

# the Pennant



Hills  
Grammar

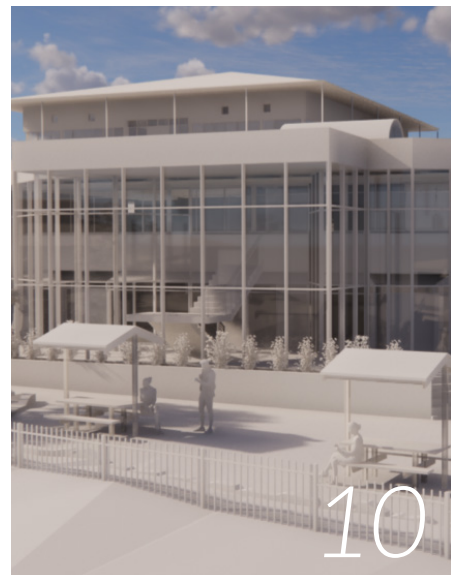
Celebrating 40 Years  
Extraordinary Staff  
Outstanding HSC Results

Our Guiding Principals  
Farewell Liz Pellinkhof  
Alumni

40  
CELEBRATING  
YEARS

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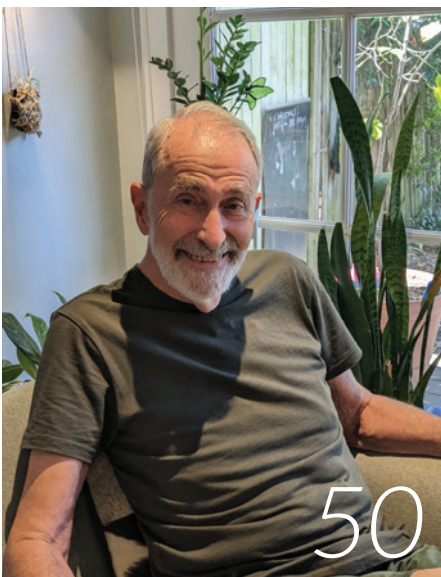
*Hills Grammar acknowledges the Darug people as the Traditional Custodians of the land upon which our School stands. We acknowledge the Elders, past, present and emerging, and pay our respect to their ongoing connection to land, water and community.*



# Alumni

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We welcome your feedback and news. If you have photographs and news contributions for The Pennant, please email [hg.communications@hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au](mailto:hg.communications@hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au)



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**On the Cover** | For our ArtsBeat 2022 launch event, we welcomed Wandana, an Aboriginal education and entertainment company that preserves and promotes Australian Aboriginal culture. Together with Wandana, our students learnt about the local Aboriginal history, places, people and events of significance and the local Aboriginal art. We then created our school story using indigenous symbols and stories. This now hangs in the Nexus building.

*This information has been gathered from a variety of sources and contributors. Every effort is made to ensure the information is accurate. However, the editors and School cannot accept responsibility for inaccuracies or the authenticity of that information.*

# Courage, Collaboration & Community

Karen Yager | Principal

*It is our mission to encourage our students to be creative and courageous; to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and the ability to make an extraordinary difference to their future and the world.*



*2022 was a year of hope and a celebration of our community. After the challenges of previous years, when our resilience was tried and ultimately proven, our students strode into the new school year with determination and a will to succeed.*

Thomas Edison stated that “The greatest invention in the world is the mind of a child.” It is our mission to encourage our students to be creative and courageous; to develop an entrepreneurial mindset and the ability to make an extraordinary difference to their future and the world.

At Hills Grammar, we aim to awaken passions and inspire the pursuit of learning both within the classroom, and beyond. Academic excellence is not just about marks – it is about personal best and supporting and inspiring every child to achieve and go beyond their potential. This conviction was reinforced time and again throughout 2022.

One of my main goals is to empower our students to have a voice and contribute to what we do at Hills Grammar. The Education Passport team, the Strategic Plan team, and the Student Wellbeing team are contributing to many of our significant strategies at Hills. They confidently present their points of view and reveal how they are mature, perceptive, and future thinkers. They inspire me and reinforce my belief that education is at its’ most extraordinary when students, teachers, and parents work together collaboratively.

I was drawn to Hills Grammar by the promise of joining a close community and the opportunity to get to know each student and their family. This promise has certainly been realised.



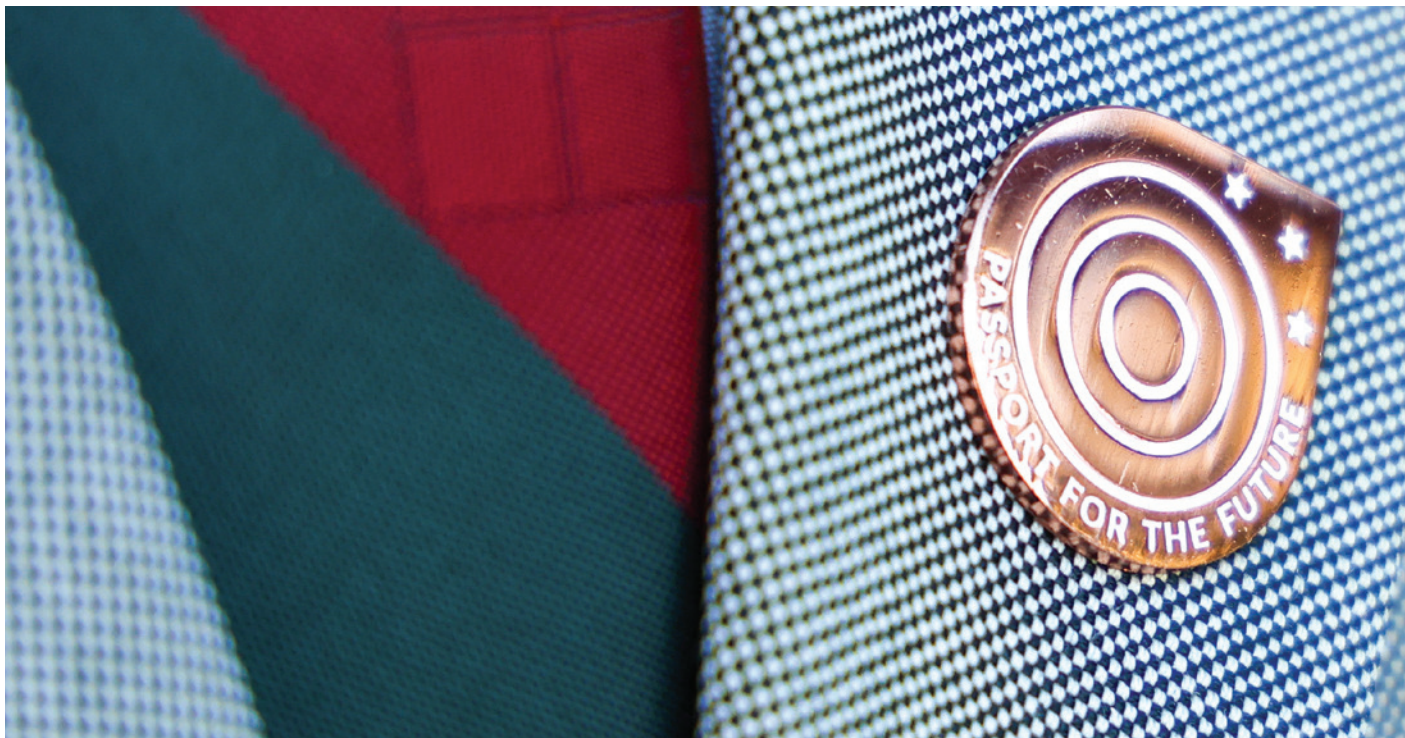
The Spring Fair affirmed that my move to the Hills was a great decision. Staff, students, and parents worked together to create a true community event. Everyone pitched in. Our students ran their own stalls and some even donated their profit to the School. PAFA and School Council members directed traffic, served at the sausage sizzle, and so much more. The laughter, the joy and the community spirit made me so proud to belong to this amazing community.

This pride was amplified by the amazing atmosphere of our inaugural House Spirit Day. The joy and enthusiasm displayed by students and staff spilled over into Giving Day, where we were overwhelmed by the generosity of our Hills Grammar community, raising over \$255,000.

This issue of *The Pennant* celebrates these achievements and so many more. We are sure you will enjoy discovering more about our Alumni, the many writers in our community, the outstanding 2022 HSC results and the Socratic Program.



# The Hills Education Passport For the Future



*At Hills Grammar we believe each child is an Original – with unique talents and passions.*

*This philosophy has endured our 40-year history, starting with Ron Ayling, Principal from 1985 to 1995, who said “I believe that education is about locating the genius in each and every child, that particle of the extraordinary, that glint of the divine, that resides in every single one of you...”*

*As we prepare our students for the future, to take on roles that are not yet in existence, recognising the achievements of the whole child, and not just those in the classroom will become more important than ever.*

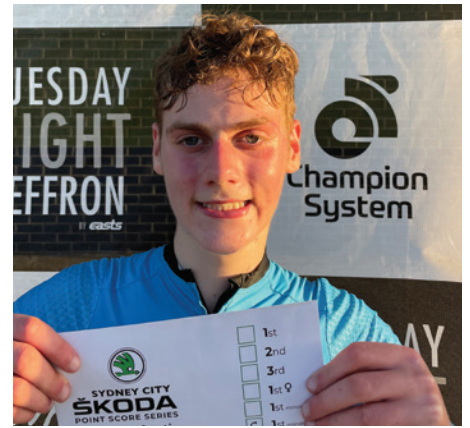
The McKinsey Global Institute (2021) reported that the employees of the future need to be creative collaborators who embrace further learning, have the courage to imagine and enact blue-sky thinking and who are resilient, adaptable, and agile enough to thrive in the complex, dynamic world of the future. Across the country, governments and institutions have been discussing the development and instigation of alternative credentials that can provide a broader and deeper picture of what a student does, knows and can achieve. Universities are already offering bespoke courses to their students. It is time for schools to embrace and implement alternative credentialing that is personalised and complements their current academic reports and reflects the context and values of their school.

If schools are to locate the genius in every child, they need to offer more than a school report of a student’s grades and marks. They need to report on a child’s skills, knowledge and achievement beyond the curriculum and the school gates.

This can easily be achieved through micro-credentialing.

The Hills Education Passport for the Future recognises that students are more than a grade. It validates the passion, knowledge, and skills that students already have, encouraging them to be agentic, committed, and responsible citizens who have the courage to move beyond their comfort zone and embrace learning beyond the curriculum to enrich and expand their skills and knowledge. The Passport was developed by our students, teachers and parents and recognises the accumulation of micro-credentials, enabling students to discover and shine the light on their “genius”.

In 2020, Professor Shergold wrote about the need for an Australian Education Passport. He stated that “Students will be guided to recognise the attributes they have acquired through study in the classroom as well as from work experience, volunteering, and personal achievement...”



Hills Grammar students from Early Childhood through to Year 12 are encouraged to look at the things that they currently do at school and in the community. It might be Surf Life Saving, a start-up, coaching a team, doing a Coursera course, volunteering, AMEB exams, a part-time job and so much more.

Early Childhood to Year 6 credentialing has been adjusted to reflect the students' ages and experiences. The Passport validates students' passion, knowledge, and skills. It is akin to bespoke courses at university but far more varied and personalised.

Students provide evidence of the acquisition of a specific skill or award or the completion of a course and receive points based on the commitment, challenges, and level of what has been achieved. When our Year 12 students apply for early entry to university, overseas universities, jobs, or university scholarships, they are required to provide a resume of their achievements. The Hills Education Passport will provide a record of all they have done and achieved during their time at Hills Grammar. The credentials acknowledge that students are more than just a grade in a subject.

Our Hills Originals have extended themselves beyond the classroom in many areas including fencing, leadership in Scouts, track cycling, squash, writing a book and supporting those in need overseas.

Our students continue to shine, showcasing their creativity, altruism, entrepreneurialism and leadership, whilst having their efforts validated by The Passport.

A micro-credential is awarded across four domains linked to our School values -

- RESPECT: Responsible citizenship
- INTEGRITY: Ethical entrepreneurialism
- SERVICE: Advocacy
- EXCELLENCE: Deeper water learning

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration states that their vision is for a "world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face" (2019, p.2).

If this declaration is to become more than words on a page, schools need to act now and enable their students to tap into their passions and interests and stretch and deepen

their learning, so they have the confidence and courage to enter this dynamic and challenging world. I believe that by embracing an Education Passport at Hills Grammar, our students' academic performance will improve as they come to realise how much potential they have, how much they can achieve and how far they can go.



# Making a Positive Impact in the Digital Age

According to the World Economic Forum (2021), half of today's work activities could be automated by 2055, posing more challenges for young people's future employment choices.

A growing number of education, business and political leaders believe that young people should be taught the crucial enterprise and life skills of creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, citizenship and collaboration.

An innovative school is future focused, collaborative and always looking for ways to improve the teaching and learning experience of its students, so they are equipped to face the world with confidence, courage, and agency.

At Hills Grammar, we prioritise innovation and creativity. Our students go beyond being technology consumers to become technology creators.

From Year 1 to Year 6, we use flexible micro:bit devices for coding, sensor exploration, and robotics. By integrating these projects across all subjects, students solve real-world problems and collaborate with experts. Additionally, augmented reality creation apps like CoSpaces foster imagination and storytelling. Our focus on creation rather than consumption empowers students to thrive in an evolving digital landscape. Hills Grammar prepares students to make a positive impact in the digital age

through innovative thinking and technological proficiency. At Hills Grammar, we prioritise fostering digital literacy among our students, equipping them with the skills to choose and interact with digital tools effectively. Through hands-on experiences and a focus on critical thinking and digital citizenship, we empower our students to confidently navigate the digital landscape, making informed choices and leveraging technology for their education and future endeavours.

We were honoured to receive the 2022 5-star Innovative School Award from *The Educator*, in recognition of our dedication to innovation.



*Our focus on creation rather than consumption empowers students to thrive in an evolving digital landscape.*





The whole school was a wash of red, yellow, green and blue as we celebrated our first House Spirit Day in November. Castle, McGrath, Pennant and Rogan competed for the inaugural House Spirit Trophy in a variety of activities across a number of disciplines.

Spirit Day was not just about athletic pursuits; the 'Tournament of Houses' included theatre sports, speed cubing, a super quiz, karaoke, a maths relay, a language and international culture competition, art and biscuit decoration, and a literature and movie quiz.

Our junior students had a ball competing in games facilitated by our Year 9 and 10 PASS students. Children went home at the end of the day covered head-to-toe in all shades of the rainbow, thanks to the colour run and slime slip-and-slides set up on the oval by Motiv8.

A chorus of voices filled the air as House chants warmed up the crowd for the House Relay. Our youngest Hills Originals sped down the track, passing the baton to their older peers, with cheers reverberating around the Pavilion until the last runner had crossed the finish line.

While Rogan were the inaugural champions, school spirit was the winner on the day.

# Investing in Bright Futures

*Hills Grammar was founded and built by families who wanted the very best for their children's futures. These families had the courage to support the foundation of Hills Grammar, and now 40 years on, our community continues to uphold these ideals.*

Over the past 40 years, the support of our community has helped build many of the facilities within our school that our current students enjoy. Our inaugural Giving Day, held in November, was the opportunity for our School Community to come together to invest in the pathways of our current and future 'Hills Originals' as they become designers,

innovators, artists, engineers, and technology experts in the refurbished Booth Centre.

