

# Life in the Wilderness

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

## From the Principal

[Belinda Arnfield](#)

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The first few weeks of term have carried a familiar sense of energy and possibility. New routines are forming, friendships are being rekindled, and across the campus there is a quiet sense of purpose as our girls step into the year ahead.

For more than 140 years, Wilderness has nurtured, inspired and empowered young women. Each year, our Year 12 students take their place as custodians of that tradition. They become leaders of our student body and important contributors to the culture that makes our School who we are.

This year, our Year 12 leaders have chosen the theme Bloom. It is a beautiful image of growth, potential and possibility. Blooming does not happen overnight. It unfolds through effort, challenge, learning and perseverance. When we reflect on their journey, we see growth not only in academic, creative and athletic pursuits, but in character, confidence and clarity of purpose.

True leadership is not confined to a badge or title. It is shaped by the daily choices our girls make and reflected in how they treat others and respond to challenges. Often, the most powerful leadership is quiet, expressed through inclusion, integrity and small acts of kindness.

At Wilderness, leadership is nurtured from the earliest years. In Junior School, we are introducing a new democratic model this year, with campaigns, voting and Cabinet

meetings reflecting the Australian parliamentary system. We look forward to announcing the election results and introducing our Junior School Premier, Deputy Premier and Ministers next week.

In Middle School, our recent SRC Badge Assembly and mentoring program have already brought students together to plan initiatives for the year ahead. Older students guiding younger ones, and younger students finding their voice, reflects the shared nature of leadership in our community.

Leadership also extends beyond our students. Our recent Parents and Friends Welcome Drinks was a wonderful example of parents leading through generosity and service.

As we continue into Term 1, I ask for your partnership in keeping our community safe. Please take extra care when driving and parking around the School, particularly on Robe Terrace, where vehicles have been observed double parking and creating significant safety risks. Keeping this area clear is essential.

Thank you for the many ways you support the life of the School. The year is already unfolding with promise, and I look forward to seeing all of our girls continue to bloom.

Belinda Arnfield  
Principal



EARLY LEARNING

## A wonderful beginning in the ELC

[Rebecca Williamson](#)

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The 2026 school year has commenced with great joy in our Early Learning Centre. At the beginning of each year, we are very intentional about where we place our focus, ensuring that what we prioritise genuinely supports every child in our care to thrive.

As we welcome new girls and those returning, we deliberately slow down. We take time to notice, to observe, to listen to the children and to watch them play. We ensure that familiar friendships are gently re-established and that new connections are given the time and space they need to grow. This period of settling is not a pause in learning. It is the foundation of it.

There is play and there is intentional play. At Wilderness, play is carefully designed, deeply observed and thoughtfully interpreted by our educators. Our team works collaboratively to document what we see, hear and notice about each child. We gather to reflect on this shared documentation, considering not only what the girls are doing, but who they are becoming within our setting. Through this collective reflection, learning is made visible and meaningful.

Once learning is visible, we are able to plan thoughtfully for what comes next. Individual planning cycles support each child's continued growth, while group planning responds to shared interests and emerging ideas. This work is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and interpreted through our school's values and pedagogical approach, ensuring learning is purposeful, responsive and deeply relational.

We also dedicate significant time to establishing routines and rhythms. There is great learning in routines themselves, but there is even greater learning in knowing what to expect and what comes next. Through this predictability, the girls develop a strong sense

of security and belonging. From here, they are ready to engage fully in the rich opportunities offered throughout their day.

Already, the girls have delighted in specialist lessons including PE, Yoga, Music and Library, and have cherished time spent connecting with their Year 6 buddies. We have also loved hearing the girls share their All About Me posters, building confidence as they speak in front of their peers and developing the equally important skill of listening to one another.

Each day has been filled with joy, play, purposeful routines and meaningful learning experiences. The learning environments, so thoughtfully prepared by our teachers over the holidays, have already begun to evolve as the girls' interests shape and transform the spaces around them.

