalism, Adventure, Leadership and Service into the daily lives of our students. With the dedication of staff and our entire Kindergarten to Year 12 community, Round Square initiatives have continued to expand and inspire, fostering a culture of service and global citizenship across all year levels.**

One example of this is our Year 9 students engaging in a variety of hands-on activities – from hearing first-hand accounts of local heroes to collaborative challenges across the Newcastle region – students embraced the opportunity to see these values in action. A standout initiative was the winter donation drive for those in need, which saw students rallying community support by collecting essential supplies that were gratefully received by a local women's shelter. This act of service was a practical response to community needs while also serving as a profound learning experience for students, highlighting the impact of compassion and generosity in action.

The commitment to student voice has been equally impactful. Weekly assemblies and the Student Voice blog, managed by Round Square leaders, offered platforms for students to share ideas, reflect on experiences and bring Round Square values to the forefront of school life. By amplifying student perspectives and encouraging open dialogue, Round Square has fostered a space for students to shape their community and celebrate their peers' contributions.

On the international stage, NGS continued its meaningful partnership with Barker College, with students from both schools attending the Round Square International Conference 2024 (RSIC24) in Colombia. Pre-conference meetings with students from other Round Square schools were instrumental in building connections and developing confidence, allowing students to connect with a broader network and experience the IDEALS in a global context. We also hosted online international 'Postcard' Conferences where students led discussions on a number of different topics, including *Unmuting Voices for the Future*, *Youth in the Age of New Technology* and a History lab on significant figures from the past.



In a first for NGS, in 2024 we offered domestic Year 8 Exchanges, which involved two of our students travelling to Scotch College in Perth and another two to Kinross Wolaroi School in Orange. We also hosted students from these schools in return, providing invaluable experiences for all. We plan to expand this to further domestic and international opportunities for our students in the future.

To continue Round Square's presence across Kindergarten to Year 12, NGS is supporting the development of a specific Primary Leadership Program and providing more service opportunities for our younger years. With these efforts, we will continue to empower students and staff, cultivating engaged and compassionate global citizens.

The spirit of Round Square has been evident in Primary, seen through the 'Worldwide Show and Tell' initiative, with Year 3 students taking pride in sharing elements of life in Newcastle and presenting on celebrations from around the world. This program has created an enriching opportunity for our younger students to connect with peers internationally by introducing them to the Round Square community at an early age and sparking curiosity about cultures beyond their own.

As we reflect on the growth and increased involvement of our students, it is clear that Round Square is more than just a program—it is a foundation for service, leadership, action and a shared commitment to making a positive difference in our world.

**Mrs Samantha Jones**

Assistant Head of Global Studies



# 2025 SENIOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM INDUCTION

**Congratulations to the Senior Student Leadership (SLT) Team for 2025, who were welcomed into their respective roles in a special ceremony at Christ Church Cathedral.**

The Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer, Dean of Newcastle, spoke about the heart of true leadership being an expression of kindness, compassion and dedication, encouraging each student to strive to bring out the best in each other. By doing so, they can contribute to making the Newcastle Grammar School community the best it can be.

Head of School, Mr Matt Macoustra, officially admitted 31 students into the SLT Team and encouraged them to make the most of this opportunity to contribute to the culture of NGS. He reiterated the importance of servant-leadership stating, "When you make others the focus of all that you do, the benefits will be extraordinary!"



## THE 2025 SENIOR STUDENT LEADERSHIP TEAM

### **School Captains:**

Molly Boyle and Shanuk Wickremaratchy

### **School Vice Captains:**

Jack Martin and Shilpi Salaria

### **Senior Prefects:**

Mitchell Chung and Claudia Wills

### **House Captains:**

Hunter – Zane Gusmerini and Sadie Smart  
Macquarie – Jasper Lance and Annabelle Miller  
Shortland – Josie Doyle and Daniel Richardson  
Tyrrell – Molly McCauley and James White

### **Sports Prefects:**

Zara Campbell and Zahli Ginns

### **Wellbeing Prefects:**

Julian Feltrin and Charlotte Knauer

### **Senior Musicians:**

Samuel Lane, Elyshia Lodge and Lucinda Mott

### **Round Square Chairs:**

Mia Kearney and Diya Nookala

### **Community Prefects:**

William Bird, Flynn Chaston, Henry Chaston, Zoe Fielden, Siena Latham, Charlotte Old, Lucienne Roberts and Amy Webster



# HOUSE SPIRIT

## MACQUARIE TERM: CHARACTER

**Our motto for the term came from the great blues singer, B.B. King: "The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." We explored how to be good at learning and life to be the best version of ourselves.**

Macquarie House launched the next series of the term focus topics, highlighting the dimensions of Deep Learning as a way of reframing the way we see education. Deep Learning is predicated on the premise that good learning practices can help build resilience and positive mental health. It is the combination of learning and

humanity at its best. This framework is also inextricably linked to our School values, Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence and the NGS Visible Wellbeing approach.