We were overwhelmed by the generous donations received from our Hills Grammar community - with over \$255,000 raised on the day. It was also a joy to see House Spirit Day spilling over into Giving Day - with Pennant and Castle vying to be top of Giving Day donations tally. Congratulations to Pennant, who pipped Castle at the post in the last few hours.

With donations received after Giving Day, we were blown away to see our original \$100,000 target more than double - when our total donations reached \$255,000.

Thank you to everyone for the generous support.



## Thank you to our generous inaugural Giving Day Donors

### PLATINUM

Whittingham Family  
Shem Family  
Bryks Family

### GOLD

Brown Family  
Bryant Family  
Chen Family  
Cheung Family  
Choat Family  
Janny-Reynolds Family  
Kelly Family  
Kocic Family  
Lin Family  
Miskin Family  
Moodley Family  
Srdanovic Family  
Tegel Family  
Tirthankar Family  
To Family  
Ye Family  
Young Family  
Zraika Family

### SILVER

Adeel Family  
Adil Family  
Agnihotri Family  
Agopian Family  
Akber Family  
Allan Family  
Alwis Family  
Anand Family  
Anandakumar Family  
Andrew-Kabilafkas Family  
Arnesa Family  
Arora Family  
Ashenden Family  
Aujla Family  
Ayubi Family  
Azad Family  
Bai Family  
Bailey Family  
Bajaj Family  
Bano Family  
Bao Family  
Barrantes Family  
Bhatia Family  
Bhattacharya Family  
Biasi Family  
Bickmore Family  
Brown Family

Buissink Family  
Burns Family  
Cai Family  
Calder Family  
Camilleri Family  
Chao Family  
Chaudhary Family  
Chen Family  
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Chen Family  
Chen Family  
Choudhary Family  
Coleman Family  
Coorey Family  
Cregan Family  
Cully Family  
Curr Family  
Dalton Family  
Davis Family  
Delgado Family  
Dennington Family  
Ding Family  
Dong Family  
Doubinski Family  
Dubbelman Family  
Duff Family  
Dunstan Family  
Ellis-Clark Family

Evans Family  
Fang Family  
Farooq Family  
Farrell Family  
Feng Family  
Ferfolja Family  
Fu Family  
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Fu Family  
Gajendra Family  
Gan Family  
Gan Family  
Gao Family  
Gerzabek Family  
Ghauri Family  
Ginnivan Family  
Gowetski Family  
Gunasekara Family  
Gundic Family  
Gupta Family  
Han Family  
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Harbour Family  
Hassan Family  
Hayes Family  
Hayward Family  
Hewa Family  
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Hoe Family  
Hopkins Family  
Huang Family  
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Jacobs Family  
Janny Family  
Jayaraman Family  
Jia Family  
Jiang Family  
Jin Family  
Jones Family  
Jones Family  
Jose Family  
Kaars Family  
Kabilafkas Family  
Kang Family  
Kaur Family  
Khara Family  
Kherfan Family  
King Family  
Kologlu Family  
Kotra Family  
Krish Family  
Lakhotia Family  
Langham Family  
Laurie Family  
Leclere Family



## The Booth Centre Renovation

*The aim of the renovation of the Booth Centre is to create a multi-faceted, vibrant innovation space where students ECEC to Year 12 can design, create and innovate.*

The design features an open plan, industrial feel featuring an atrium to display work, VR and AI technology, 3D printing, drones, robotics and much more.

The space with its advanced technology and communal working spaces will attract industry and university partners to provide training and mentoring ensuring our students are workplace and future ready.

Lekhwar Family	McKean Family	Pentakota Family	Singh Family	Wu Family
Leong Family	Megalli Family	Phyo Family	Singh Family	Xiao Family
Leung Family	Mehta Family	Pohorukov Family	Singh Family	Xie Family
Li Family	Meng Family	Poulos Family	Siwakoti Family	Xie Family
Li Family	Meng Family	Prat Family	Snow Family	Xiong Family
Li Family	Messiha Family	Puchert Family	Song Family	Xu Family
Li Family	Minney Family	Pulavarti Family	Stanbury Family	Xu Family
Li Family	Morris Family	Qian Family	Suhairy Family	Xue Family
Li Family	Mousania Family	Ragghianti Family	Surve Family	Yager Family
Liang Family	Murthy Family	Rahman Family	Sworden Family	Yajaman Family
Liang Family	Naidu Family	Ramalingam Family	Tang Family	Yan Family
Liang Family	Narendran Family	Ramos Family	Tasker Family	Yang Family
Lin Family	Natale Family	Raveendran Family	Tok Family	Yang Family
Lincoln Family	Ng Family	Rice Family	Tran Family	Yang Family
Liu Family	Nielsen Family	Richardson Family	Tsaganas Family	Yashiki Family
Liu Family	Niriella Family	Roberts Family	Tweedie Family	Yuan Family
Liu Family	Nobilo Family	Roy Family	Valencia Family	Zalm Family
Liu Family	Nordenstahl Family	Ruston Family	Vempati Family	Zammit Family
Lolis Family	Nunkumar Family	Salguero Family	Vincent Family	Zhang Family
Luo Family	Nusairat Family	Saulnier Family	Wales Family	Zhang Family
Ma Family	O'Neil Family	Sentheeran Family	Wang Family	Zhang Family
Ma Family	Pan Family	Shah Family	Wang Family	Zhang Family
Mahendra Family	Pan Family	Shah Family	Wang Family	Zhang Family
Malhotra Family	Pande Family	Shakeel Family	Wang Family	Zhang Family
Malishev Family	Panter Family	Shakeel Family	Wang Family	Zhang Family
Mangat Family	Pappalardo Family	Shi Family	Wardell Family	Zheng Family
Mao Family	Pascoli Family	Shi Family	Weng Family	Zhong Family
Mao Family	Patil Family	Sidhu Family	Whitmore Family	Zhou Family
McDonald Family	Paul Family	Simic Family	Williams Family	Zhu Family
McEvoy Family	Pellinkhof Family	Simms Family	Wright Family	Zhu Family

# At Home at Hills

David Hamper | Deputy Principal | Head of Senior School

*2022 marked a quarter of a century of teaching, the values and ethos of Hills Grammar aligned with me perfectly and I knew that Karen Yager was going to be an amazing Principal to work with.*



It's Monday 23 May and I'm driving down Kenthurst Road at around 7.30am. Having grown up and lived in and around the Hills all my life it was a road I knew well and a journey I had taken many times. Yet this was a different experience as I would be turning right into the Hills Grammar car park to take on my new position as Deputy Principal of the School.

Hills would be my 5th school and I'd been in senior roles in schools for more than 16 years but I still had the usual first day nerves just like every one of our students who starts at the school. I reassured myself that morning that I had lots of experience, in fact 2022 marked a quarter of a century of teaching, the values and ethos of Hills Grammar aligned with me perfectly and I knew that Karen Yager was going to be an amazing Principal to work with.

Of course, almost immediately I felt at home at Hills. The students, the staff and the whole community made me feel very welcome and I knew that my decision to accept the role was absolutely the right one.

My first six and half months at Hills Grammar have been filled with many highlights. Apart from that close alignment of the School's and my personal values, was my desire to work closely with students and the School community. Working in a school that is intentionally smaller greatly appealed to me. It meant that within a few weeks I had the opportunity to meet with every Year 11 student, with student and staff leaders and many others. What impressed me was the overwhelming fondness of the students and staff for their school, their passion to keep making it better and their desire to play an active role in shaping Hills Grammar into the future.

Hearing from students the impact that the disruption of the pandemic and the associated lockdown and schooling from home had caused to the culture of togetherness, I was keen to work with them to reignite some of what was lost. The inaugural House Spirit Day in November grew out of the ideas and discussions we had with students and staff.

The success of this day was a genuine highlight for me not only in my first months at Hills but in my wider career. This day will now be a fixture on the calendar and I'm very proud of our House Leaders, both students and staff, for their efforts in making the day possible and so successful.

The working life of anyone working in school leadership is a constant mix of activities. Weeks and months blur and there is a frenetic pace at times. There were visits to camps, opportunities to work with students on new features for the Senior School Library, Spring Fair, music and drama performances and so much more.

Despite the pace and busyness of it all, it is a wonderful privilege spending time with young people, dedicated teachers and support staff working in close partnership with our parents. 23 May 2022 will always be a special day for me professionally and joining this wonderful school.

# Celebrating our Values

Sarah Black | Head of Junior School



*Promoting academic learning and wellbeing at Hills Grammar is integral to the daily lived experience of every individual student. This is what motivates our staff each day, to ensure a rigorous academic program, underpinned by a truly integrated wellbeing program which caters for each of our Hills Originals.*

Being part of Hills Grammar is something I am so immensely proud of. Throughout my time at this amazing school, I am fortunate to have worked across Pre K-12 and now have the honour to be leading the Junior School. This is such an important time in the School's 40-year history. We are privileged to have Karen Yager as our Principal. She is leading us into groundbreaking educational territory and also increasing student voice and choice which is something very close to my heart.

Promoting academic learning and wellbeing at Hills Grammar is integral to the daily lived experience of every individual student. This is what motivates our staff each day, to ensure a rigorous academic program, underpinned by a truly integrated wellbeing program which caters for each of our Hills Originals. Our small class sizes enable our staff to know our students well, and individually adjust the classroom environment to help enrich connections with each student both individually, and as part of a whole class.

Our staff and students work in partnership with our school values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence.

These values are celebrated, and staff look for every opportunity to proactively recognise and celebrate each student as they demonstrate these across all aspects of the school day.

Our Wellbeing Program across K-6 is proactive and forward thinking. It centres around embedding Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) across every aspect of the school day. It is an integrated approach which is immersed into each student's daily lived experience.

A sense of self, emotional wellbeing and social skills are at the core of SEL. We empower our students to experience success in their efforts, to interact with others and explore their world.

This motivates each of our students to continue engaging in new experiences and feel optimistic about the future.

Our wellbeing language is also integrated across our academic programs. We discuss important wellbeing characteristics such as

growth mindset, resilience, problem-solving and mindfulness before undertaking academic tasks. Staff support students to link, generalise, and weave invaluable wellbeing characteristics throughout their daily School journey, ensuring genuine skill development and lifelong, meaningful connections.

Watching each student's growth and development across all aspects of their daily lived experience is an immense privilege. I feel very honoured to be part of your child's school journey.

## Introducing

# the Socratic Program

Dr Geoff Gates | Director of Learning and Teaching Pre-K to 12



*For some time now we have been grappling with the question of how to cater for high potential learners through differentiated learning programs, while still holding high expectations and opportunities for growth for all students.*

The Honours program, first introduced in 2006, has been successful in providing the appropriate level of challenge for students performing at a high level in one or more areas of learning. The Socratic Program - introduced in 2022 - builds on the Honours program to enrich the learning of all students in Years 7-10. It includes a variety of experiences, both shared and personalised, and includes both disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning.

### *Why 'Socratic'?*

The Socratic Program takes its name from the Socratic Method, developed by Greek Philosopher Socrates (470-399 BC). The approach builds critical thinking through dialogue between teacher and student, as part of "a concerted effort to explore the underlying beliefs that shape the students views and opinions".

This approach aligns to the Guided Inquiry pedagogy at Hills Grammar. As stated in *Deeper Water, Deeper Learning*, 'classrooms are places where thinking is explicitly valued and actively encouraged [and] a spirit of curiosity and inquiry is evident in the classroom' (p.8).

Further to this, we emphasize Student Voice, by developing classroom cultures where students are encouraged to 'reason with evidence and learn through debate' (p.10). Direct teaching is part of Guided Inquiry and is in evidence in most lessons.

### *Flexible Learning Streams*

From 2022, our core classes will be named after two foundational Greek Philosophers, Socrates and his famous pupil, Plato, as we aim for all our students to inquire deeply into their subjects. The two streams are designed to be flexible, with changes possible at the end of each academic year, and sometimes earlier, based on performance in the formal assessment program.

In 2022 we also developed an acceleration program for Year 9 Mathematics, with the class named after another famous philosopher, Hypatia (program from 2023).

### *Interdisciplinary Learning*

While most learning in Years 7-10 takes place in defined subject areas, taught by subject experts, we know that helping students to connect their knowledge promotes critical thinking and helps students to make connections to real-world experiences.

As a result, our Socratic Program includes a range of Interdisciplinary Learning experiences in Years 7-10, which builds upon the fantastic work completed and showcased in the Year 6 Expo of learning.

These currently include:

- Year 7 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering Mathematics)
- Year 7 DREAM (Drama, English, Art, Music)
- Year 8 LiGHt (Languages, Geography History)
- Year 8 Game Changers (PDHPE and Technology)
- Year 9 STEM II
- Year 9 Entrepreneurs Program
- Year 10 Passion Project (new for 2023).

<https://tilt.colostate.edu/TipsAndGuides/Tip/53>

## Designing for Deep Learning

Our Interdisciplinary Learning experiences fulfil two deep learning goals. The first is to connect the curriculum in ways that promote application of knowledge. The second aim is to provide focused attention on building global capabilities, namely the '6Cs' (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Communication, Collaboration, Character, Citizenship).

If the Socratic ideal is a dialogue between teachers and students to promote deeper learning, then we can also see at Hills Grammar a gradual release of responsibility to build student capacity.

For example, in the Year 6 Expo and the Year 7 STEM program, students work within a defined problem and build their collaborative skills as they are coached by teachers. The Year 8 Game Changers unit asks the students to develop an innovative solution to make use of technology to enhance fitness. Having pitched their ideas in Year 8, students are then ready to face an open-ended challenge in developing a social entrepreneurship idea of their own in Year 9. Our Year 10 Passion Project will help students to explore their individual talents and passions, working with a Mentor while having a autonomy in what their project looks like, and which of the 6Cs they wish to focus on during its development.