It has been a wonderful beginning, and we look forward to the year ahead as we continue to slow down, notice deeply and plan with intention, ensuring every child is known, valued and supported to flourish.



JUNIOR SCHOOL

## Settling into the new year

[Liz McCarthy](#)

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The Junior School has settled into the new year, with classes focusing on their learning programs and a deeper sense of belonging in their new levels. With co-curricular activities commencing last week and planning underway for upcoming camps and excursions, it is safe to say that we have enjoyed a very successful start to the year.

### **Student Parliament**

I am proud to introduce our new Year 6 Student Parliament Leadership Model, an initiative grounded in purposeful learning and closely aligned with the Civics and Citizenship curriculum.

In Year 6, students deepen their understanding of Australia's democratic system, exploring how representatives are elected, the responsibilities of leadership, and the importance of active citizenship. Through participation in Student Parliament, the girls will learn about campaigning, voting, representation, and Cabinet meetings. They will not simply study democracy, they will experience, serve, and lead within it.

The year began with an immersive 'minimester', where the girls spent a full week exploring Australian democracy, state and federal parliamentary models, and the principles of leadership. They considered their personal strengths and areas for growth to determine which roles to apply for. Adding further depth to the program, we were honoured to welcome the South Australian Premier, The Hon. Peter Malinauskas, who

shared valuable insights into the workings of State Parliament and the purpose of leadership in serving a community. His visit provided a meaningful real-world connection to the girls' learning and reinforced the idea that leadership is about serving others, not oneself.

Inspired by the South Australian State Parliament, our Student Parliament includes the following roles each semester:

- Premier and Deputy Premier
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Community and Belonging
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Citizenship
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Media and Innovation
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Arts and Culture
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Library and Literature
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Health and Wellbeing
- Minister and Shadow Minister for STEM
- Minister and Shadow Minister for the Environment and Sustainability
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Reception to Year 2
- Minister and Shadow Minister for Years 3 to 5
- House Captains
- Members of Parliament for each class from Reception to Year 5

Each portfolio reflects an important area of Junior School life and Ministers are supported by a designated teacher throughout the year. A defining feature of the model is its commitment to authentic student voice, ensuring ideas and perspectives from across the Junior School are heard and thoughtfully represented. The Year 6 cohort will hold Cabinet meetings every three weeks, fostering collaboration, accountability, and shared decision-making.

The benefits for our students are significant. Through participation, they develop confidence in public speaking, respectful listening, negotiation, and informed decision-making. They learn to consider diverse perspectives, practise fairness, and understand that leadership is not about status but about service and responsibility.

As our Year 6 students step confidently into their roles, we are proud of the maturity and thoughtfulness they are already demonstrating. Through this model, they are building not only leadership capability, but also the knowledge and dispositions required for active and informed citizenship in the wider world.

I look forward to presenting our Student Parliament at next week's Junior School Leadership Assembly and sharing their achievements throughout the year.





MIDDLE SCHOOL

## Encouraging girls to take the leap

[Dr Rhiannon Giles](#)

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What a busy start to the year in the Middle School! We always begin the year with Orientation Morning for all new students to the Middle School and our Year 7 girls. The day was full of excitement and there were many waves through my office windows as girls toured the school to find the classrooms on their new timetable.

The Year 7 Parent Coffee Morning and the P&F Drinks provided opportunities for parents to meet with staff, and it was wonderful to meet so many new families and welcome them to the community.

Year 6 to 12 girls had the opportunity to explore ways they could be involved in the School community at the inaugural Student Experience Expo. Memorial Lawns were packed with girls finding out more about the clubs, committees, music and sport opportunities on offer this year.

SAPOL joined us for the annual Traffic Duty Training, ensuring girls understand how to complete their duties safely and confidently. This term the Year 10s are rostered on, but the remainder of the year is completed by Middle School girls. Rosters for before and after school duty timeslots are organised during Form with the support of Form Teachers.

The Year 8s enjoyed the Burn Bright program on Wednesday this week. The themes explored during the day included social and emotional skills, interpersonal awareness, building respectful relationships, effective communication, problem solving and navigating unkind behaviours in social settings.