Secondary students were challenged to try a new skill and to map their progress throughout the term. This all led to a whole-of-campus salsa dancing lesson

on Macquarie Day where students and staff joined in to learn this fun new skill together! We celebrated with a traditional barbeque and cake stall which raised over \$4,000 for our chosen charities – Wall of Hands and the School's Vietnam Project.

**Ms Sally Wood**

Macquarie Head of House 10-12



## SHORTLAND TERM: COMMUNICATION

**In Term 4, Shortland House embarked on a rich and meaningful journey centred on the theme of Communication. Students explored how communication shapes relationships, fosters understanding and builds a stronger community.**

Lifeline, the selected charity for the term, perfectly embodies this theme through its emphasis on listening and providing support to those in crisis. To actively support this vital cause, Shortland students organised a thoughtful fundraising campaign that also brought attention to the importance of active listening and mental health awareness – a powerful reminder that listening is not just an act of kindness, it is a crucial skill for building empathy, fostering connections and creating a supportive community.

Term 4 concluded with a vibrant celebration on Shortland House Day.

Featuring an *Alice in Wonderland* theme, the day symbolised the magic of meaningful interactions and the joy of shared experiences. The colourful costumes and imaginative atmosphere served as a reminder of how communication can bring people together, fostering a sense of belonging and unity. Throughout the day, moments of connection took centre stage, whether through heartfelt donations, shared laughter over lunch, or the dynamic music performances by students and staff.

Shortland's exploration of communication throughout the term encouraged students to consider the ways they connect with one another and the broader world. Several activities brought this theme to life, including the creation of Teacher Appreciation messages, organised as part of World Teachers' Day. These messages provided an opportunity for students to reflect on the positive impact teachers have had on their lives and to articulate their feelings in a meaningful way.



Amelia Eissa, Madeline Healy and Sienna Anstead, Year 7, on World Teachers' Day.

Students also crocheted poppies for Remembrance Day to raise funds for Legacy. These projects, alongside The Vietnam Project and the focus on Lifeline, highlighted the power of communication to bridge generations, honour service and support those in need.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the NGS community for their unwavering support of Shortland Term.

**Ms Jordan Grant**

Shortland Head of House 10-12

# DEBATING CHAMPIONS

**The Heads of Independent Co-Educational Schools (HICES) provides a range of unique opportunities and collaborative experiences for students from over 70 independent co-educational schools across NSW and ACT. This year, Newcastle Grammar School students participated in the HICES Music Festival, Gifted and Talented Camp and Debating competition.**

Debates were held throughout the year via online sessions to allow students throughout NSW to connect. The top eight teams then met in Sydney for the Grand Final. Featuring an exciting showcase of talent and intellect among junior, middle, senior and open-level debaters, the competition brought together quick thinkers, eloquent speakers and creative collaborators. The topics addressed pressing societal issues, sparking high-quality arguments for and against, including:

- That we should ban social media for children under 16 years of age,
- That we should restrict the building of new homes in natural disaster-prone areas, and
- That medical staff should be able to make medical decisions for patients who are unable to provide consent even if the family does not approve the decision.



1

Congratulations to the students involved – they had an amazing season and performed exceptionally well, taking out both the Middle and Senior Division titles as well as the Sue Macneil Shield for the Overall Champion School of 2024. Jessica Choi (Year 9) was named the Best Debater in the Senior Grand Final and Matilda Dyer (Year 9) received the title of Best Senior Debater in the 2024 season. To achieve such great results is unprecedented in the history of the competition.

Thank you to Mrs Victoria Howe, Head of Intellectual Competitions, for expertly guiding and coaching the students. They have all developed fantastic debating skills and had fun along the way!

## Mr Daniel Kozey

Director of Co-curricular K-12



2



3

1. Ms Racquel Charet, HICES Chair and Principal of Masada College, with Matilda Dyer (Year 9) moments after Matilda was titled Best Senior Debater in the 2024 HICES Debating Senior Grand Final.
2. Sandili Phaltane, Jessica Choi, Matilda Dyer and Henry Dayton (Year 9).
3. Hannah Lamble (Year 8), Ayaan Narwal (Year 7), Emily Hayes (Year 7) and Kellen Royes (Year 8).