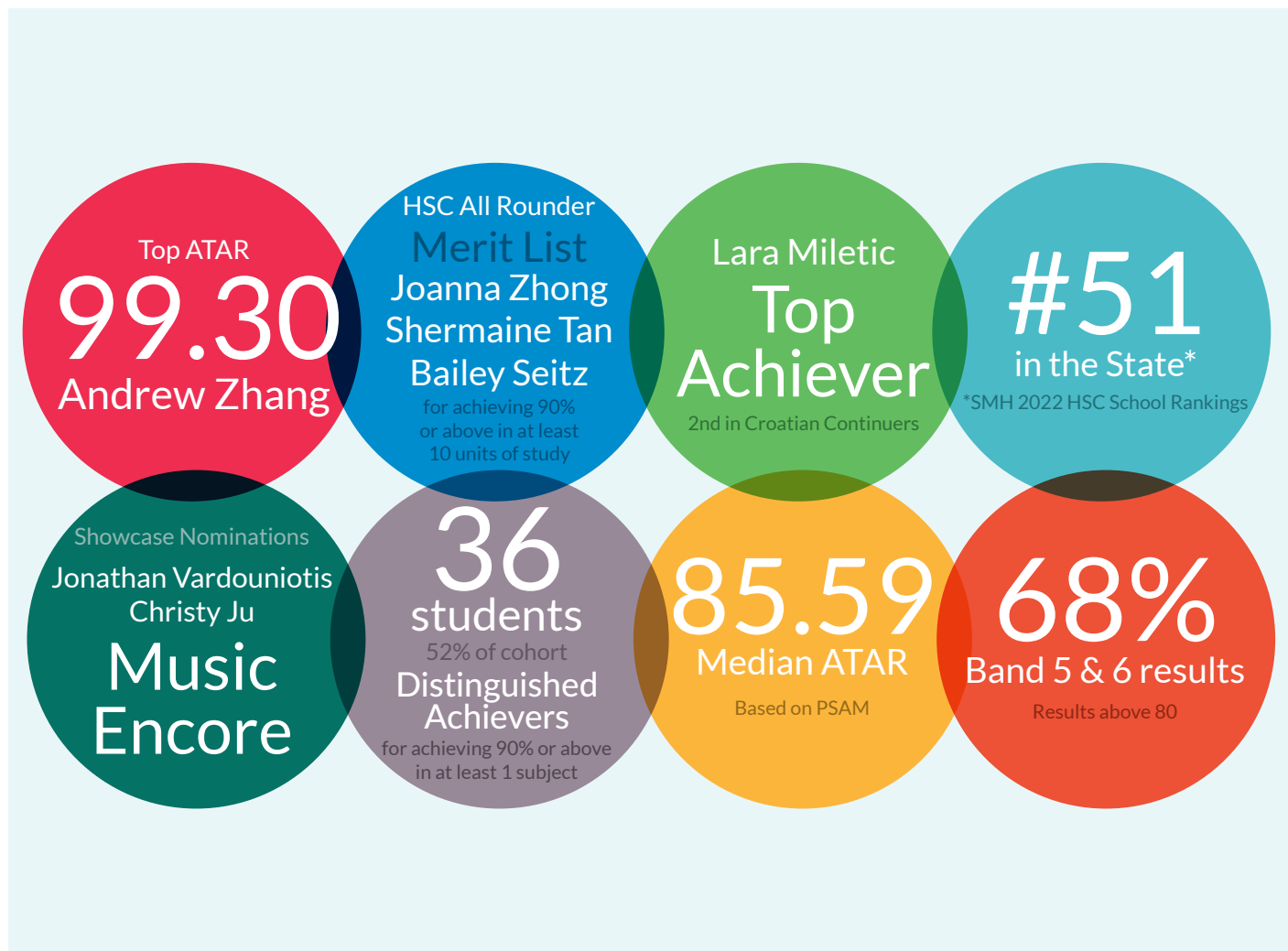
## Academic Rigour

The headline on the subject of 'academic rigour' in *Deeper Water, Deeper Learning* includes the subheading, 'High expectations but not afraid to fail' (p.16). Academic rigour means building student understanding through a personalised approach, providing both challenge and support. We aim to take students into 'deeper waters' by giving them opportunities to apply their knowledge, and by creating classroom cultures where the teacher is a 'warm demander' and the student is an active participant in their own learning. The Socratic Program will help to achieve these aims for all Hills Grammar students.

*We aim to take students into 'deeper waters' by giving them opportunities to apply their knowledge, and by creating classroom cultures where the teacher is a 'warm demander' and the student is an active participant in their own learning. The Socratic Program will help to achieve these aims for all Hills Grammar students.*



# the Class of 2022



*Year 12, 2022 achieved an outstanding set of results and we congratulate all students for their achievement across a wide range of courses. We are proud of the students' efforts and for their commitment to achieve their best.*

Our broad curriculum allows students to choose courses which are in line with their interests and talents, and this is reflected in the fact that HSC examination means exceeded State means in 28 HSC courses, with students achieving Band 6 results (HSC marks of 90 or more) in 25 courses. 97 Band 6 results were achieved, representing 25.4% of all results. Attainment of Band 6 results relative to attempts meant that the school was ranked 51 out of more than 800 schools in the Sydney Morning Herald's ranking.

However, this only tells part of the picture. Our best-ever median ATAR of 85.59 would be higher than many schools "above us" in the SMH ranking. Two important factors contribute to strong ATAR results: results above 80, and participation in extension courses. 68% of results achieved were in Bands 5 and 6. That is, 258 results above 80 were achieved by Hills Grammar students in 2022.

Another impressive figure is the fact that 55% of students completed at least one challenging extension course as part of their pattern of study. That is a sure sign of ambition and opportunity at Hills Grammar, and when combined with the high proportion of 80+ marks, makes a difference to ATAR for our students.

*A Hills Grammar education is broader than an ATAR, and there are many paths and definitions of success.*

Further highlights from the 2022 HSC include NESAs recognition of individual efforts in the HSC.

### HSC All Rounder Merit List

For achieving 90% or above in at least 10 units of study:

**Joanna Zhong** – Joanna achieved Band 6 / E4 results in all 7 of her subjects, including Advanced English, Advanced and Extension 1 Mathematics, Japanese Continuers and Extension, Latin Continuers and Extension. Joanna achieved the second highest ATAR of 99.20. Her top result was 49/50 for Japanese Extension.

**Li Shan Shermaine Tan** – Li Shan Shermaine achieved Band 6 / E4 results in all 5 of her subjects, including Advanced English, Extension 1 and 2 Mathematics, Business Studies, and Visual Arts. Her top result was 95% for Mathematics Extension 1.

**Bailey Seitz** – Bailey achieved Band 6 / E4 results in all 6 of her subjects, including Advanced English, Ancient History, History Extension, Food Technology, Modern History and Mathematics Standard 2. Her top result was 94% for Ancient History.

### School Dux and Highest ATAR

**Andrew Zhang** – Andrew was equal School Dux (based on internal results) and achieved the highest ATAR of 99.30. Andrew achieved Band 6/E4 results in 9 units of study, including Chemistry, Economics, Mathematics Extension 1 and 2, and Physics. His highest result was 95% for Mathematics Extension 1.

**Madeleine Rice** – Madeleine was equal School Dux (based on internal results). She achieved Band 6 / E4 results in 9 units of study, including Ancient History, English Advanced, Legal Studies, Modern History and History Extension. Madeleine’s highest result was 94% for Legal Studies.

### HSC Showcase & HSC Top Achiever

**Jonathan Vardouniotis** – Jonathan was nominated for Music Encore (Composition). Jonathan also achieved Band 6 / E4 results in Information Processes and Technology, Mathematics Advanced, Music 2 and Music Extension.

**Christy Ju** – Christy was nominated for Music Encore (Performance). Christy also achieved Band 6 / E4 results in English Advanced, Mathematics Extension 1, Mathematics Advanced, Music 2 and Music Extension.

**Lara Miletic** – Lara was a Top Achiever in Croatian Continuers (placed second in HSC course – congratulations!). Lara was nominated for Music Encore (Performance) and achieved a Band 6 in Music 1.



Andrew Zhang  
Equal School Dux & Top ATAR



Bailey Seitz  
HSC All Rounder Merit List



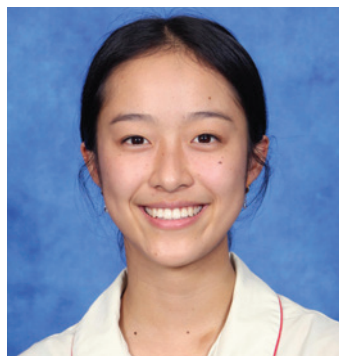
Shermaine Tan  
HSC All Rounder Merit List



Joanna Zhong  
HSC All Rounder Merit List



Jonathan Vardouniotis  
Music Encore



Christy Ju  
Music Encore



Lara Miletic  
Top Achiever



Madeleine Rice  
Equal School Dux

Enriching & Vibrant

# Learning Opportunities

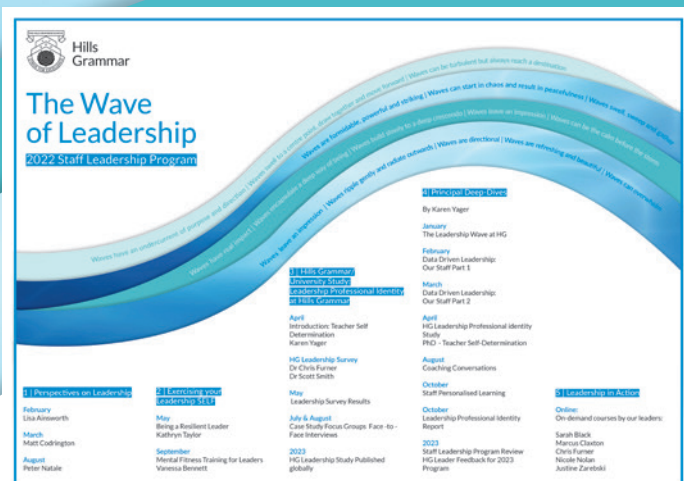
Dr Chris Furner | Director of Professional Learning

*During 2022 Hills Grammar continued to provide enriching, relevant and vibrant learning opportunities to teachers, support staff and parents. These sessions were presented and accessed across a number of modes including face-to-face, Zoom, video and podcasts.*

## Teacher Action Learning Program

Throughout 2022, Early Childhood, Junior and Senior School teachers collaborated in Action Learning Teams to develop student learning goals that successfully improved student learning outcomes. An Action Learning Cycle based on best practice in the educational literature guided teacher reflection on student learning, including the collection and analysis of student learning data and the implementation of goals designed specifically to boost learning in their particular students. In November, Teams met collegially during our Action Learning Showcase, where summaries of the Action Learning Cycle completed were captured and displayed on posters, enabling deep discussion and collegial appreciation.





### Staff Learning Lounge Program Highlights

During 2022 the Learning Lounge lived up to its vision of *Collaboration, Collegiality and Connection*.

Teachers and Support Staff across the school were able to access a series of Hills Grammar customised Leadership in Action Online/On-Demand courses. These courses were developed by our own leaders and contextualised to our Ethos and Mission. Courses included “Immunity to Change” by Sarah Black, Head of Junior School and “Leadership and Fostering Potential” by Marcus Claxton our ICT Manager.

A focus on student learning, engagement and building edifying relationships that enhance student learning and development continued throughout the year in the Staff Learning Lounge Program.

Well attended sessions included “Classroom Icebreakers” by Stephen Clark, “Engage your Students” Workshop by Dr Chris Furner and “Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice” by Rachael Ingram.

### Leadership Program

During 2022 our Leadership Program was themed “The Wave of Leadership” and included professional learning sessions on our Whole-School Mentoring program “Paying it Forward,” Perspectives on Leading, Exercising our Leadership and a number of Principal “Deep Dives” by Karen Yager.

### Parent Learning Lounge Program Highlights

The Parent Learning Lounge Program continued with the vision to invite parent engagement, learning and collaboration. Our theme was “Evergreen Learning” with a focus on providing a range of experiences that remain fresh, vital and timeless in our everyday lives. The parent feedback was excellent from the session “Student Wellbeing at Hills Grammar Year 7-12” by Kelly Boyd, Head of Student Wellbeing 7-12 and Arti Narayan, School Psychologist. An overview of mental health issues impacting teenagers was provided, along with practical ways that families could use to support their child’s wellbeing. A Book-Club for parents hosted by Leonie McIndoe, Hills Grammar Parent, was also well attended by parents who enjoyed reading and reflecting on the book “Thursday Murder Club” by Richard Osman.



# Our Extraordinary Staff

The staff at Hills Grammar are extraordinary and passionate educators who are dedicated to inspiring and nurturing the growth of our students. We spoke to some of our staff about their love of teaching, stand-out moments of their careers, and what excites them most about their roles.



*Stephen Clark | Head of Drama*

I've been teaching at Hills Grammar since 2005. What excites me most about my role is working with students every day and the excitement they bring to drama and seeing the quiet shy ones, to becoming confident enough to perform on stage.

Drama is about trust and drama is about not being frightened of failing. It's a warm enveloping environment where they can perform and do their best.

At the moment I have two playwrights on the go, I'm trying to duplicate the success of a play I wrote in 2015 called *The Ghosts of ANZAC* a group of the students were invited to perform the play in Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy and it went over very well.

*Helen Laidler | Head of Rogan House | Geography Teacher*

My Dad who was a School Principal has a saying 'Walk in their door and bring them out in yours'. So you have to find what interests kids, what is important to them, and link and relate it to your subject area. You need to do it all with a sense of humour and the kids will pick up on that and follow. You can often get kids on board if you treat it as 50 minutes of stand-up comedy.

Working at Hills Grammar is a living personification of my subject area, the wildlife, the sounds, trees, the space we have, I feel truly privileged to work here. I have a sense of admiration and wonder about this campus, it truly is amazing.

I have a passion for mountain biking, and I've been able to run a downhill mountain biking course and take a group of students down to Thredbo every year to learn more about the sport.



*Lauren Reeves | Junior School Teacher | Year 2 Coordinator*

I love that Hills Grammar is Pre K to 12. I have the opportunity to see the students' journeys as they progress into high school. I might have them in Year 5, and be their classroom teacher, and then I see them graduate several years later and that's really rewarding.

Building relationships is crucial. I have high expectations and I let the students know what these are and I love seeing the effort they put in as they apply themselves to try and reach these goals.

I think feedback is really important and humour, so making learning fun for the students so they love learning and they find it enjoyable.



*Tristan Jones | Head of Sport*

This is my 20th year at Hills Grammar and over the time that I've worked here, I've held three different positions. The best part has to be the extracurricular things that we have done over the years, the tours and excursions we have been on, and the camps, which have just been outstanding. It's amazing watching some students travel the world and make a profession out of a sport that they may have started in PE classes at the School.

At Hills Grammar, I think we cater for all-round students. It allows for the kids in lesser-known sports to reach their potential. We foster, develop and push them into the right avenues, and a lot of those kids really do strive for excellence, and that's been really exciting for us.

*Melissa Wardell | Junior School Teacher | Year 4 Coordinator*

Nothing beats having a nervous group of 4 or 5 year old children come into your classroom at the beginning of the year, and then spending the year watching them grow and learn and develop then saying goodbye to them at the end of the year and they can read and write. They can do all sorts of things they weren't able to do before. That is really satisfying and exciting as their teacher, just to see that growth and development.

It's really important for me to get to know my students from the minute they walk into the classroom so I can understand what motivates them and I can tap into their minds.



*Cathy Menzies | Junior School Music Coordinator*

I've been teaching at Hills Grammar for 36 years, and working in the Junior School is heaps of fun, lots of singing and dancing and playing games. I've really loved doing the junior musicals, it's very interesting, we spend a term learning the songs in class and little by little we add the script, we add the lyrics, the actions costumes and the kids really love it. It's a really exciting process. The parents are always so impressed and everyone really loves what we have done.

I like having the autonomy to source something different and being able to bring new resources, songs, activities and new pieces to the band. I spend a lot of my spare time listening to find a new piece of music or a new musical, I spend a lot of time listening to repertoire, listening to music, listening to songs, and reading until I find something that I think "That's the one that's really going to appeal to the kids."

Scan the QR code or visit the URL below to watch the interviews with our extraordinary staff

<https://bit.ly/hg-extraordinary-staff>



## Our Evolving

# Co-curricular Program

Yass Sidaros | Director of Co-curricular Programs



Co-curricular activities are an essential part of all school programs. Here at Hills Grammar, we are fortunate that we have a Co-curricular Connect period every Thursday for 45 minutes in addition to the myriad of activities available before and after school.

The Hills Grammar Co-curricular program is constantly evolving to meet the needs of our community, with new activities introduced each year.

### *Newly introduced activities*

E-Sports

TechCrew

Stitch Masters

VR Golf

3D Design & Make

Netball Fast Five

Music Theatre Skills

Badminton

Chess Classes

Theatre Sports

Cricket Coaching clinic

Dance - Junior Tap

Competitive Creative Writing

Coin Collectors (Numismatics) Club

Film Appreciation Club



# The Benefits of Co-curricular

Research has shown that students who participate in co-curricular activities show improved academic results, enriched relationships at school, and are more likely to lead healthy, active lifestyles beyond school. Students develop increased self-esteem and a greater sense of belonging.

