

Life in the Wilderness

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FROM THE PRINCIPAL

From the Principal

[Belinda Arnfield](#)

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 many years, Wilderness has nurtured, inspired and empowered young women. Each year, our Year 12 girls 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 a theme, Bloom. It is a beautiful image of growth, potential and possibility. Blooming does not happen overnight. It unfolds through effort, challenge and perseverance. When we reflect on their journey, we see growth not only in academic learning, 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 the Junior School, we are introducing a new democratic model for our Year 6s, with positions, portfolios 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, ensuring a warm welcome for our families in 2026.

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.



EARLY LEARNING

Supporting every child in our care

[Rebecca Williamson](#)

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](#)

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

A busy start to the year in Middle School

[Rhiannon Giles](#)

The Middle School has had a busy and exciting start to the year. We began with Orientation Morning for all new students and our Year 7 girls. The day was full of energy, curiosity, and plenty of waves through my office windows as the girls explored the school and found their new classrooms.

The Year 7 Parent Coffee Morning and the P&F Drinks provided wonderful opportunities for parents to meet staff and connect with each other. It was a pleasure to welcome so many new families to our community.

Our students from Year 6 to Year 12 explored ways to get involved in school life at the inaugural Student Experience Expo. Memorial Lawns were buzzing with excitement as girls discovered the many clubs, committees, music, and sport opportunities on offer this year.

Safety and responsibility remain a key focus, and SAPOL joined us for annual Traffic Duty Training. This ensures students understand how to complete their duties safely and confidently. This term, Year 10s are rostered on, while the remaining duties throughout the year will be undertaken by Middle School girls. Rosters are coordinated during Form with support from Form Teachers.

The Year 8s participated in the Burn Bright program, which explored social and emotional skills, interpersonal awareness, building respectful relationships, effective communication, problem-solving, and navigating unkind behaviours in social settings.

At this week's Middle School SRC Assembly, our new leaders were presented with their badges. They have since met with staff and Year 12 mentors to plan their initiatives and

goals for the year. Congratulations to our 2025 Middle School Leaders:

- **President:** Georgia Gibson
- **Vice President:** Amelia Yip
- **Secretary:** Leyla Antonis
- **Library Representatives:** Emma Herbert, Isabelle Morgan
- **Music Representatives:** Bonnie Cabot, Jade Sammut
- **Round Square Representatives:** Zumurod Shibeeb, Gabrielle Sun
- **Sport Representatives:** Poppy Detmold Cox, Angelique 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 Winter Olympic Gold Medallist in 2002. While often celebrated as an underdog story, Bradbury's success is also a reminder to make the most of the opportunities that come your way. Lindsey Vonn's recent reflection on taking risks, dreaming, loving, jumping, and sometimes falling, has resonated with me this week. School is a place where every girl is encouraged to take those leaps, whether starting a new school, learning a new language, nominating for a Swimming Carnival event, or preparing for camp.

Our compulsory Year 7 Camp provides an important opportunity for girls to build friendships within their House groups and strengthen connections with House Teachers. The Outdoor Education Team has run preparatory sessions at school this week to help students feel ready and confident. Each camp experience builds toward our three-week Year 9 REALISE program at Crawford, where students continue to be encouraged to challenge themselves, guided by the principle of "Challenge by Choice." I encourage all girls to discuss any concerns with their Form Teacher, Head of House, or Outdoor Education staff to ensure a positive and rewarding experience.

Middle School is a place where students are supported, challenged, and empowered. Through these opportunities, girls develop resilience, confidence, and skills they can carry forward throughout the year and beyond.





SENIOR SCHOOL

Reflecting on the values that shape our community

[Kate Hanson](#)

As the Senior School begins another year, we take a moment to reflect on the values that shape our community and the legacy entrusted to our students. Our Senior Girls hold a special place within the life of the school, standing between the foundations carefully built by those who came before them and the future 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 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 travel this year to the Western Front alongside other SA prize winners, selected teachers, and an RSL representative.

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

Nawal was recognised 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 dedication 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 and the responsibility they carry as the senior cohort. The service marked an important moment in their journey, recognising both what they have inherited 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 families' continued support in upholding school policies regarding uniform, makeup, and mobile phone use. Consistency between home and school is important in helping students 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 is allowed aside from a simple watch.
- **Nails and makeup:** Nail polish and makeup do not align with uniform expectations.
- **Devices:** Mobile phones and smart devices, including smart watches, must not be used during school hours. Students needing to contact home can do so via the Health Centre or their Head of School.

Signing Out

If your daughter needs to leave school early for an appointment, please communicate this through the Verus app to maintain duty of care. Year 12 students are reminded they may not sign out during study periods before 1.05pm. Students with study periods after lunch may sign out via the front office.





BOARDING

Welcoming new girls to our boarding family

[Carolyn Matthews](#)

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.