## YEAR 9 BOOK LAUNCH

**Reflect on a time when you met someone who challenged your assumptions about the world, even though you were initially reluctant about meeting them.**

Society in its very essence is a collaborative and social environment, whether we like it or not. Therefore, it is inevitable that we are going to connect, talk and work with people whom we initially may be hesitant to meet. Year 9 students were asked to reflect on this very quandary. A big request perhaps, but one we were sure they could handle.

We knew that a question of such depth required a mirrored and equally deep learning approach.

Newcastle Grammar School is dedicated to the Deep Learning Framework which “changes learning by focusing on personally and collectively meaningful matters, and by delving into them in a way that alters forever the roles of students and teachers, and even our parents and families.”

Representations of Diversity was the unit of study where we explored a range of examples within film and the media. Students challenged stereotypes surrounding disability through viewing, reading and analysing a range of texts that were composed by, and prominently featured, people with disability.

The core piece for the unit was the 2019 film, *The Peanut Butter Falcon*. In addition, students examined a range of texts to better understand the

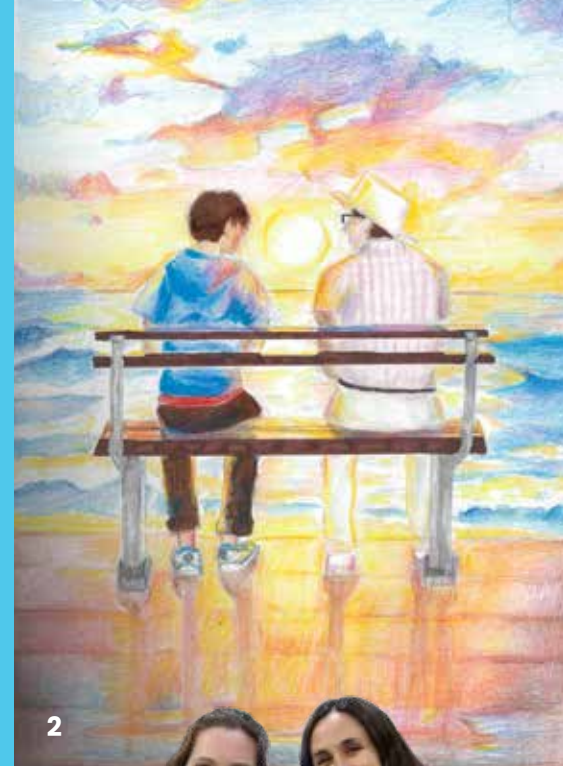
perspectives, strengths and challenges faced by those with diverse needs in society. An appreciation for the positive qualities of diversity was established, and discussions were held about strategies and ideas to overcome adversity and debunk negative stereotypes surrounding members of our community.

Students were then asked to craft a piece of discursive writing on the above prompt and advised that their piece would be included in a collection to be published by NGS and held in the library.

This original work was presented at the Year 9 Book Launch Evening, where students shared their literary and artistic creativity with loved ones. The students embraced this opportunity and unveiled their unique perspectives through the transformative power of personal stories.

One of the key aspects of Deep Learning is the collaborative process, so this task was designed with teamwork and a cross-curricular approach in mind.

Year 9 Commerce students took charge of marketing the event, while Year 9 Food Technology students provided the catering, designing a diverse menu that accommodated various dietary needs. The Art Department organised a front cover competition, with the audience voting on their favourite entry. There were many fantastic submissions, and the winning artwork, by Darcie Horn, is displayed above. Congratulations to all participants.



The evening was a huge success! We were able to focus on the process and crafting of the pieces with a tangible goal, culminating in the gathering and sharing of stories with our community, forever altering our viewpoints of our role as co-collaborators, community members and learners.

**Miss Jessica Penny**  
English Teacher

1. A selection of entries for the front cover competition.
2. Darcie Horn's winning artwork.
3. Miss Jessica Penny and Ms Julia Clement, English teachers.
4. Sandili Phaltane, Year 9, shared her story at the Year 9 Book Launch evening.