Organisation	Your child will learn about time management and prioritizing the things in their life.
Opportunities	Getting involved in Co-curricular activities allows students to get involved in diverse opportunities across a broad range of areas.
Commitment	Your child will learn about long term commitments. Learning to uphold their commitments is vital, and these activities can teach your child this important lesson.
Contribution	Co-curricular activities allow your child to contribute in some way. They are contributing to something significant usually as part of a group or team. This is important in their personal growth.
Self Esteem	Being involved in Co-curricular activities helps to raise self esteem. Everyone wants to find something that they are really good at and Co-curricular activities provide your child with this forum where they get involved in something and really shine, giving their self esteem a boost.
Relationships	Your child will have the benefit of creating new relationships and building relationship skills when they get involved in Co-curricular activities.
Recognition	Employers, Universities & Colleges recognise the value of involvement in Co-curricular activities. These organisations recognise the contribution that these activities can have on the individual and also recognise the commitment needed to be involved in such activities.



# Where it all Started

Tim Leong

*In 2017 a group of Year 7 boys just wanted to play Volleyball.*

This was the beginning of a long friendship within the group. Thanks to our Volleyball Co-curricular program, they started training and played in the first Schools Cup and then won Silver in Newcastle and Gold against Sydney Boys. This 'Team of the Year' challenged themselves in their first Australian Volleyball Schools Cup (AVSC) in Melbourne that year. They enjoyed the experience of playing volleyball for a week with other schools around Australia.

In 2018, Ms. Sinclair took the Year 8 Team to Melbourne again and came up with a terrific result, 5th place in Australia. As one of the parents who travelled each year with this group, we witnessed a huge boost in their volleyball development with a few of them playing representative for the Hills Dragons Volleyball club as well, including Yuji Hashimoto,

Sam Hope, and Kynan Leong all representing NSW. The trio together with Jordan Archer and Campbell Black continued to play in this group through to Year 12.

In Year 9, AVSC 2019 was held in Gold Coast. The team worked harder that year and started their training every week from February.

Ten months later in the second week of December, not only did they enjoy a week in a lakeside house with a pool, they learned how to cook and live as a team and showed honesty to one each other. The team also survived some late games with supper at 11pm on the way home after their games.

As they played together more they showed trust in each other and great camaraderie amongst themselves. Each player started to believe in themselves, and their team mates as they won more games. They rallied themselves to first place in their group pool. Our Semi Finals match on the Friday night in 2019 was against the Queensland college Kelvin Grove, who was

undefeated in the other group pool.

We'll never forget how our team stood strong to shut out the chanting from all the Queensland supporters that night in 2019. It was Hills Grammar from NSW against the supporters from all the other Queensland schools. After losing the first set to Kelvin Grove, we clawed back to take the 2nd set for a one set-all ball game.

It was anyone's game even till late in the third set to 15 points. Then came the crucial moments in the game: Behind 11-12, it was time to call our first "time out" to calm our team down. We huddled as a unit to void the Queensland chants. We couldn't hear any supporters chanting for us but we asked each player to look at each of their teammates in the eye, to play for each other and give it their best to finish the game off and to shut out the noise. Next, the game was even at 15-all, but both teams needed a 2 point lead to win the game. Kelvin Grove started the lead first,



The Volleyball team after their 2019 Nationals win



In action on the court

Hills Grammar behind 15-16. It was time to call our last “time out”. The boys showed belief in each other and played as a unit as we won 3 straight points to win the deciding 3rd set 18-16 for a place in the Gold Medal match. Surprisingly, we noticed a huge change in cheering for us towards the end as we put up a great fight to take the game from behind.

From there, they carried their momentum and belief to win the Gold Medal against St Joseph’s College Gregory Terrace, Queensland in straight sets on the Saturday morning. They were the 2019 National Champions in Year 9, Division 1.

Then came COVID-19, and this team missed their chance to compete interstate in Year 10 and Year 11. In 2022, the boys reached Year 12 and their focus was on their HSC. It wasn’t until Graduation Day they decided to have one last chance at playing together in AVSC in December as their alternative to Schoolies. With the last-minute entry and the inability to train during their HSC, the team was entered into Division 3 so they could enjoy their volleyball together.

In the second week of December, we were back at Gold Coast to live together as a team in a huge house again. Losing their first game on Monday reminded them that they were here

to represent our school. It didn’t take long to get them back to their 2019 routines and plan more time for their pre-game preparations for each of their games going forward. The Hills Grammar team recorded more wins throughout the week and all games were pretty tough. The team kept their ranking consistently in the top 4, but going into the Semi Final match as 2nd placed. We then defeated 3rd place St. Peters College, SA for a place in the Gold Medal match. On that Saturday, Hills Grammar faced 1st place Marsden State High School, Queensland in the Gold Medal match. Marsden State High is a school where they have many sports stars originate from especially in the NRL.

In the Gold Medal match, the game started off tight point for point, but Marsden took the first set 25-23. Hills Grammar believed in themselves and we corrected our errors to fight hard and won the second set 25-21.

We took the same belief into the third set to exhibit class and excellence in our skills to defeat Marsden 15-11 to win Gold.

From the very beginning, this two time Hills Grammar Team of the Year’s mission was to put Hills Grammar on the map in Australian Volleyball and we now look forward to our next generation of players in the Hills Grammar Volleyball Academy to continue our success in future AVSCs.

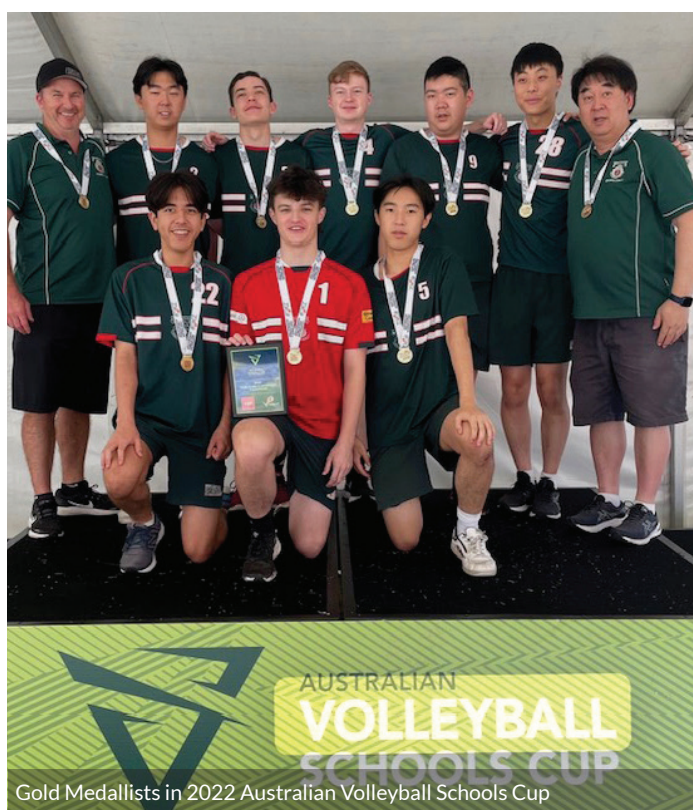
Thanks also to parents : Jon Hope and Stephen Archer for their hard work in getting the team through the week, together with all other parents who shared this journey along the way with us as well.

Special thanks also to Ms Sinclair who coached the Volleyball teams earlier on and also coaching Kynan from Year 4 and Ms. Gandhi who also joined the Volleyball coaching for their first year at AVSC, together with the ongoing support of our Head of Sports, Mr Jones.

*As they played together more they showed trust in each other and great camaraderie amongst themselves.*



Friendship and a strong belief in each other - keys to this team’s success



Gold Medallists in 2022 Australian Volleyball Schools Cup

## Empowering Voices

# Student Leaders

Madeleine Rice & Joseph Arsenious-Inaty  
School Captains 2022

It was an honour and a privilege to be appointed as the 2022 School Captains. Throughout the year we enjoyed representing Hills Grammar and participating in many events, including ANZAC Day ceremonies, parent functions, formal affairs and regular meetings with our Principal, Mrs Yager. We especially enjoyed amplifying the students' voices by listening to their concerns and bringing them to the attention of staff. One of our proudest achievements was working with the School to update the student leadership selection process, to make it more holistic. We enjoyed participating in the revised process and assisting in the appointment of the 2023 leaders.

Another project we have been excited to pilot is academic coaching for Years 10 to 12.

A number of students from our year are on site a few afternoons a week sharing our skills and expertise from completing the HSC. We share tips on what worked well for us, assist with reviewing concepts learnt in class and study and preparation tips.

Peer to peer review is a great way to cement your understanding – if you can explain it to someone else you are more likely to retain that knowledge.

We have enjoyed staying in contact with Hills Grammar, our teachers and younger peers as we transition into university.



Maka with English Teacher Ms Justine Zarebski

## Introducing

# Our inaugural Poet Laureate

*The Poet Laureate is a leadership position that embodies the voice of the students.*

Traditionally, it is a poet officially appointed by a government or institution, expected to compose poems for special events and occasions.

The term 'laureate' is related to the laurel wreath, which would crown the head of great writers or poets. It is a symbol of Apollo, the Greek god of wisdom. That's why the title of poet laureate implies that the poet is exceptionally skilled and wise.

The judges and audience were thrilled by the Year 10 students' original works, and their use of powerful, evocative language and significant themes.

Congratulations to the winner, Maka Mbakada, who was selected for her creativity, passion for arts, unique perspectives and desire to see a better future. The Hills Grammar Poet Laureate is tasked with writing and creating poems to be performed at school events throughout the year.

This is Maka's poem, 'Future', which she performed at the 2022 Foundation and Leadership Assembly.

Maka's inspiring work of art welcomed the Class of 2023, invoking deep reflection about where they have been and where they would like to end up in the future.

## Future

We now celebrate the experience of individuals  
The principals gathered through lessons provided  
Establishing students with hopes and ambitions  
The future was made for creative minds  
That have dreams and aspire to incite change  
Lives rearrange  
Time comes for the youth to engage  
In a world full of opportunities to operate  
A community consisting of collaboration and connection  
The next generation of artists and lawyers  
Doctors, designers, leaders, and writers  
The future was made for logical minds  
That analyse and find solutions to confusion  
The story unfolds  
Told by mathematicians and scientists  
Inside the inspired soul lies potential  
To be successful; an instrumental  
Part of society inviting ideas  
That make a difference  
The future is peculiar  
Carrying the ability to try any shoe is pleases  
A range of possibilities  
But in the end, its expertise is adaptability  
Facilitating a road built with precision  
Sometimes crossroads of decisions hinder our certainty  
But not completely knowing is the art of living  
The thrill of surrendering  
Accepting the idea that we can't control everything  
Ultimately, enjoying whatever reality is presenting  
Whilst simultaneously providing our complete commitment  
Remaining in the present  
The future was made for every breed and brain  
Creative and logical minds  
Designed with the intention  
That we thrive and find what we require  
To be everything we desire

Maka Mbakada, 2022



# Celebrating 40 Years of Extraordinary Education

People say 40 is the new 30 – it is in your 40s when the more life experience you have, the more your confidence grows. This confidence allows you to approach the next chapter of your life with the same enthusiasm and vigor as you did in your youth, whilst benefiting from the wisdom and insights that come with age. The same can be said for Hills Grammar. As we embark on our next decade we are at a stage where we are young enough to be agile and adaptable, yet we have also established a firm sense of identity and purpose. This combination empowers us to stay true to our values and principles while embracing innovation and change.

## Throwback Thursdays

Over the course of 2022, we posted 40 weeks of 'Throwback Thursdays' starting with 2021 and finishing at 1982. Here is a snapshot of our social media celebration of 40 years at Hills Grammar.





## Generations Breakfast

We started the year with a Generations Breakfast, welcoming past students who are now current parents of Hills Originals. The multi-generational event also included grandparents who played such a pivotal role in school life when they were parents as well as now as grandparents. This special connection to our school was celebrated with speeches from Carolyn Smale – Former Chair of School Council, Former PAFA President, Foundation parent and now grandmother to two current Hills Originals – and Liz Pellinkhof – Alumni Manager, Foundation Staff member and former parent. Everyone enjoyed reminiscing with the photo display, video story and tour of the School.





### *Celebration Dinner*

In August, families past and present enjoyed a fun-filled evening at our 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner, themed with a nostalgic touch of 80s glam.

It was fantastic to see some true 80s guests form a table amongst the taffeta, sequins, generous shoulder pads and iconic hairstyles that filled the Epping Club.

Our revelers enjoyed dinner, entertainment, dancing and an engaging speech by foundation student Donald Matthews (1988).

We were treated to memories of the fashion trends that have graced our school, as current students donned uniforms from our early days and served classic 80s snacks. A fabulous silent auction rounded off the night with over \$25,000 raised towards the redevelopment of the Booth Centre into a new innovation hub for the School.





## Foundation and Leadership Assembly

The joy of anniversary celebrations is largely about people and re-kindling connections with those whom you shared very special times. The Foundation Breakfast and Assembly saw a very special group of foundation staff, students and parents gather in the Learning Lounge, be guests of honour at the Assembly then enjoy lunch together at The Vicar. It was particularly pleasing to have our co-founder Ross Booth and his daughter Kate join us on this special occasion.

Foundation Student Dr Clair Whelan (Class of 1994), addressed the incoming leadership team, staff and parents. She spoke about her experiences during the early days of Hills Grammar recalling rocks, hills and the freedom of space. She recalled being the only girl starting in Year One, building forts and cubbies and overnight survival camps. Her stories of school life and excursions which just wouldn't be possible today, certainly entertained and enlightened our audience.





Hills  
Grammar

WELCOME  
BACK TO  
HILLS

### Back to Hills

A perfect Spring day welcomed a stream of past students, staff and parents to our alfresco afternoon tea on the oval surrounded by the buzz of the bi-annual Spring Fair. Amidst the sunshine and joy of the Spring Fair we celebrated the friendships forged at School many of which have blossomed over the years. 'Back to Hills' provided our Alumni with an opportunity to tour the school, view their 40th Anniversary pavers and marvel at the changes to our campus since their time at School.





# Hills Grammar Spring FAIR







# ArtsBeat 2022

*In the midst of the 40th Anniversary celebrations, the annual “Beats” festival returned for its fourth consecutive year, with the theme of ‘ArtsBeat’. This vibrant festival of the arts encompassed a diverse range of workshops and events that incorporated all facets of artistic expression, including visual arts, performance, literacy, and drama.*

The ArtsBeat festival provided a remarkable opportunity to commemorate our rich cultural heritage of art, literature, creative and spoken arts, dance, and music at Hills Grammar. These elements served as the foundation for numerous events throughout the two-week period. Staff, students, and families were invited to engage in a number of exciting activities, from lunchtime programs and guest speakers to immersive workshops. These programs and workshops catered to our ECEC, Junior, and Senior School students, as well as their families, fostering an environment of learning, creation, and celebration throughout our campus.

ArtsBeat commenced with a captivating launch by Wandana, an Indigenous education and entertainment company dedicated to preserving and promoting Australian Aboriginal culture. Through their Indigenous Cultural Immersion Program, our students embarked on a journey into the local Aboriginal history, significant places, people, events, and the beauty of Aboriginal art.