At this week's MS SRC Assembly, our new Middle School Leaders were presented with

their badges, and today they met with their staff and Year 12 mentors to plan their initiatives and goals for the year. Congratulations again to the following Year 9 girls who were elected by their peers late last year to lead the Middle School.

President – Georgia Gibson

Vice President – Amelia Yip

Secretary – Leyla Antonis

Library Representatives – Emma Herbert, Isabelle Morgan

Music Representatives – Bonnie Cabot, Jade Sammut

Round Square – Zumurod Shibeeb, Gabrielle Sun

Sport Representatives – Poppy Detmold Cox, Angeliqne Whittaker

Student Foundation Representatives – Victoria Henderson, Pranavi Meruga

Visual Arts Representatives – Margot Colby, Serena Yao

At the assembly I spoke about Steven Bradbury, Australia's first gold medallist at the 2002 Winter Olympic Games. Many hold Bradbury up as an example of the value of an underdog never giving up, but I think his win was also a reminder that you need to make the most of the opportunities that come your way.

This week Lindsey Vonn, a skier from the US, took to social media to comment following a crash on Sunday:

"Similar to ski racing, we take risks in life. We dream. We love. We jump. And sometimes we fall. Sometimes our hearts are broken. Sometimes we don't achieve the dreams we know we could have. But that is also the beauty of life. We can try."

These words have really resonated with me this week as each Middle School girl will have been challenged to jump at the beginning of a school year. It might be that they are starting a new school, learning a new language, nominating for an event at the Swimming Carnival or preparing for camp.

School is a place where students are encouraged by their parents, peers and teachers to take these opportunities in a safe and supportive environment. These opportunities are carefully constructed to challenge students to push themselves just a little further than they thought they could go. In doing so, girls practise and develop skills they can draw on the next time they are challenged.

When things do not go to plan and perhaps hearts are broken, there will be a team of people ready to provide support as they navigate their feelings and think about regrouping and planning their next steps.

The compulsory Year 7 Camp is a chance for girls to form friendships within their House groups and build stronger connections with their House teachers. Our Outdoor Education Team are highly skilled and have run special sessions at school this week to help students prepare for their first Middle School camp.

Each camp builds towards our final compulsory Outdoor Education experience, our three week program in Year 9 called REALISE. When I visit the girls at Crawford, I often hear Rosie Smith explain the idea of “Challenge by Choice”, encouraging the girls to be brave and choose their level of challenge.

I encourage your daughters to reach out and discuss any aspect of camp they may be worried about with their Form Teacher, Head of House or our Outdoor Education teachers.



SENIOR SCHOOL

## The values that shape our community

[Kate Hanson](#)

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As the Senior School begins another year, we take time to reflect on the values that shape our community and the legacy entrusted to us. Our Senior Girls hold a special place within the life of the school, standing between what has been carefully shaped by those who came before them and what they will leave behind. Through their leadership, relationships and daily choices, they contribute to the culture of our school and help ensure that its traditions and values continue to thrive.

Education equips young people to engage with the world thoughtfully, drawing on past learning while taking responsibility for what comes next. This is central to the role our Senior School students play within the community. We encourage our girls to approach their learning and their relationships with care and purpose, recognising that they are part of something larger than themselves. By engaging respectfully with others and upholding shared expectations, they shape not only their own experience, but also the experience and culture that will be inherited by those who follow.

### Student news

Late last year, Saanvi Khanna was selected as a 2025 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize awardee for her excellent biography of WWII nurse and Wilderness Old Scholar Lorna Florance Laffer. Saanvi received her prize from the Education Minister at a December ceremony at the Torrens Parade Ground and will now travel this year on a trip to the Western Front with the other SA prize winners, selected teachers and an RSL representative.

Nawal Usmani was shortlisted for the Walkerville Young Citizen of the Year. She was presented with a certificate at the Town of Walkerville Australia Day Awards Ceremony.

Nawal was acknowledged for her research, advocacy, humanitarian service and global citizenship.