## WORKPLACE LEARNING

# A WINDOW INTO PROFESSIONAL LIFE

The Newcastle Grammar School Workplace Learning Program offers Year 10 students a valuable chance to immerse themselves in the professional world, gaining hands-on experience and essential real-world skills. In 2024, NGS students worked in various settings, including placements at hospitals, law firms, engineering companies and retail stores, with feedback from students and employers highlighting how transformative this experience has been.

### Student Reflection – Growth and Learning

Many students expressed that the learning opportunities and personal development they experienced during their placements were particularly impactful. One student remarked, “Even though this experience did not align with my intended career path, it taught me a lot about independence and work ethic. I appreciated the autonomy and learnt how to be efficient and effective in my work.” Another student reflected on the value of teamwork, stating, “The program helped me understand the importance of teamwork and how to work collaboratively.”

### Employer Feedback – Praise for our Students

The employers were highly impressed with the professionalism, enthusiasm and adaptability of the students, with comments including:

“I am incredibly impressed; it’s hard to believe she’s only 15-years-old!”, “He performed at the level I would expect from an 18 or 20-year-old surveying student,” and “Her mature attitude and confidence allowed her to complete tasks confidently and seek assistance when needed.”



Solomon Scholes (Year 10) at the Cameron Park Vets and Cardiff Veterinary Hospital.

### Memorable Experiences – Student Highlights

Students shared some of their most memorable moments, showcasing the variety of opportunities they had:

“I had an amazing experience, with highlights including daily walks with team members where we discussed everything from business to personal interests. I enjoyed attending meetings and learning from clients who took time to explain things in detail.”

“Working at the hospital was hands-on and insightful. I observed and assisted with patient care, which deepened my knowledge of medicine and improved my communication skills and empathy.”

“I enjoyed interacting with different departments and experiencing the vibrant work environment. Highlights included visiting the Supreme Court, seeing the Sydney Harbour Bridge from the office, being included in a call with the Tokyo office and participating in team activities.”

### The Path Forward

The Workplace Learning Program is successful, not only because it provides our students with a glimpse into their future careers, but also because it helps them develop crucial soft skills

and build real-world connections. Students move into their senior years and subject selections with some clarity on what is needed to succeed after Secondary School.

By integrating existing Deep Learning frameworks and the Round Square IDEALS,\* this unique week of learning prepares students for the future by fostering independence, collaboration and communication. The Workplace Learning Program establishes both short-term and long-term learning partnerships, offering students the chance to engage in authentic professional experiences in new environments. By embracing these real-world scenarios, NGS students are better prepared to transition from academic life to the professional world, equipped with the confidence and skills necessary to flourish.

\*Newcastle Grammar School is a member of the Round Square global network of schools that share a commitment to character education and experiential learning built around six themes: International Understanding, Democracy, Environmental Stewardship, Adventure, Leadership and Service (IDEALS).

### Mr Daniel Kozey

Director of Co-curricular K-12



# YEAR 11 CONFERENCE

# SPRING IN THE SOUL



## A Season for Picking Figs

**The purpose of the annual Year 11 Conference is to support our senior students as they step into a new season of their lives. Navigating through to the end of Year 12 is exciting, but it is also challenging. This is the beauty of adolescence; it is a time of identity forging – a developmental period of unrivalled intellectual and physical growth that lasts at least a decade into the early 20s and deserves to be celebrated.**

In 1901, Granville Stanley Hall, the President of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, proclaimed this time to be 'spring in the soul'. He went on to say "... [this is the stage where] now the best things are springing up in the human soul. If there is any genius or talent, enthusiasm for work or for ideals, they begin now to be felt."

Indeed, adolescence is a time of growth, abundance and potential flourishing, and we have a very important role to play in supporting our young people. While this is their 'springtime', we can offer support and stories that can help them prepare for this season.

A highlight of the 2024 Year 11 Conference was the series of mini keynote presentations delivered by 10 inspiring speakers, each of whom shared their personal stories of strength and perseverance to inspire and motivate our students. We are grateful to the additional professional guests who generously shared their time, wisdom and life experiences at the Conference Dinner.

One of the joys of the Conference was hearing from NGS alumna, Ruby Buckeridge, who graduated in 2022. Aside from all the fabulous HSC tips and insights, she offered a very powerful lesson about embracing



the different versions of ourselves. Drawing inspiration from Sylvia Plath's novel, *The Bell Jar*, Ruby used the motif of a fig tree to inspire students. Ruby acknowledged that "nearly every young person can relate to the fig tree: that horrible, suffocating feeling of indecision, the sense that every choice you make for the future means giving up on 10 other choices. The knowledge that you can only move forward, and that if you choose the wrong 'fig', the right fig might fall and rot before you get to it," But then she bravely reframed the fig tree into a symbol that is relevant to each of us. Ruby explained that "we have different fig trees that look very different depending on our life stage, our age and our context." She outlined that throughout our lives we have multiple fig trees allowing for the pursuit of multiple dreams.