From ECEC to Year 12, our community worked together to create our own unique school story using indigenous symbols and narratives. The completed artwork now hangs in our Nexus Building.

Our Drama department took a bow with their remarkable *Play in a Day*, enthralling melodramas, and a sensational production of *House on Fire*.

Music echoed throughout the school, especially at the annual Music Showcase, a breathtaking display of musical prowess that delighted the entire school community. The campus itself transformed into an art gallery, adorned with stunning visual art installations, including a sculpture walk, intricately crafted pinch pots, and thought-provoking creative writing pieces.

Our parents and friends even got into the ArtsBeat spirit with cupcake decorating with Viola Creations, flower arranging with Madhu Shah, and painting in the Yurt with Jenny Carden.

The pinnacle of ArtsBeat was the unforgettable Finale—an “Around the World Dance Event” that brought the entire school together. Hills Grammar reverberated with a celebration of diverse cultures, dance, and movement as each year level immersed themselves in a different style of dance choreography by DanceMob. The culmination of this collective effort was a spectacular flashmob on the school oval, leaving a lasting impression on all who witnessed the synergy and joy that radiated from our united community.

*The ArtsBeat festival provided a remarkable opportunity to commemorate our rich cultural heritage of art, literature, creative and spoken arts, dance, and music at Hills Grammar.*



# Our Guiding Principals



1983 - Mr Booth greets new students and parents on the first day of school

Since its foundation, Hills Grammar has been guided by exceptional principals who have shaped its identity and nurtured its growth. Each principal has brought a unique vision, dedication to excellence, and commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive community, resulting in Hills Grammar becoming a renowned institution that consistently strives for educational excellence.



2002 - Ross & Joan Booth at the opening of the Booth Centre

## Ross Booth | Co-Founder

Mr Booth relates the story of New Year's Eve 1980, when around the dinner table with a group of friends, the discussion focused on the need for an independent school of excellence in the Hills District. The seed was sown and Ross Booth and Geoff Hasler commenced planning 'the school they would be proud to send their children to'.

Before June 1981 Mr Booth had commenced work on the prospectus, compiled a financial proposal for lending authorities and started the hunt for an appropriate location. The Jackson family's property Chelsea Park proved to be ideal and was secured in November that year.

In February 1982 the DA was submitted to BHSC and the school had the potential backing of the Australian Bank, dependent on enrolment numbers.

In July, a public meeting was organised with around 550 interested people in attendance. Within three weeks, parents of 130 future students were financially committed to The Hills Grammar School.

A very cold and wet Sunday October 10 in 1982 saw the celebration of the first Foundation Day with the first building under construction by Paynter Dixon P/L. Today, it houses the Languages Department.

This incredibly ambitious and idealistic project became a reality when, on Monday 7 February 1983, 162 smiling students, including Mr Booth's daughter Kate, excitedly entered the grounds for their first day as Hills Grammarians.

Mr Booth remained on the staff as Bursar until the end of 1983 while Mr Hasler discontinued ties with the school by the end of 1982.

*We wanted a student population that was truly international... thereby ensuring a great cross-fertilisation of ideas, ideals, with students learning from each other, on the basic human level, they are all the same. It was considered ethically indefensible to discriminate between students on the basis of gender, race, religion or country of birth... Establishing The Hills Grammar School was the result of a cooperative effort of many people sharing fundamental notions of ethics and justice.*

*Extract from Ross Booth's 25th Anniversary speech*

1980 - 1983



1983 - Mr Michael van Heeswyk at an early school assembly

*Michael Van Heeswyk | Foundation Headmaster | 1982 - 1986*

Mr Van Heeswyk came to The Hills Grammar School from Scotch College, Melbourne where he had taught in the Social Sciences, was Faculty Head, Social Sciences and Business Education as well as part-time lecturer/tutor Deakin University School of Social Sciences. Three of his children became foundation students of THGS.

Although the School's facilities were few, the vision and commitment for the entire community to Strive for Excellence was unwavering. At a time when only 35% of Australian students completed secondary education, he and the parents of 165 foundation students selected a co-educational, non-denominational independent school which was committed to delivering an academic education, defined by the subjects on offer. However, this did not overlook the need for opportunity and development in the fine arts, outdoor education, ethics, sport and a variety of co-curricular activities.

Mr Van Heeswyk introduced a Public Lecture series, an Ethics Program, an Academic and Careers Advisory Board, Staff Professional Development Program, Computer Education and community connections through Rotary, just to name a few.



The Principal's office



Mr Michael van Heeswyk and Mr Michael Smith catch up on campus

*Mr Van Heeswyk has brought the School to a point of physical prosperity from which there is no looking back. Furthermore, enrolments are at a maximum, waiting lists healthy and a curriculum well established which will form the basis for continued excellence. He also deserves our thanks for having assembled a professional, conscientious body of teachers committed to the ideals of the School and the wellbeing of the children.*

*The School Management Committee 1986*

1982 - 1986

# A Vision of Excellence



*...education is all about locating the genius in each and every child, that particle of the extraordinary, that glint of the divine, which resides in every single one of you, and moulding the path of its fulfilment.*

*Principal's address, 1991 Speech Night*

1990 - Mr Ron Ayling at the Art & Craft Show with Carolyn Smale

## Ron Ayling | Principal | 1986 - 1995

Mr Ayling joined the staff of The Hills Grammar School in 1984 as a Language teacher and as Director of Studies. In August 1986 the Chairman of School Council, Mr R.J. Scaramuzzi, announced his appointment as Principal of The Hills Grammar School, following the interim Management Committee of Leonie Coombes, Nigel Morgan and Ron Ayling, April- August 1986.

As Principal, he founded The Hills Grammar Society of the Arts in 1987 which staged three exhibitions of paintings, sculptures and ceramics (1987-1990) many musical recitals.

His interest in and personal experience of overseas study saw Mr Ayling initiate the Overseas Students program. Exchange students from Sweden, Africa, and England and international students from Hong Kong, China, Korea and Sri Lanka demonstrated his and the School's strong commitment to internationalism. Overseas and guest teachers were also a feature of Mr Ayling's time as Principal.

One notable building project among the five major developments he presided over, was the multi-level state-of-the-art Library which brought together junior and senior students in a superb modern facility in 1993.



1990 - Mr Ayling with School Captains Amanda Hutton and Stuart Warren

*For me the greatest reward was not from seeing building go up, gardens created, advanced technology installed; it has been watching children grow into adulthood in the most admirable way; it has been helping promising young teachers becoming outstanding educators, and from there the spirit of The Hills Grammar School was distilled.*

*An extract from Mr Ayling's departing thoughts*

*A great school is more than the sum of its parts. It is a living, developing, growing entity, and when you and I are just dusty unfamiliar names on honour boards, portraits and archival rolls, The Hills Grammar School will continue to thrive. Today's newcomers are tomorrow's legends. In some ways it is better to be an ancestor than a descendant.*

*Newsletter No. 15, October 1992*



1992 - Mr Ayling and 'support crew' at the 10th Anniversary Celebrations

1986 - 1995



Enjoying a ride in Mr Phipps' red chair

*The overwhelming impression of Mr Phipps' time as Principal is of leadership through service and exemplification of the school motto to Strive for Excellence. Ultimately his devotion and passion for Hills Grammar set a standard for loving our school which will be his enduring legacy.*

*Deputy Principal Mr Smith commenting in Mr Phipps' Vale, 2016*

*Robert Phipps, Principal 1996-2016*

As the longest serving Principal to date, Mr Phipps oversaw major developments (physical, ideological, teaching and learning, wellbeing and co-curricular) over his 20 years of leadership. Adjoining properties were purchased, buildings re-furnished and built to accommodate changes in curriculum and students' needs.

Mr Phipps commenced his tenure with the priority of "familiarisation; of getting to know the school community and the uniqueness of its cultures." He hand-delivered birthday cards to students and staff. Awards of Excellence were also a feature of his time as Principal.

Close relationships with the entire community were important to Mr Phipps and so the Community Relations Department was introduced to promote meaningful relationships with our parents, alumni, and greater community.

His commitment to know each student was a familiar theme; "Our students are our reason for being and one of the many joys I have had this year has been my hosting lunches with the Junior School classes on my verandah. Each child has his or her own story to tell...Even sitting in the Principal's 'red chair' can be a real delight for them." 1997 Annual Principal's Speech

"I will continue to be determined that every boy and every girl will have a place in the sun, and there will be a spirit of hope and goodwill within our school. It is its students, its girls and boys, which give the School its reason for being. We are here to serve them."

The Performance Centre was subsequently named in his honour – The R J Phipps Performance Centre.



2013 - Mr Phipps with Senior School students

1996-2016



2020 - Mr Smith with Kindergarten Students

## Michael Smith | Principal | 2017 - 2021

Mr Smith served as Principal for almost five years after 18 years as Deputy Principal. From his first speech in 1999, Mr Smith identified how his values aligned so perfectly with those of the School. Hills Grammar's celebration of diversity, as well as its challenges, opportunities and creativity appealed to this leader and humanitarian, who was to make his mark on student-centred learning, which is fundamental to the School's mission of fostering each student's potential for greatness.

Michael Smith was a transformational principal, inspiring staff and students alike, to meet challenges and to actualise the goals inherent in its vision, Extraordinary Education – Extraordinary Individuals. It is a tribute to Michael Smith's deep and abiding humanity that he made it his personal as well as his professional endeavour to support every child, every family, every member of staff, who was willing to embrace the School motto, Strive for Excellence.

Mr Smith demonstrated his leadership in so many ways. Some luminous examples include the development of the Student Wellbeing Program, the nurturing of an international perspective and the recognition of alumni as partners in learning and as valuable contributors to society.

*"We have, in 2017 and beyond, an opportunity to unite and in so doing achieve extraordinary things together. Hills Grammar has been developed and deliberately created for this purpose – not for its own sake, but to ensure that our students are provided with an environment and atmosphere which is conducive to learning, discovery of their passions and formation of their character. This is our task, our challenge and our opportunity."*

*Mr Smith's own words as the newly appointed Principal*



2019 - Mr Smith addressing visitors to the School



ECEC students reading their stories to Mrs Yager

*I made it one of my aims that Hills students would be heard, that they would have a voice and greater agency, because I think too much education is done to young people, not with them*

*Karen Yager | Principal | 2021 -*

As the School's fifth, and first female, Principal, Mrs Yager commenced in 2021, with more than 26 years' experience in education, including, most recently, as Deputy Headmaster K-12, at Knox Grammar.

"I am looking forward to building on the values and legacy of the Hills Grammar principals who have come before me. The School's unique culture and focus on nurturing their Hills Originals attracted me to the position.

I really enjoy working with students to prepare them for life beyond the school gates. I am looking forward to working in a co-educational environment where I am committed to empowering our young men and women to take their place in the world with courage, confidence and conviction and the ability and will to positively influence their own lives and the world around them.

"At 40 years young, Hills Grammar is agile enough to innovate and develop our offering, but old enough to know who we are and to maintain the essential elements of our culture...

I have made it one of my aims that Hills students would be heard, that they would have a voice and greater agency, because I think too much education is done to young people, not with them."

Soon after starting her tenure, Mrs Yager called for students to form a Student Wellbeing Team, Hills Passport Team and a Strategic Planning Team. The children have contributed to major school decisions, such as the mobile phone policy and microcredentialing.

"I could see so much potential here with these children. I actually coined the phrase 'Renaissance Entrepreneurs' because the school was founded by entrepreneurs with humanist values who had the courage to take risks. And that became really important."

"I want young people, who will face so many problems in a complex, dynamic world, to have the skills and confidence to make a difference."



In the Senior Study Centre with senior students



Appreciating the 40th anniversary cake designed by students as part of their food for celebrations unit

*As educators it is one of our great joys to nurture the passion, knowledge, and skills of young people, to give them the confidence to achieve their unique potential.*

# A long and varied history...

After an astonishing 41 years of service, Elizabeth Pellinkhof (also known as Liz, Mrs P, or 'the lady with the camera' to many) is bidding a fond farewell to Hills Grammar.



Liz (front right) with Hills Grammar staff, 1983



Liz leading the choir at the 1983 whole school concert at Dural Memorial Hall.

When Ross Booth and Geoff Hasler founded Hills Grammar with the vision of establishing an independent, non-denominational and co-educational institution where students would be the primary focus, they were determined to recruit teachers who aligned with this philosophy.

In 1982, with enough enrolments to have another primary class, Ross Booth invited Elizabeth Pellinkhof to apply for a role at Hills Grammar. This unique opportunity resonated with the young and enthusiastic teacher.

In 1983, upon the School's opening, Liz was appointed to the position of Year 2/3 composite classroom teacher, joining the small cohort of foundation staff...

"14 of us in total from Kindergarten to Year 5, so it was very cosy..."

As the years passed and the school grew, Liz took leave to start her family, raising two wonderful boys, Nicholas and Antony, both of whom later became students at the school.

After the birth of her first son, Nicholas, the principal Ron Ayling invited Elizabeth to teach in the Senior School, delving into Medieval History with Year 8 among other things.

Embracing the opportunity to work within a faculty environment, collaborating with Geography and Legal Studies teachers, as well as guiding Year 10 students in their history and personal development, proved to be a truly rewarding experience.

Following the birth of her second son, Antony, Ron once again approached Liz, this time to assist in coordinating the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the school's opening.



At the 10th Anniversary celebrations, 1992



Helping with make-up for the Junior School production of 'Toad of Toad Hall', 1988

*There was a lot of talk about this new independent school which was due to open in Kenthurst the following year...it wasn't difficult to pick up on the excitement and passion surrounding this fledgling school. It was very clear that Hills Grammar was going to be unique in character, ethos and learning environment. It was going to also expect high standards of integrity, dedication and continual professional improvement from its' staff, and I'm pleased to say this remains a constant today.*

*From a podcast with Liz and Chris Furner*

## Mrs Liz Pellinkhof, Foundation Staff Member and 10th Anniversary Celebrations Co-ordinator



Liz Pellinkhof is perhaps the most familiar and respected personality to a generation of Hills Grammar students. As a Foundation Staff Member in 1983, Liz taught the Years 2/3 Composite class, was Housemistress of Castle, and co-ordinated Music and Drama. She conducted various School Choirs from 1983 to 1987, organised Primary Playnights and was deeply involved in the organisation of Speech Days.

Liz taught Years 2, 3 and 5 while a full-time member of the Junior School staff, and returned after her first baby to teach Years 8, 9 and 10 History, as well as Years 7, 8, 11 and 12 Living Skills and supervising Year 10 Peer Support.

Liz co-ordinated the writing of the Junior School Social Studies Curriculum, has completed her Bachelor of Education while on our staff, has been involved with Philosophy in the Junior School, has been a member of the Gender Equity, Functions, Uniform and 10th Anniversary Committees, and is currently studying Speech and Drama at an advanced level.

No other teacher has given so much of herself to make our School what it is today. How fitting it is that Liz Pellinkhof should be co-ordinating our Foundation celebrations, and how deserving she is of every bit of help that we can give.

Reflecting on her eagerness to lead the celebrations, Elizabeth humorously recalls, "I must have been quite sleep-deprived at the time because I said, 'Yes! That would be great! I can do this... it's only six months later!'"

This readiness to always say 'Yes' became a defining aspect of Liz's career at the school. No challenge was too daunting, no opportunity too distant—she has always been willing to propel the school towards its' next goal.