### **Year 11 and 12 Formal**

The Year 11 and 12 Formal was held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, with the theme Golden Age of Glamour beautifully reflected throughout the evening. From the elegant décor to the students' attire, the event was a great success. Congratulations to the Formal Committee, led by Year 12 Representative Leila Thirlwell, for their organisation, creativity and commitment in delivering such a memorable night.

### **Dedication Service**

Thank you to all families who joined us for the Year 12 Dedication Service. As our Year 12 students commence their final year at Wilderness, we acknowledge the leadership they bring to the school and the responsibility they carry as the senior cohort. This service marked an important moment in their journey, recognising both what they have inherited from those before them and the example they now set for others. We look forward to supporting them with care and guidance throughout the year ahead.

### **Reminders**

As we settle into the school year, we appreciate the continued support of families in upholding our school policies regarding uniform, makeup and mobile phone use. Consistency between home and school plays an important role in supporting students to meet expectations and develop responsibility.

- **Jewellery:** Students may wear a single pair of small studs or sleepers in silver, gold or pearl. Dangling or decorative earrings are not permitted. No other jewellery, aside from a simple watch, is allowed.
- **Nails and makeup:** Nail polish and makeup do not align with our uniform expectations.
- **Devices:** Mobile phones and smart devices, including smart watches, must not be used during school hours. If a student needs to contact home, this can be done via the Health Centre or their Head of School.

### **Signing out**

If your daughter needs to leave school early for an appointment, please ensure this is communicated through the Verus app so we can maintain appropriate duty of care.

Year 12 students are reminded that they may not sign out during study periods before 1:05pm. If they have study periods after lunch, they may sign out via the front office.



BOARDING

## Welcoming new girls to our boarding family

[Carolyn Matthews](#)

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This year we welcomed seven new girls to our boarding family, who arrived on a very hot Australia Day for their orientation. They were warmly greeted by their buddies and our Boarding House Captains, Mimi and Bea.

Our Captains prepared beautiful welcome packs, complete with the ever-popular Jellycat as a special surprise. The new girls have settled in wonderfully and taken to boarding with confidence and enthusiasm. They have been supported by the entire house, especially their buddies, Big Sisters and House Leadership Team.

Returning boarders were delighted to discover the complete refurbishment of the 23 Corridor. With new bedroom furniture, fresh carpet, built-in wardrobes and gorgeous artwork and furnishings, the transformation was met with plenty of excitement and positive feedback.

The first two weeks have been full of connection and activity. Our new girls enjoyed ten-pin bowling and arcade games with their buddies, along with a city orientation led by their Big Sisters, where they explored key locations, completed fun challenges and enjoyed a few edible treats along the way.

Thursday Family Dinners have also begun, with activities designed to help each boarding family get to know one another. Led by our House Captains and Big Sisters, families decorated photo boards featuring all their members, strengthening that important sense of belonging.

Our first weekend in was just as lively. The younger girls enjoyed a pamper night with face masks, Cold Rock ice cream and a movie, while Saturday evening saw enthusiastic

rounds of bingo with mystery prizes that were a big hit. It has been wonderful to see camaraderie already forming across the house, with shared activities playing such an important role.

A highlight of the social calendar, the Year 11 and 12 Formal, took place on a very warm first Friday. We enjoyed traditional drinks and canapés with parents before group photographs were taken. The excitement and joy surrounding this event made for a memorable start to the year. While the girls attended the formal, parents enjoyed dinner together at the Kent Town Hotel, making it a special evening for all.

Last weekend was equally busy, with many girls attending a pool party at Pembroke, followed by a whole-house trip to Middleton Beach for a beach day and learn-to-surf session. A picnic lunch, plenty of singing and a generous amount of lollies made for a joyful day out.

Despite the full schedule, we have also settled comfortably into our regular routines of Preptime, Sport, Techtme hand-ups and daily house life. With a non-compulsory exeat this weekend, the girls will have a welcome opportunity to rest and recharge after such a busy and positive start to the year.