Ruby summarised her three lessons: "We have different aspirations at different points across time, shaped by the different contexts of our lives; we get to pick all the figs if we so choose and that the only person who should be able to decide which figs and when, is you; it is possible to do multiple things simultaneously – you can't pick a wrong fig; and being paralysed by indecision is totally fine. Just know that if you need time to think, your dreams will not wilt in front of your eyes. There is no time bomb on your ambitions – they will wait for you until you are ready."



Ruby then offered a conclusion for our Year 11s that is just as relevant to everyone as it is to our students:

"You just need to be great where you are, be it school, work, making new friends, travelling – and this sets the tone for your future endeavours even when you're not expecting it. You have so much time to pick all the figs, but only if you're doing your best job wherever you are, even if you think what you're doing is small."

Ruby's lessons for the Year 11 cohort speak to the heart of the Conference. Indeed, adolescence is a time of spring in the soul – a season for picking figs. Be great in this moment, offer your best, struggle through, celebrate your strengths and be brave. Other figs will be ready to be picked next season.

## Ms Marnie Thomas

Head of Positive Education  
Languages and Literacy Teacher

1. *The Year 11 cohort.*
2. *Year 11 student, Flynn Chaston, with guest speaker, Jonathan Hiley (Class of 2009), Creative Development Partner at Google.*
3. *Guest speaker Ruby Buckeridge (Class of 2022) with Year 11 student, Isabel Dixon.*

## CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

# THE FOOD OF LOVE

**The 2024 CAPA Showcase, *If Music Be The Food Of Love, Play On!* was a spectacular artistic collaboration and celebration of student performances. Taking inspiration from William Shakespeare, his works and the countless artists he inspired, this event wove different artforms together in a creative, delightful tapestry. The Senior Co-curricular Music ensembles and groups performed, including students from the new Chamber Music Ensembles, Dance, Drama and Public Speaking.**

It was a rich and varied event that saw the works of 19th century composers Johann Strauss II and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky alongside contemporary hits like Taylor Swift's *Love Story* and Imagine Dragons' *Thunder*, as well as musical theatre numbers from *Something Rotten!* and *Swingin' the Dream*. Dancers and actors utilised the space delivering excerpts or adaptations from plays including *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. The combination of spoken word—Iago's monologue, with a jazz interlude, and Shakespeare's text with a string ensemble—produced something truly magical.



If that wasn't enough, students delivered short lectures to abridged pieces and participated in comic skits that saw even Head of School, Mr Macoustra, and The Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer, Dean of Newcastle, taking to the stage to reveal their acting talent!

The evening could not be adequately described without mentioning the magnificent Christ Church Cathedral. A complex lighting rig transformed the space into a stunning backdrop for the ensembles and performers, providing the perfect setting for the epic plays and poems of The Bard. It is equally important to recognise the small but passionate group of student technical managers and stage assistants who ensured the evening ran smoothly.

An event such as this would not be possible without the incredible dedication of the extended Creative and Performing Arts team. We deeply appreciate each one for their drive, mentorship and passionate commitment to the Arts. The staff, who began preparations for the Showcase at Music Camp, gave their all at every rehearsal and worked tirelessly to overcome challenges, ensuring the students shone brightly on the night.

It was a full house with family, friends, staff and members of the extended NGS community, providing a joyful performance experience for the students. Although many moments and triumphs could be highlighted, the final item of the night involving every performer—a rendition of *Shallow* [from the film *A Star Is Born*] by Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper—delivered a breathtaking crescendo of musicianship and unity.

Congratulations to everyone involved!

**Mr Andrew O'Connell**

Head of Creative and Performing Arts







# PRIMARY SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

## RISING CHAMPIONS

**Our Primary School students have showcased their talents across a wide range of sporting fields, competing in Athletics, Basketball, Cricket, Gymnastics, Mountain Biking, Netball, Oztag, Rugby 7s, Snow Sports, Soccer, Tennis, Triathlon and Touch Football. Their achievements are worthy of celebrating!**

### Snow Sports

Congratulations to Sam Simpson (Year 5) and Molly Waerea (Year 3) for their outstanding performance at The Interschools Snowsport Championships. Sam competed in the Giant Slalom Snowboard event and finished just eight seconds behind the first-place competitor in the country, securing a commendable 27<sup>th</sup> place overall. Sam was also the second fastest competitor from Northern New South Wales. Molly competed in the Moguls event and finished 22<sup>nd</sup> in the country for her division.