The 10th Anniversary celebration served as a turning point for Liz, inspiring her to expand her contributions beyond the classroom. She approached the then Principal, Ron Ayling, with the idea of raising the school's profile in local publications. Thus began her journey of adjusting her already busy schedule to include photography, writing feature articles and submissions to local publications. Liz's connections with the local media proved

instrumental in enhancing the school's reputation and fostering a strong bond between Hills Grammar and the Hills district community.

When Rob Phipps assumed the role of the School's third principal, he recognized the significance of branding, consistent and quality communication, as well as engaging the school community. Consequently, he appointed Liz to the school executive in 1997, as Director of Marketing and Community Relations.

For more than 20 years, Liz thrived in this field, evolving with the responsibilities that seamlessly aligned with her dedication to the School. Her unwavering commitment to revolutionising marketing and fostering connections within the School led to her being awarded a Fellowship of Educate Plus.

*This readiness to always say 'Yes' became a defining aspect of Liz's career at the school. No challenge was too daunting, no opportunity too distant...*

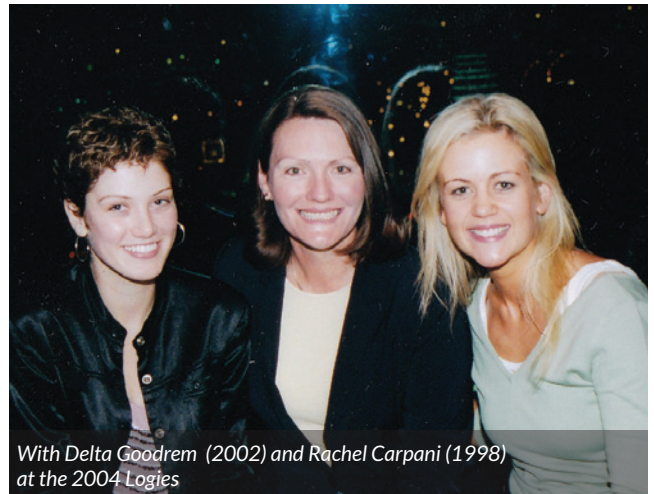
# Farewell Liz Pellinkhof



In 2002 Liz was awarded the Mallik Family Staff Award for her outstanding contribution to the School as a foundation member of the teaching staff.



With Eric at the 2014 PAFA Diamond Ball



With Delta Goodrem (2002) and Rachel Carpani (1998) at the 2004 Logies

During this time, Liz was often spotted documenting the goings-on in the school from behind the lens of her camera. Liz was also crucial in the staging of a number of ex-student drama productions, under the banner of "EXTRAS".

In 2018, with a new grandson, Liz decided to go part-time, and for the last four years has been working as Alumni Manager, developing the alumni database and fostering connections with our past students.

Liz has also been working closely with the 'Partners in Learning' program. "... this has been an absolute joy and very evident that our past students are Hills Originals. They've visited every class – every year group, covering topics from viticulture to prisoners in remand, from

sustainable cities to seagrass forests, physics, marketing, international travel and so it goes on."

The entire Pellinkhof family have been an integral part of the wider Hills Grammar community. Liz's husband, Eric, lent his voice to countless occasions over the years; as MC at formal events, announcing raffle winners or calling lively bush-dances with his band, the Inland Navigators. His involvement brought a touch of warmth and familiarity to the School's gatherings.

Liz's years of dedication and service have shaped the very fabric of the School, and her impact will continue to resonate in the lives of students, alumni and colleagues for years to come.





Liz with the first recipient of the Hills Original Alumni Award, Joel Edgerton (1991) in 2015



Belinda Buda (1993) and Lee Wood (1993) with their Junior School teacher in 2023



Liz with her 1984 Year 3 Class at their 10 year reunion in 2003



The first K-12 graduates in 1995, Jeremy Coombes, Daniel Jones, Shilpa Prahbu and Kim Watson



In 2022, Liz was presented with her 40 Years of Service award at the 40th Annual Presentation of Awards.

Connecting again

# with our Community

After three years of social distancing, it was fantastic to bring our community back together in 2022 for a whole range of events on campus.

The HG Parent Connectors, parent volunteers who assist the School in welcoming new families, organising social functions and supporting the Parents and Friends Association (PAFA) enjoyed getting together as a group each term. Our Connectors took the lead on planning social functions and building the community for each of our year groups and families.

Mother's Day was combined with the annual Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, with families raising much needed funds for the Cancer Council. Our Hills Grammar Dads then enjoyed 'Donuts with Dad' while observing Jersey Day, raising awareness for organ donation. Our Junior School students were excited to welcome their Grandparents back to campus for Grandparents Day. A visit to the Book Fair was a must-do activity and a Hills Grammar Grandparents' Day tradition we were delighted to resurrect.

PAFA coordinated a number of events for our Hills Grammar families. From Movie Night to the Spring Fair, they had a busy year of community engagement and fundraising. This concerted effort resulted in a \$120,000 donation to the School as announced at the Annual Presentation of Awards.





### From the PAFA President

As we celebrated 40 years of Hills Grammar in 2022, the dedicated PAFA team enjoyed getting back into the full swing of meetings, fundraisers and events.

We were delighted to welcome new Principal Mrs Karen Yager. The PAFA committee has enjoyed getting to know Mrs Yager at our many meetings and fundraising events throughout the year. We welcomed the opportunity to be involved in a feedback session during the Strategic planning day with the School Executive and School Council.

In person events returned and throughout 2022 our focus was on building the Hills Grammar community and fundraising. Our 2022 events included :

- Commemorative tea towels for Kindergarten, Year 6 and Year 12
- Movie night
- Mother's and Father's Day stalls
- Staff appreciation coffee van and breakfast

- Gingerbread house kit fundraiser
- Second-hand uniforms
- PAFA Meetings

The largest event on the calendar was our 40th Anniversary Spring Fair. This event attracted over 4000 people to the campus on a beautiful October day. Coordinated by PAFA, the Advancement & Engagement team and the HG Parent Connectors, Spring Fair once again proved to be a wildly successful occasion. Rides, food trucks, market stalls, music, entertainment, and the much-anticipated helicopter rides made Spring Fair the place to be. As with all events of this scale, there are many people I would like to thank.

The Spring Fair Committee, led by Radha Shah, took charge of planning, booking and coordinating. Our HG Connectors, who coordinated the year group stalls and worked with our parent volunteers. The School's Advancement & Engagement Team, and Nicole Bennett-Santon in particular, who planned,

coordinated and implemented so much of this event. Our Spring Fair sponsors whose support and enthusiasm allowed us to raise a significant amount for the School.

*Elite Sponsors* | Budget | Castle Group | Efficient Capital Solutions | Wealth 360

*Platinum Sponsors* | Force Air | Bright Print Group | Gower Jones | Max Tennis | Scendar | Shockwave Signs | Sydney Plant Market | The Little Gym Dural | TMA Australia Pty Ltd | TPM Events

*Gold Sponsors* | Mindworx Psychology | Raptor Reptiles

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I would like to thank the Hills Grammar Community for its support and engagement with PAFA events across the year.

Due to the success of the events, PAFA was delighted to make a \$120,000 donation to the School in 2022.

Russell Burns | PAFA President

# For the Love of Writing

From the very early days our students' creative talents and interests have been nurtured and supported by their teachers and their peers. This feature brings together a variety of writers from the community; alumni, staff and former staff. Each writer has a story and purpose to share, many with their roots in the Hills Grammar classroom.

I won't be the only person to write glowingly here about Mr Baines, or to try to express what a gift it was to attend his classes... even at the time, we all knew how lucky we were to have him as our teacher.

### Kylie Needham Class of 1992

In 1988 - which now feels like a hundred years ago - I was a Year Eight Hills Grammar student, and in the dancing Chorus in our school production of Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. (I was a nervous dancer, but my acting skills were worse; the Chorus had one word of joint dialogue to begin the show - 'Well' - and on opening night I went blank and forgot it.)

I can pin down so many 'firsts' to that production of *Antigone*: the first time I read and was mesmerised by a Greek tragedy; the first time I felt the collective thrill of putting on a play; and most importantly perhaps, the first time I met Mr Baines, who would be my English teacher in Years 10-12.

I won't be the only person to write glowingly here about Mr Baines, or to try to express what



© Daniel Boud

a gift it was to attend his classes. I remember laughing so hard in his lessons that my cheeks hurt. Other times, I'd leave class more thoughtful, having interrogated an idea within a text. Even at the time, we all knew how lucky we were to have him as our teacher.

After finishing high school, and completing a BA in Communication, I started my first job as a Script Trainee on a top-rating television show I'd never watched before: *Home & Away*. (My boss called me 'Plankton', which tells you all you need to know about how important I was.)

Working full-time, in-house, on a show that aired to millions of viewers worldwide, and being in a team producing two and a half hours of story per week, was an invaluable training ground for me as a writer - and a lot of fun. People dismiss shows like *Home & Away* as fluff, but for a twenty-one year old, fresh out

of uni, it was a rare opportunity to learn about plotting, structuring and shooting scripted drama, and about how television is made. It was also a brilliant place to make mistakes - and I made a lot of them! - but it was probably when I learned the most.

For twenty-five years I've worked as a screenwriter and editor for television and film. I've won two AWGIE (Australian Writers' Guild) Awards and hold Masters degrees in English Literature and Creative Writing. But what I've always wanted to do is write a book.

In April, my first novel *Girl in a Pink Dress* was published by Penguin Random House. It's a story about love and art, about sacrifice and ambition, and the often damaging relationship between artist and muse. Writing it was a complete joy - much less stressful than writing TV! - and I'd love to keep doing it.



*Richard Baines*  
*English & Drama teacher*  
*1987 - 2004*

My own education in post-war England was gloomy, drab and unremarkable.

I arrived in Australia in 1969. I had hitch-hiked across India and down through South-east Asia. I wore an American army jacket and sandals and carried a rucksack and two long playing records: Bob Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel. I had been offered a job - unseen - by a wonderful man Peter Gebhardt in Bathurst. I had not been in the country for more than six months before Peter said to me, 'Baines, you are going to write a pageant.' You've gotta love someone who says that to you. I wrote a pageant.

I don't think I've ever had ambition. We war babies were not told that we could seize the day, do anything we wanted, follow our dreams or be the best version of ourselves. We took opportunities when they presented themselves. When finances were difficult I started working on books for schools with a good friend, Brian Keyte. We were lucky. They sold. Brian took care of the technical stuff. I worked on the creative side of things. So I owe more to friends and luck than to any classical inspiration. I am a jobbing writer, I suppose. When COVID hit I took out my old travel diaries. 'Who's going to read these?' I wondered. 'No one. Not even me!' So I decided to use these half forgotten descriptions of faraway places as exotic backgrounds for a number of spy novelettes *a la* James Bond. I

*I had not been in the country for more than six months before Peter said to me, 'Baines, you are going to write a pageant.' You've gotta love someone who says that to you. I wrote a pageant.*

have had great fun writing about guns, villains, car chases and pretty girls as I turn eighty. I have wondered why it took me so long to write anything of this length.

'You're a slow developer, Poppa,' says Sophie, aged twelve.

My last story is about three people who have to go to Ukraine. Set in 2022. It was exciting including bits of news of the war as they happened and threading them into an ever-changing plot. It was like riding a whirlwind.

I have taught English in England, Uganda, Kenya and Australia, but am only just learning to write.

I need another eighty years.

*Geoff Gates*

*Hills Grammar English teacher*

*Director of Teaching & Learning*

I've had two main creative passions for as long as I can remember. My first guitar teacher issued a composition challenge. I was 12 and only knew four chords, but I did it! I've been writing songs ever since. Later in school I started to write poetry. Initially it was parody I shared with my English teacher to get a response. She did that old teacher trick of taking me seriously, and so I kept going. At university, I wrote short stories and had a few published. In my twenties I lived in England and Germany, where I wrote my first novel, *A Ticket for Perpetual Locomotion* (2005). After I returned to Sydney and started at Hills Grammar, I completed a Masters in Creative Writing and worked on my second novel, *The Copyart Murders* (2015).

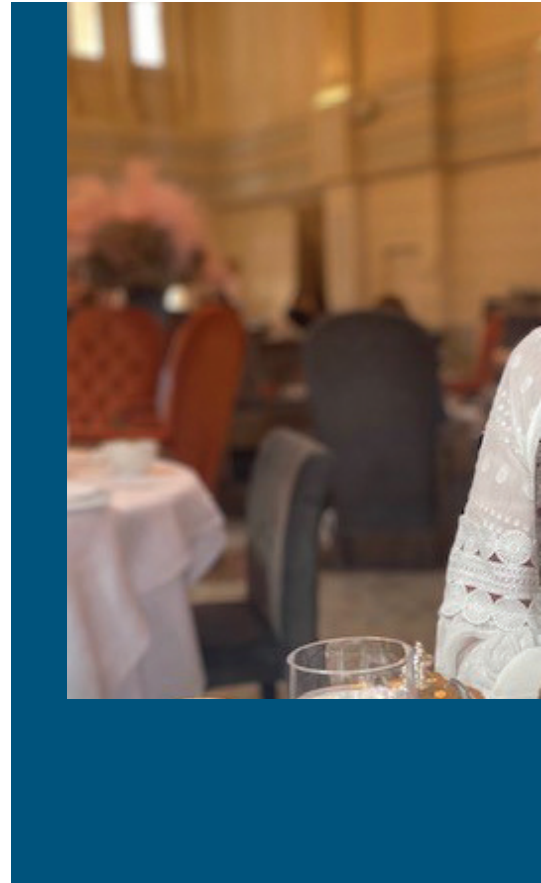
What I enjoy most about writing – both fiction and song writing – is the feeling of surprise at what comes out of your 'pen', and how an initial idea can come to life, sometimes quickly and sometimes years later.

I record song ideas on my phone, and fiction ideas in a journal.

Of course it requires concerted effort to turn an idea into a completed work. When I am teaching students Extension 2 English, where they complete a Major Work, I talk about setting up a routine. I worked on my third novel as part of a Doctor of Creative Arts degree, writing in the State Library on Thursday nights, nudging forward a little each week.

I've just come back from a two week Varuna Residential Fellowship where I spent time preparing my manuscript to send to publishers. In many ways the real work begins now. I have also recently finished recording a second album of original songs, which I plan to release independently later this year. You can find my music on Spotify, Apple Music etc. under the not-very-well-hidden name of 'Geoff Gates'.

This year we've introduced a Year 10 Personal Passion Project. Thinking about it, I could add teaching as my third creative passion. After all, it's often an interested teacher who gets us started.



*Thinking about it, I could add teaching as my third creative passion. After all, it's often an interested teacher who gets us started.*





Josie Reid  
Art & French teacher  
1989 - 2000

*What was the inspiration for 'The Man In The Black Coat'?*

The bush fires in Australia were my inspiration for writing this story. The death toll, loss of homes, wildlife, livelihoods and the displacement of people made me think of parallels to other types of disasters.

War brings refugees and fires bring homelessness, which is part of the same story.

Courage and bravery is how mankind deals with these apocalyptic events. The refugee question is close to my experience because I was one of those displaced people after the second World War. My mother and I, without any identifying documentation, survived the aftermath of a concentration camp, because of the kindness of strangers.

*What was the greatest challenge of the writing process?*

I used firsthand accounts to tell this story through letters and a memoir. The challenge

was the translation of these letters from Dutch to English. I am the only one who speaks Dutch in my immediate family and without me, all these letters, which have been kept for 80 years, would be lost. I wrote the story for my children and grandchildren

*Do you think you will continue with your autobiography?*

It is the only story I will ever write because it would have been lost if I had not. Everyone has a story and this book is only about a very small part of my early life. I have had a glorious life for which I will be forever thankful. The short story of Henk, Lily, and Josine, shaped my life forever. The beginning of a story is often the key to the end. Suffering, loving, loss and renewal is a part of everyone's story.

*What is your favourite writing snack?*

No particular degustation was needed to write this story. In fact it would have been a sacrilege to eat whilst writing a story about starvation.



Viet-Anh Nguyen  
Class of 2010

I am a musician who takes a multi-faceted approach to developing a creative career and business. After completing an undergraduate degree the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, I performed on numerous tours, recorded and produced international artists, and most recently, accepted a role as the Artistic Director of the newly minted Co-Operative Orchestra.

*Can you trace your current love for writing/composing back to school days? If so, how did that develop?*

I can absolutely trace it right back to year 8, when we were looking at pop music and various song structures; at the time I'd found this dinky little recording device (Zoom MRS8) and would spend many a lunchtime just doing take after take in the music rooms.

*Who are your favourite composers/songwriters?*

My creative influences are pretty diverse. For music, I find myself drawn to Dream Theater, Hiromi Uehara, and Paco de Lucia, whilst for philosophy and literature, I'm influenced by Khalil Gibran, Umberto Eco, and the few writings of Hypatia one can find. There's something about a vividly colourful pool of influences that really gets my creative energy going.

*When and how did your composing become important to you?*

My writing was initially an escapism, then an idealism, and now it's become a channel of free expression. A range of opportunities have given me the freedom to write and produce whatever

I want, without concern for 'commercial value' or 'popularity/virality'.

*What would you consider the greatest challenge of working as a full-time creative? Any advice for aspiring creatives?*

I would absolutely say it's time and energy management - motivation to do the work is no problem if you love what you do every day, but a creative can just as easily over commit their time and overextend their energy, underestimating the consequences on their health (physical and mental). My advice is simple: imagine you're your own employee - what kind of work/life balance would you like to have?

*Shameless Plug*

In 2022, I released three fairly different-sounding records under my solo artist moniker of 'Van Leucia' - 'Saturnalia', 'Reminisce' and 'Inexorable' which was my first full-length album of symphonic progressive metal including one song utilising Latin text that I wouldn't have been able to write from scratch if it weren't for the classes at Hills all those years ago!



*Cameron Henderson*  
*Class of 2006*

I'm a songwriter. Having worked as a professional guitarist since leaving school in 2006 I became fascinated with songwriting and particularly lyrics in 2016 which coincided with a deep dive into the music of Bob Dylan. I became obsessed with songs that put you in a story within a couple of lines and cause you to connect with the emotions of the character

until the song feels like it's about yourself. I worked hard at lyrics, practising daily to develop it - just like I had with guitar playing. I release my original music under the alias 'CJ Stranger'.

My inspiration to become a professional musician occurred in mid high school. I suppose songwriting was something that eventually flowed from my continued study of music after school and university. I had a band with my mates and my brothers when I was at school.

I remember two members of the music department being influential. Eric Hutchens showed my brother and myself that it was possible to become a professional musician. Guitar teacher Chris Gillespie (although I never actually had a lesson off of him) was someone who wrote real songs with crafted lyrics and I remember that fascinated me. Later on I recorded my first album of songs with Chris at his studio.

My favourite songwriters are Bob Dylan, Kurt Vile, Gillian Welch, Liz Stringer, William Crighton and Neil Finn.

I have learnt to use the senses in my writing; the normal ones (touch, smell, sight, etc etc) as well as kinaesthetic (position of body, movement). This allows the listeners to instantly relate to what you're saying and you can place them in the story quickly.

I'm fortunate to always have great songs surrounding me in my guitar playing work which is a constant source of inspiration. Whether it's experiencing the raw power of song playing 'I Was Only 19' with John Schumann (Redgum) or the Australian landscape paintings in William Crighton's music to being immersed in the world of Bob Dylan for a year touring with 'Girl From the North Country'. I've been very fortunate to have great songs constantly rotating in my brain.

'Hey Stranger' my album under 'CJ Stranger' came out in 2020 and is available everywhere online and my new record should be out later this year.



*Jessica Belcher*  
*Class of 2002*

I am a post-doctoral research fellow who writes scientific research. After graduating from Hills Grammar in 2002, I completed a Bachelor of Arts -Psychology with Honours, a Master of Clinical Psychology, and a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Clinical Psychology. I loved the experience of writing my PhD

(basically a long book made up of a series of experiments that tell a story). I looked at the role of autobiographical memory and imagination in the development of stress, and since then I have enjoyed writing peer reviewed journal articles and a book chapter.

*Can you trace your current love for writing back to school days? If so, how did that develop?*

My love and appreciation of writing came later, when writing my PhD. However, my love of learning developed in Year 8 science class. I was struggling with schoolwork as I had moved interstate twice in a short timeframe and attended 4 different schools in as many years. I was put in a small science class with the lovely Mrs Gregson, who helped me develop a passion for inquiry and explanation. I think it was a report about photosynthesis that was an "A-HA" moment for me, and there were many more of these moments at school where things just clicked, and my confidence grew. I loved learning and especially loved PDHPE and Ancient

History, I remember writing copious amounts for assignments on marathon running and Hatshepsut.

*Was there a teacher or author from your school days who particularly inspired you to pursue this career?*

There were many! Mrs Gregson inspired my love of science; Miss Irvine inspired my confidence in maths (and statistics); Mr Anderson inspired my love for devising a story from evidence (ancient history); Miss Ferguson inspired a love of learning about health and wellbeing (PDHPE).

*What is your favourite writing snack?*

Cup of tea and Maltesers.

*What are your plans for future writings?*

I am currently investigating moderators of HSC stress and testing school-based treatments for stress and anxiety... and writing a few papers on this topic...whilst having my 4th child!



*Gabi Pasztor*  
*Class of 2002*

I'm Gabi Pasztor – copywriter, English language teacher and author of contemporary fiction books under the nom de plume Gabriella Margo.

Pre-pandemic, I was teaching English to migrant and refugee students in Sydney. I knew I'd be out of work once immigration ceased,

so I started my own business as a copywriter, working with businesses in a variety of fields like finance, health and tech. Over the years, I had completed many writing courses, so it wasn't completely new – I had just never monetised it.

Once lockdowns began, I quickly realised I was not quite the sourdough-baking goddess I'd hoped, so instead, I wrote three fiction books in my spare time. Of those, two were published in 2022.

I never aspired to be a writer – I despised essays and set texts at school! As a first-generation immigrant, English was my second language, and I never thought that one day I'd be published by the likes of HarperCollins, The Guardian and HuffPost.

The industry is tough to navigate; though – getting my fiction work published was one of the biggest obstacles I've ever overcome, with more than a hundred rejections before I got the big 'yes'.

My fond memories of Hills Grammar come down to solid friendships, and the teachers who consistently encouraged me to do my best and be more confident. Thank you to all of them; notably Mr O'Neill, Mr Morgan, Mrs McFadden, Mrs Kempthorne and Mr Nitarski.

I'm an avid reader, inspired by authors Taylor Jenkins Reid, Colleen Hoover, Dawn O'Porter, Harlan Coben and brilliant Aussies Craig Silvey, Sally Hepworth and Markus Zusak.

Post-pandemic, I still teach, run my copywriting business, write fiction and read books every day. Right now I'm working on a crime / romance novel. I most enjoy writing when I have no deadline, and the book is still under wraps.

*Tulips from Mal* is out now (10% of profits goes to the Animal Welfare League), and *All's Fair in Love and Tequila* is available from HarperCollins (10% of profits goes to Take 3 for the Sea).



*Jen Dennis*  
*Class of 2006*

My name is Jen Dennis and I've been writing for twenty-one years. I started out composing song lyrics and poetry, and before long I began writing full-length novels. I have published a children's picture book, a survival thriller and I have been the ghostwriter behind a non-fiction publication.

*Can you trace your current love for writing back to school days? If so, how did that develop?*

My love of storytelling began in Year 8 during Mrs. Kowald's Non-Language class. We were assigned the task of writing a story, and suddenly my imagination had an outlet. At the end of the term, I submitted a 48-page novella – all hand written! Mrs. Kowald said that if I enjoyed writing I should keep going; and I haven't stopped.

*Was there a teacher or author from your school days who particularly inspired you to pursue this hobby/career?*

I was very fortunate to have so many supportive teachers that encouraged me to go for my dreams.

In particular, Mr. McClure – my maths teacher – heard I had an interest in writing and he used to take home my draft manuscripts, read them, and then provided me with feedback the following week.

*When and how did your writing/composing become important to you?*

Writing gave me a voice. Verbal communication will always be a challenge for me, but my thoughts become clear and concise when I put the words onto paper.

*What has helped or hindered you most when writing?*

The most helpful thing? Deadlines! Life gets busy, but if I set myself a strict deadline – I get the job done. A few years back I completed a draft manuscript standing at 85,000 words in just seven and a half weeks.

*What are your plans for future books/compositions?*

At the moment I'm writing a fictional novel for young teens inspired by my own schooling experience. It's a glimpse into the neurodivergent mind and how we see the world differently.

My survival thriller MORSE CODE is available online and in selected retail stores.



Andrew Hansen  
Class of 1992

I'm mostly known for being in the comedy group The Chaser, with whom I made a lot of TV shows as a writer, actor, composer and producer. For some reason, they were watched by millions of people. There's no accounting for taste.

I'm a touring comedian these days, using plenty of guitar and piano in my shows, and I'm co-author of the *Bab Sharkey and the Animal Mummies* series.

I became keen on creative writing during English classes run by Hills Grammar's eclectic staff – cryptic, analytical thinkers such as Ms Prime, Mr Baines and Mrs Pratt. (I'm still calling them by their posh, formal names!)

Outside hours, Mrs Boyd ran marvellous drama classes where she generously pretended to find me as funny as I thought I was.

And there were variety nights, known as *The Soiree* and *Victoriana*, where teachers like Mr Molyneux and Miss Waldock helped turn me into the peculiar musical comedian I am today.

I usually wrote and performed in those shows with my dearly missed school friend David Bathur, who taught me so much about humour and imagination.

Growing up, I adored comedy acts like The Goodies, Monty Python, Billy Connolly, *Blackadder* and *The Young Ones*. As a grown-up, I've loved British and American things like *The League of Gentlemen*, *South Park*, and *Curb Your Enthusiasm*. From Australia, I've really enjoyed the work of Anne Edmonds, Greg Larsen, Judith Lucy, Denise Scott and Aunty Donna. My music heroes include Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne and The Beatles – and yes, I do like The Traveling Wilburys!

In the book world, I'm wading through all the famous titles, hoping to read most of the best-known novels while I'm still on the planet.

I found the key to writing one's own stuff is not to be precious about it. It's a job, after all. There's no room for 'writer's block' when you're commissioned to do a book or a show.

So if I were to pass on anything I've learned, it's to buckle down at 9am (or whenever suits) and simply churn it out! Glamorous, huh?



Jackie Merchant  
Class of 1987

My name is Jackie Merchant and I am the author of three novels, *The Promise Horse*, *The Pony Question* and *The Homecoming Horse*.

I don't have any formal training to be a writer unless being a big reader counts, and I have an imagination that loves to work.

It was Mr Ayling, my Year 9 English teacher who saw some potential in my creative writing

and suggested I consider doing more of it. Miss Delprado took our social studies class – here I first understood the power of writing to influence and challenge or change opinion.

Being an author seemed something that "other" people did, so it just sat as an idea in the back of my head. But ideas don't wait for forever, so I gave myself a month to write a novel. No matter how difficult it got I'd just keep going. Shows how little I knew. They take a bit longer than that.

I wanted to write novels with an Australian voice, where you'd hear our birds and see our landscape with real and relatable characters.

I don't have a favourite part of writing a novel – each stage is special – the end of a first draft when you have a story is a relief, the rewrite when you get to paint in the detail and your characters really start to live is magical, and even the editing process when you work with your publisher and editor to make the book ready for the world. No one tells you though that it's hard work.

It's the best kind of work, but it will challenge and push you, most things worth doing well will.

*The Promise Horse*, *The Pony Question* and *The Homecoming Horse* are Published by Walker Publishing and available through all good book shops or online. The *Pony Question* is also published in Germany under the title "A Heart and a Pony". The title of which was kindly translated for me years later, by Ron Ayling, the teacher who first saw my writing potential.

*It's the best kind of work, but it will challenge and push you, most things worth doing well will.*



*Georgia Fairclough*  
*Class of 2000*

A classically trained pianist and freelance music composer, I completed my Master of Music (composition major) with my thesis exploring the composer/director relationship in documentary film. My B.A. in English and Music from Chatham Uni. Pittsburgh PA, USA, was where I composed several instrumental ensembles which were performed by members of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

I've written music for community service announcements as well as film projects for the Sydney Film School - "White Sound" screened at a number of film festivals around the world, winning several awards. The piece "I" from my original solo piano work "5 Pieces" has played on ABC Classic FM and numerous community radio stations around the country.

I'm currently a piano teacher and a Year 11 and 12 HSC music composition tutor at Hills Grammar. Film Music has always been my favourite genre/style, as it holds so much power, and so perfectly bridges the gap between "classical" and popular music.

*Can you trace your current love for writing/composing back to school days? If so, how did that develop?*

Ever since I began learning the piano at age seven, it was never enough to just play someone else's pieces. As much as I loved learning Mozart, Debussy and Beethoven, I always interrupted my own practice to compose my own pieces.

*Who are your favourite authors/composers/songwriters?*

Hans Zimmer is my favourite film composer. The way he blends styles, and utilises minimalism, is mesmerising and frankly ingenious.

*When and how did your writing/composing become important to you?*

In Year 12, with Owen Nelson as my teacher, writing the core composition solidified my love of bringing my own music to life. Hearing it performed was like nothing else.

*What, to you, are the elements of good writing?*

A balance between movement and stillness, and realising the beauty in simplicity.

*What has helped or hindered you most when writing?* Time constraints - while they can aid quick decision-making, they often make audio engineering very difficult.

*What are your plans for future books/compositions?*

Writing more tracks! And music placements in TV and/or film.



*Patrick Hart*  
*Class of 2016*

I am a lawyer at Allens, I hold Bachelor's degrees in Environment and Law, and I have a passion for journalism. I strongly believe in the crucial role of journalism in creating public awareness of societal issues and the

functioning of democracy. I admire journalists who become experts in their respective fields, such as environmental science, law, politics, or economics, and share their knowledge through thought-provoking publications. Inspired by their work, I have been fortunate enough to contribute my writing to various organizations and hope to continue down this path.

*Can you trace your current love for writing back to school days?*

Despite having great teachers like Mr. Clendening, English was by far my weakest subject. Yet, I have a tendency to make things difficult for myself by pursuing what I'm worst at. During my senior year, I set a single goal: to achieve a specific mark in English. I poured all my efforts into it, only to break my thumb a week before the final exam and miss my goal by 1%.

It may have been cruel fate, but perhaps that's precisely why I still love writing to this day.

*When and how did your writing/composing become important to you?*

I learned that journalists play an important role in conveying the insights of experts in various fields, such as science, policy, and academia, to the general public through unbiased and fact-based reporting.

*What, to you, are the elements of good writing?*

Brevity.