### Mountain Biking

Over 25 students competed in the NSW School Mountain Bike series, contributing to Newcastle Grammar School's impressive second-place finish as a school in the Singleton Teams event in 2024. Willow Frazer and John-Carlo Olivares-Green, both from Year 6, had an outstanding semester in the NSW School Mountain Bike series. Competing at events in locations such as Awaba, Jacks Ridge, Kempsey, Newcastle and Tamworth, both riders earned points at each stage. John-Carlo, racing in the boys Under 13s category, finished third in the state after claiming first place at Jacks Ridge. Willow dominated the girls Under 13s category, winning all five events. Congratulations!

### Gymnastics

Five students made their Gymnastics debut competing at the Independent Primary School Heads of Australia (IPSHA) Tournament at the Sydney Gymnastics Centre. This was our first time entering the competition and the girls were nervous but excited when they saw the incredible facility. After intense preparation, they participated in the Artistic Gymnastics division, excelling in the vault, bars, beam and floor. Their hard work paid off as they came away as winners in their division. Congratulations to all the girls for their pioneering efforts!

### Oztag

NGS had 42 students compete at the Hunter Primary School Oztag Gala Day, the region's first Oztag tournament. Our teams performed exceptionally well, with both the Junior Girls and Senior Girls qualifying for the semi finals. The Senior Boys made it through to the Grand Final, where they were narrowly defeated by one point. The day was a fantastic display of skill, teamwork and sportsmanship and we look forward to future competitions!

With the new Park Campus facilities, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. The students will have access to state-of-the-art resources, further enhancing their sporting experiences. We eagerly anticipate another exciting year of sporting achievements in 2025.

### Mr Cameron Logan

Primary Sport Coordinator









# HIGHLIGHTS FROM SECONDARY SPORT

# VICTORY LAP

**The peak events of winter sports coincided with the start of the summer Sports programs in Semester 2, creating a busy period on the Secondary sporting calendar.**

## School Pathways

At the conclusion of the Cross Country school season, Newcastle Grammar School was well represented at both the NSW All Schools and the School Sport Australia Nationals levels. Harry Boyn (Year 11), Rosie Boyn (Year 10) and Annabelle Miller (Year 11) finished off strong campaigns with outstanding results at Nationals, with Annabelle winning a Gold medal and being crowned National Champion for her age group.

2024 was a highly successful year on the Athletics track and field for our students. Many records were broken, personal best times and results were achieved, and over 100 medals were awarded to NGS students across the Hunter Region Independent Schools (HRIS), Association of Independent Co-Educational Schools (AICES) and New South Wales Combined Independent Schools (NSWCIS) pathway levels. We are extremely

proud of our Junior Girls relay team, consisting of Audrey Heslop (Year 7), Zoe Karihaloo (Year 9), Evelyn Richardson (Year 8) and Emerson Wallace (Year 9), who won Gold at the AICES Competition and broke the AICES record for the 4x100m relay. Harry Boyn and Annabelle Miller brought their outstanding Cross Country form onto the track with some record-breaking performances. Congratulations to the following students named on the NSW CIS Merit Team for 2024: Audrey Heslop (Year 7), Alice Hill (Year 9), William Noonan (Year 9), Luka Karihaloo (Year 10), Alexandra Noonan (Year 10), Annabelle Miller (Year 11), Jemima McKensy (Year 12) and Gabby Waerea (Year 10).

## Team Sports

There were many opportunities for students to participate in team events, kicking off with over 50 boys and girls representing NGS at the Netball NSW Schools Cup Newcastle Round. Fielding five teams, our students enjoyed a great day of Netball in wet conditions, with our competitive Years 9/10 boys, Years 9/10 girls and Years 7/8 girls just missing out on progressing to the regional rounds.

Our Under 16s and Opens girls' Netball teams carried forward the momentum from the Netball NSW competition into the HRIS 16s and Open girls Netball Gala Day. Competing in warm conditions, both teams showcased great spirit and sportsmanship. The Under 16s team finished as champions, while our Open girls secured a hard-fought third place.

Volleyball was introduced into the HRIS Gala Day calendar for the first time in 2024, with NGS fielding both Opens and 15s boys' and girls' teams for these inaugural events. Our students ventured into this new space with their usual enthusiasm and competitive spirit, allowing some of our representative Volleyball players to showcase their skills at the HRIS level. The character, sportsmanship and spirit that our students brought to these events were commendable and shows an understanding and respect for the purpose of team sports.

The arrival of warmer weather marked the beginning of the School Cricket season. With Mr Benjamin Peacock taking on the Head Coaching role again in 2024, we set our sights on both the long and short formats of the game. Our Junior T20 teams enjoying building their skills and gaining experience at the local level through the Hunter Schools T20 Cricket Competition. We also entered the 2024/2025 Wiburnd Shield Knockout Competition, with our team successfully progressing through the regional rounds.

Field sports were a highlight, with NGS represented at events such as Rugby 7s, Rugby League and Touch Football. Our girls' Rugby 7s team put on a strong performance against experienced teams at the Hunter Valley Gala Day. Comprising mostly Year 7 girls, our team showed great tenacity, cohesion and courage while competing against bigger and older opposition. Evelyn Richardson (Year 7) proved very hard to chase down in attack and the defence of Sachi Scowen (Year 7) and Chloe Elliot (Year 7) put many teams on notice.







Our boys' Under 14s and Under 16s Rugby League teams gave outstanding performances at the HRIS Rugby League 9s Gala Day at Cessnock, with our Junior boys' team punching well above their age and weight and the Senior boys' team showcased their skills in both attack and defence, putting on a strong display throughout the day. Mentored by senior student, Daniel Richardson (Year 11), we were extremely proud of both teams' efforts at this event.

The HRIS Touch Football Gala Days are among the most popular events on the NGS calendar, with boys' and girls' teams competing across both the 15s and Opens categories. In hot conditions, our students played with great enthusiasm and effort. All teams placed within the top five of their age groups and the girls' team was awarded Runners Up in their age group.

### National Schools Basketball Championships

The final week of 2024 saw our boys' and girls' National Basketball squads representing NGS at the Footlocker National Schools Basketball Championships on the Gold Coast. This was the final event in a Basketball calendar that commenced in February 2024, with teams training year-round under the guidance of coaches Mr Liam Toms and Mr Matthew Gray and overseen by Mr Tim Mallon.

In extremely hot and humid conditions and playing two games a day, both our boys' and girls' teams competed with NGS' signature spirit, teamwork and tenacity to achieve outstanding results in their respective divisions.

Our Under 17s boys' team, comprising of Martin Macready (Year 9), Elliott Manning (Year 9), Edward Morton (Year 8), Samuel Nightingale (Year 9), Sam Noonan (Year 8), Rocco Roseworne (Year 8) and Jack Wilshire (Year 9), started off their campaign with a very close result against a team from Albury, NSW. They continued with strong performances throughout the week, achieving a spot in the Division 3 semi-finals. With an average team age of 14 ½ years, these boys consistently demonstrated great teamwork, grit and determination, with each player showing significant improvement over the year.

Our Under 20s girls' team, comprising Keely Rao (Year 10), Mia Roseworne (Year 10), Abigail Sawang (Year 9), Isabelle Spruce (Year 12), Lily Spruce (Year 9), Ella Wilshire (Year 12), Lucy Wilshire (Year 11) and Maddie Wilshire (Year 8), worked hard and entered the semi-finals undefeated in their pool. With an average age of 15, each player consistently demonstrated courage and resilience, battling against often

top-age teams in a highly competitive division. With fortitude, determination and teamwork paying off, the team overcame a 17-point deficit to make it to the gold medal match on the final day of championships. In an extremely hard-fought battle, they narrowly lost by 10 points to a much older team from Western Australia.

Congratulations to Lucy Wilshire for achieving the top ranking in her division for total match points and total two points made, and for securing third place in average points per game. Elliott Manning and Isabelle Spruce also made the leaderboards, with Elliott ranking second in average points and fourth in free throws made, and Isabelle ranking fourth in total two points made.

We would like to sincerely thank our coaches for guiding the teams in 2024, and all the parents and carers who travelled to Nationals to support them. The collegiality and encouragement amongst our families were crucial elements to the overall success of this event and our teams.