*What part of writing is the 'most fun'?*

When someone challenges your ideas.

*What has helped or hindered you most when writing?*

Prioritisation.

*What are your plans for future books/compositions?*

I need to get some time back in order to write, but when I do (hopefully soon) I will start to write for the same organisations that I have previously, or maybe a new one.

# Celebrating Our Hills Originals

*In the 40th Anniversary Year, we celebrated two alumni who have forged international careers in one of the most competitive and demanding areas of the entertainment arts; performance music. Both awardees were incredibly generous with time and talent throughout their school days and returned for special appearances as required. They have demanding international careers yet show humility and gratitude as they remain committed to their art and tour the world.*

*Adrian Cunningham  
Class of 1994*

Adrian began his musical journey having been gifted a toy keyboard at three years old when, to his parents' astonishment, he proceeded to pick out the tune of Happy Birthday.

It was clear that Adrian had the ear for music so piano lessons followed before the saxophone and clarinet during his Senior School years at Hills Grammar. Adrian has vivid and fond memories of spending time in the music department and is most appreciative of the support and guidance of the staff, particularly Owen Nelson.

His school band "Midnight in Harlem" became a regular fixture at school soirees, reviews and cabarets.

Adrian's professional work started in 1993, with a steady 2 nights a week at Baulkham Hills Bowling Club and the Mountain View Chinese restaurant in Dural.

Adrian's commitment to music and performance was unwavering. His mother recalls, "Adrian would practise any time of the night or day, draping the doors and walls with blankets to block out the noise – unsuccessfully. He took himself off to New York for lessons with Eddy Daniels, the famous jazz clarinetist who encouraged him to learn classical clarinet."

After his application to the Sydney Conservatorium of Music was unsuccessful Adrian started a Psychology degree which



Adrian Cunningham

he soon left behind to concentrate on music, taking all jobs regardless of the money. The following year Adrian was accepted into the Conservatorium to study Jazz.

With great commitment, years of disciplined sacrifice, an enormous amount of natural talent and a little luck, Adrian graduated from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music with Honours in Jazz Performance.

In Australia he performed in musical theatre, on popular television shows and played with well-established bands such as Galapagos Duck, The Cat Empire and The Whitlams.

Adrian moved to New York City where he is now based and is one of New York's most in-demand woodwind players on the jazz scene.

*If you ever you embark upon a path outside of convention, you will be met by some form of resistance. Why do I do what I do? The answer is obvious - I love what I do and I believe if you love what you do and you work hard at it, you will be rewarded exponentially.*

*Music has given me amazing and life changing gifts.*

He has performed at many of New York's greatest Jazz Clubs and travels widely to festivals around the world.

He has also recorded at some of the greatest studios in the world, including Avatar in NYC and the renowned Abbey Road in London.

In 2013 Adrian formed a traditional New Orleans style outfit called *Professor Cunningham and His Old School* and it has fast become one of the top bands in the international Swing scene.

*Postscript: We also must congratulate Adrian on his recent nuptials in Spain.*



Van-Anh Nguyen at the 2022 Annual Presentation of Awards with Harrison Long

### Van-Anh Nguyen Class of 2004

Van-Anh was born into the world of classical music with her mother an Opera Singer and her father a classical guitarist.

Her piano studies commenced at the tender age of 13 months and her Sydney Opera House debut, at 8 years old as a diminutive but highly competent performer.

Van-Anh recalls she and her sister Thuy-Anh were beautifully outfitted by their mother's dressmaking as they played piano and violin together. She was offered a music scholarship to commence Year 7 in 2000 and thankfully, she accepted it and became one of our most talented, gracious and committed scholars.

Being surrounded by like-minded people at Summer School in Europe strengthened Van-Anh's ambition of mixing performance and travel. Nevertheless, she commenced a Law/Journalism degree in 2005. However, with only 12 months remaining before graduation, Van-Anh was compelled to follow her heart back to her beloved piano and performance that she loved so much.

Although not your traditional classical pianist, Van-Anh has enjoyed remarkable success as a composer and concert pianist; having had four No.1 spots on the Australian iTunes Classical charts hitting #1 on the ARIA Classical charts with her 2020 *Peaceful Piano Essentials* album debuting at #2 on the ARIA Classical/Crossover Charts for her album *Pop Alchemy* and this year was nominated for an ARIA award for Best Children's Album with *Princess and the Piano - a reinterpretation of Disney Classics*.

Her versatility as a pianist allows her to collaborate across genres and has recently created Perfect Pairings, a concert concept where she pairs music to wine. This concept has appeared across 6 countries, working with various vineyards, sommeliers and chefs and has subsequently led to the launching of her own wine.

Van-Anh's intense international touring career has resulted in her residing between Sydney and Los Angeles.

*Hills allowed me to express myself with freedom. I was lucky enough to know innately that I wanted to pursue music as a career. Sure, I could have gone to The Sydney Conservatorium high school where I would have been surrounded by other musical peers but in my head, life was more than that. I wanted a well rounded schooling experience and Hills was just that!*

*I have incredibly fond memories of my time at Hills. The Music Department was my second home and Mr Nelson allowed me to really explore so many different things outside of the school curriculum. I remember he got me to read Mozart In The Jungle way before the Amazon series came out, pushing me to think outside of the box. He saw an opportunity to let me accelerate my Music HSC so we did which then freed up time for me to do other things like travel abroad to do piano competitions and summer schools.*

*My whole career has been an experiment but it's been a fun one and always an adventure and learning experience. If I had to leave you with my biggest piece of advice, it is to love what you do so much that you can't imagine yourself doing anything else. That will ensure you're focusing on the right thing that not only builds your career but brings happiness as you go along doing it.*

# Alumni Reunions



## Reunions

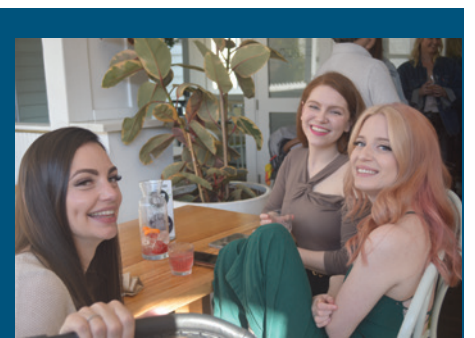
*2022 was a monumental catch-up on COVID-cancelled reunions and it was wonderful to see most of them went ahead as off-campus events which were well patronised and hugely enjoyed by all alumni and partners.*



Many thanks go to Amity Durham (Class of 1991), Todd Stevens and Amy Tyler (Class of 2000), Mercedes Ibbett (Class of 2001), Andre Panich, Amanda Taylor and Kim Pike (Class of 2002), Katherine Leverett (Class of 2010), Emma Youngman (Class of 2012), Ashley Wangmann (Class of 2015), Jacque Brown and Pat Corrigan (Class of 2016) and David Romic and Joel Cummings (Class of 2017).



# Alumni Reunions





2012



2015



2016



2017

# News

## Katherine Leverett (2010)

Kat and Steve Smith were married on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at Nelson Bay Golf Club. On a sunny winter's day more than 100 family and friends made the trip north to celebrate, including 13 Hills alumni. Kat's sister Amanda Dodds (Class of '02) was maid of honour, and did an amazing job at 38 weeks pregnant! Kat is currently completing the final year of her Doctor of Medicine through the University of New England, and is based in Newcastle at the John Hunter Hospital. Steve is a chiropractor in Raymond Terrace, just north of Newcastle.



## Van-Anh Nguyen (2004)

Van-Anh and Mark Olsen chose Hoi An for their wedding in March this year. They combined the beautiful traditional wedding rituals with western customs over seven days of festivities. A family tea ceremony on February 26 in Ho Chi Minh City commenced the festivities, followed by a Welcome Dinner at Vy's Market in Old Town Hoi An on March 2 where 170 guests all wore 'ao dai'. March 4 was Wedding Day! The wedding was held on the beach at Blush Beach Club. A 10-piece orchestra of friends from Australia, USA and HCMC featured during the ceremony. A cocktail hour followed with a jazz quintet from HCMC playing and then the reception itself was basically a concert.

Mark (a drummer, DJ and music producer) and Van-Anh played the first song for everyone to dance and DJs played late into the early hours of the morning. The Sunday recovery was a pool party at La Siesta Resort & Spa where the pool stage saw a different DJ on every hour from 2pm to 9pm with live musicians and singers.

It truly was a music festival weekend, hence the wedding hashtag #BurningNam2023 - a play-on of Burning Man. The bridal party and guests truly embodied the music festival vibe the entire weekend.

It wasn't all fun and games though, Van-Anh performed in four concerts in HCMC the week before and it was off to Thailand a few days later for performances as Double Touch, their electronic duo, playing at Cafe Del Mar in Phuket. April to October will see Van-Anh touring in the USA.

Photo credit @hipsterwedding.asia



## Sarah Kingshott (2012) & Tomlin Poynton (2012)

After postponing their wedding because of COVID, Sarah and Tomlin faced access concerns with flooding in the Hunter Valley. Fortunately, they and their 140 guests enjoyed a wonderful wedding celebration at Wallawong House on 11 March 2022. Their Hills Grammar attendants included Roy Poynton (Groomsman), Sarah Rudland (maid of honour) and Caitlin Creak (bridesmaid). Christmas in New York was their honeymoon destination

Sarah is a graphic designer and Tom works for the Federal Police.



*Katherine Chester (2012)*

The wedding of Katherine Chester and Sega Afoa on 25th February 2023 at Baylys' Farm, Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Alumni guests included Adrienne Monteverde (Maid of Honour), Alexander Rashleigh (Bridesman), Phillip Chester (Bridesman), Amelia Ashton, Lana Spehar, Sean Hobern, Jacqueline Starr, Tara Starr, Michelle Flack, Sarah Gosper. The newlyweds enjoyed their honeymoon in New Zealand and Queensland. After travels Katherine returns to her role as a Services and Programs Team Leader for Corrective Services NSW.



*Hayley Jamison (2010) & Roy Poynton (2010)*

Hayley and Roy chose the very cool Lazy Bones Lounge in Marrickville for their nuptials on May 28 2022. A strong Hills Grammar contingent of Adam Martin, Tara Blancato, Louise Fitzgerald, Alex Moore, James Thompson, Nick Redman, David Russell, Tomlin Poynton, Sarah Poynton (nee Kingshott) celebrated with the happy couple.

Hayley and Roy enjoyed a honeymoon in the Cotswolds UK and Bangkok Thailand. They are living in the Blue Mountains where Hayley is the curator at Blue Mountains Cultural Centre and Roy works with Unions across NSW.



*Ian Chan (2008)*

Ian married his wife Bianca during COVID lockdown at an 11-person ceremony in September 2021, with proper celebrations with family and friends finally taking place in May 2022.

Ian graduated with a Law/ International Studies degree from the University of Sydney and a Masters of Law from Leiden University in the Netherlands (during which he enjoyed travelling all around Europe!). He went on to work as a conveyancing and migration lawyer in private practice, then as a government lawyer in Canberra. Ian is currently back in Sydney working as a Senior Lawyer at the Fair Work Ombudsman.



*Jacqueline Brown (2016) & Jerry Boyaji (2014)*

Jacqui and Jerry enjoyed a fabulous evening on Sydney Harbour to celebrate their engagement which was announced in June last year.

They are planning a Southern Highlands wedding at Bendooley Estate in March 2024 with a generous line-up of Hills Grammar alumni in the bridal party; Samantha Brown, Jessie Boyaji, Ida Bahrami, Isabel Tegel, Sophie Whitehouse, James Boyaji, Joseph Caspar and Nick Robinson.

Jacqui is and Event Manager at All Occasion Cruises and Jerry a partner in the family business, All Sale Plastic.



## Introducing

### Maree Concato

*Maree joined us in 2023 as our Alumni & Donor Relations Manager.*

Maree's journey began in the education sector, where she worked as a teacher and leader for several years. Maree was driven by a desire to inspire young minds and instill a love for learning. Witnessing the growth and success of her students was immensely fulfilling, and it solidified her commitment to the educational field.

Throughout her career, Maree has always endeavored to make a positive impact in education, aiming to empower individuals and build strong relationships. She worked as an education services manager at Ronald McDonald House Charities.

During her time at this not-for-profit organisation, Maree gathered a wealth of experience and an understanding of the importance of fundraising. She successfully supported various educational initiatives, enabling access to quality education and fulfilling experiences for sick children and their families.

Maree's husband is an alumnus from the Class of 2003, and they have two children attending Hills Grammar. She is excited about building relationships with our alumni families and is looking forward to fostering opportunities for them to stay connected with the School community.

## Calling all Alumni Mentors & Partners in Learning

Each year we welcome back a number of alumni to share their knowledge and experience with students from ECEC to Year 12. With so many career and lifestyle paths you, our valued past students, provide a rich and expansive resource to complement the curriculum.

We are always looking for new alumni, from all year groups, to join us as speakers, experts and mentors. Local, overseas and interstate speakers have zoomed in to classes when necessary.

If you would like to enrich the learning of our current students please send us your expression of interest.

[hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au/partners-in-learning](https://hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au/partners-in-learning)

## Reunions

There are a number of reunions scheduled for 2023. We look forward to catching up!

Visit our website or email [tohga@hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au](mailto:tohga@hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au) to find out when your year group is gathering.

You can also stay in touch via our Facebook Groups. Visit [facebook.com/hillsgrammar](https://facebook.com/hillsgrammar) to find your group.

[myhills.net.au/#alumni](https://myhills.net.au/#alumni)

## Nominate a Hills Original

The Hills Original Award is presented each year to a 'Hills' alumnus who embodies our motto 'Strive for Excellence'. Recipients have achieved extraordinary personal and professional success in their field and embody the School values of Respect, Integrity, Service and Excellence.

Each year, we are ask our past students, parents and community members to nominate a past Hills Grammarian for the upcoming Hills Original Award.

We encourage you to embrace this opportunity to nominate a worthy graduate and enable us to recognise these extraordinary Hills Grammarians.

Nominate via the online form, or scan the QR code below.

[hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au/hills-original-award](https://hillsgrammar.nsw.edu.au/hills-original-award)





2002 - Council Reunion with Mr Ross Booth



1983 - Foundation Dinner

## Vale

Brian Finn | Foundation Parent

It is with great sadness that the School farewelled another treasured member of the foundation families of The Hills Grammar School. Brian and Ivy Finn enrolled their two sons Nicholas and Davin, (with Kate to follow a few years later) as foundation students in Years 4 and 2 respectively.

Just as Ivy was closely involved as a School Councillor, Brian as CEO of IBM Australia, became an invaluable connection for the Information Technology program at Hills. His expertise and connections assisted our School to be positioned at the forefront of technology in the early eighties. Brian was an excellent speaker and our staff and parents benefitted from his wisdom and enthusiasm on many occasions.

Brian and Ivy were seen at every play, music evening, soiree and formal event. Their support for the School was unwavering and generous – a strong connection which has lasted over 40 years.

*'I can recall a staff Christmas Party, traditionally given to staff by School Council in recognition of their hard work and dedication, where budgets were a little tight and perhaps this particular year, we could give it a miss. Brian and Ivy thought creatively and decided they would host it at School. Aprons were donned, barbeques were lit and they personally flipped sausages and served the staff in the Multi-Purpose Hall. This was the type of people they were.... True Hills Originals!' Liz Pellinkhof*

We extend our sincerest condolences to Nicholas, Davin, Kate, Andrew and Paul and their families.

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