**Ms Leah Gilbert**  
Head of Sport

## CLASS OF 1991

## RACHELLE SCHMIDT



**After graduating from Newcastle Grammar School in 1991, Rachelle Schmidt began a Bachelor of Arts in Education at the University of Newcastle, but left feeling out of place. She moved to Sydney in her early 20s and worked in retail management, but something was missing. Returning to Newcastle, she joined her family's electrical company and rekindled her passion for music by taking piano lessons.**

Rachelle soon commenced singing lessons and her teacher suggested she audition for a minor role in *Annie* at the Civic Theatre. Though initially unsuccessful, she was later called back to fill a role.

After *Annie*, Rachelle made a commitment to herself to audition for other shows and in 2000 she sang as part of a production with Opera Hunter. She received her AMEB diploma and in 2002, decided to pursue a career as a singing teacher.

Rachelle earned a place to study with the Bavarian State Opera in Munich, Germany in 2006, which allowed her to

grow in ability and confidence. Once again back in Newcastle in 2013, she founded The Voice Studio, a boutique space for vocal training. Rachelle's vision was to create a studio which would be a nurturing, personal, safe space where people of every ability could learn or improve their singing. She wanted a place for people to find their true voice. Her studio now employs nine teachers and caters to a diverse range of students, from professional singers to beginners.

Rachelle took many leaps of faith throughout her career, remaining active in community theatre while also fulfilling her teaching roles. Rachelle exemplifies breaking the mould of expectation, making her professional theatre debut at age 50 in the Australian production of *Menopause the Musical*. She won her fifth CONDA award in 2024 for Best Supporting role in *Romeo and Juliet* by HER Productions.

Reflecting on her time at School, Rachelle is grateful for the encouragement and sacrifice her parents made to send her to NGS. She believes that her schooling laid the groundwork for the self-assurance, courage and discipline needed in life.

She remembers the frustration of hearing, "If you're leaving the school grounds, you must wear your blazer!" However, this taught her the importance of showing up well. "You are representing yourself and your school. There's an elegance in showing up like you mean it. Your costume is a reflection of your character." This attitude has helped her develop the required fluidity of discipline. "These rules give me the freedom to express myself."

Rachelle is grateful to the many teachers who nurtured their students beyond the academics.

Her advice to current students is, "Do not define yourself based on what others think you should be doing. It's important to not define yourself by your age or what others may consider is an acceptable path or framework. Don't be afraid to defy the normal—feel the fear and do it anyway!"



Follow the breadcrumbs. Life takes many twists and turns and we don't know our future, but if one follows the next step, that will take us further along our path.



# THE VALUE OF ALUMNI

# SHARE YOUR STORY

Newcastle Grammar School thrives today thanks to the visionary founders, the dedicated staff who have tirelessly contributed their time and expertise, the supportive families who have strengthened the community and the wise and committed leaders who have guided its journey. Most importantly, it is the students who have written the Newcastle Grammar School story. They share moments that become cherished memories, create a vibrant culture and grow into young adults who define what NGS stands for.

In 2024, NGS launched a project to begin to showcase the stories of alumni. Located on various walls across Hill campus, large acrylic posters show the faces and career paths of 10 former students. Each poster contains a QR code that links to an article revealing their journeys to date.

We have already witnessed these stories inspiring current students to dream big, motivating them by showcasing what can be achieved with hard work and dedication in a wide range of industries. They remind staff of their valuable role and that their impact certainly does not stop once students leave NGS. Our hope is that these features will inspire other alumni to share their stories.

Connecting alumni with each other and current students facilitates knowledge-sharing, aligning with



the NGS Deep Learning academic framework. This approach brings to life the theory learned in class with real-world application. Staying connected with NGS offers valuable networking opportunities, internships and job placements for both current and former students. Showing the value of our alumni in such a visible way on campus also helps to foster a sense of community and continuity, deepening the connection of past and present members of the School.

To our alumni – we hope that more of you will share your stories to



continue to motivate and inspire the next generation.

We recognise students, staff and community members of Newcastle Boys' Grammar, Newcastle Church of England Girls' Grammar School and Broughton School, as important and cherished members of the NGS family.

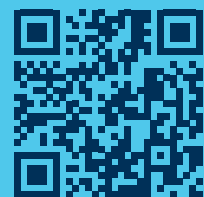
Please share your story or nominate someone via email [alumni@ngs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:alumni@ngs.nsw.edu.au) or the NGS Alumni website [alumni.ngs.nsw.edu.au](http://alumni.ngs.nsw.edu.au)

**NGS Alumni Team**



# NGS ALUMNI

## YOUR NEW WAY TO CONNECT



### Connect online

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