



# Grammar Women

## Incorporating the OGA est. 1899



### 121<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting

5<sup>th</sup> May 2021

## Opening Remarks

The 2021 OGA AGM meeting is certainly a different scenario to what we all faced this same time in 2020. At that time, we all faced uncertainty, some fear, and many unknowns about how our world and life in general was going to change. The OGA Committee, along with Antonia Swindells and Ellena Papas, held the 2020 AGM via teleconference. The relevant documents were read aloud, and nominations signed and accepted beforehand, but it was without the usual enjoyment of being together as a collective.

As a result of Covid-19 and the restrictions to travel and congregations, the OGA faced a year of fewer meetings and almost no social gatherings. This was very disappointing for all concerned and not a usual start for our two new Committee members, Joanne Marks and Kate Swete Kelly. There were still a few highlights; most notably the opening of the Science Learning Centre. I congratulate the ladies of the OGA Committee for staying connected and still keeping the interests of BGGGS in their sights. The School community is indebted to Principal, Jacinda Euler, and her staff, for maintaining a very high standard of curriculum delivery and keeping connections alive between School and home-based learning.

I would like to make special note of the work undertaken by Antonia Swindells (Alumnae Relations Manager) and Georgina Anthonisz (Director of Development) during the lock-down periods in particular. They personally called many Grammar Women all around Australia to touch base and make sure they were coping and with a support network to help them if needed. This was an enormous undertaking and very much appreciated by all concerned.

The other initiative to launch during 2020 was the publication of 'Bishbar Blue'. Spearheaded by Antonia Swindells in response to what Grammar Women particularly noted in the School Survey, this publication was very warmly received by graduates of all ages. Antonia and the Communications team have managed to include items of interest to Grammar Women that provide speaking points when meeting back together again.

I thank the OGA Committee, Jacinda Euler, Antonia Swindells, Ellena Papas and Georgina Anthonisz most sincerely for supporting me as OGA President throughout 2020.

# President's Report for 2021

## 1. Management Committee

Committee Meetings were held throughout the year as required. Due to limited activities and Covid-19 restrictions, two meetings were cancelled.

Meetings were held on June 16, July 14, August 24 and November 4 in 2021. Committee members and key personnel from the school were invited to attend a Christmas Dinner at the home of the President on December 5.

The Management Committee for 2020 comprised:

Julie Caton (Cleghorn 1981) President  
Joanne Marks (2005) Vice-President  
Leigh Fielding (Gow 1984) Treasurer  
Samantha Caton (2016) Secretary  
Dorothy Bourguignon (Scotney 1956)  
Jenny Gray (Vallis 1969)  
Sue Jordan (Squire 1967)  
Ann Caston (Pressland 1958)  
Sylvia Pegg (Gaulton 1965)  
Kim Morgan-Short (Skuce 1981)  
Michelle Tully (Oswin 1981)  
Andrea Connolly (Peake 1981)  
Kate SweteKelly (McAdam 1981)

Thank-you to the Committee as a whole for continuing lively meetings where we discuss relevant issues with openness and respect. Treasurer, Leigh Fielding, kept us all in check and ensured all financials were appropriately in order. This takes considerable time, especially when preparing for the AGM. Thank-you, Leigh, for your continuing efficiency and dedication. Secretary, Samantha Caton, appropriately noted all conversations and decisions at our meetings. Thank-you, Samantha, for your ongoing dedication towards the OGA. It was very pleasing to welcome Joanne Marks to the position of Vice-President in 2020. I am very much looking forward to sharing duties with Jo as our calendar returns to some sense of involvement and interaction.

To the other members of the Committee, thank-you for your ongoing friendship and support. You all have the interests of BGGs in your sights and continue to be very much appreciated and valued members of the OGA Committee and BGGs community as a whole.

## 1. OGA Connections with the School

BGGS is more than a school alone; it's a community, strengthened by the ties that bind it across many different levels. The 2021 motto, 'When the sisterhood unites, the royal blue shines bright', could not be a more fitting reflection of how we aim to keep the sisterhood connections alive. Grammar Girls know they will become Grammar Women and look to the OGA as an integral part of the School. Principal, Jacinda Euler, ensures the OGA is recognised and gives her support to the Committee and our interests as a whole. Thank-you, Jacinda, for your attention, interest and continuing support. It is very much appreciated.

Thank-you to Antonia Swindells who most definitely has 'blue' in her veins and approaches every activity and event with a high level of professionalism and attention to detail to ensure each is purposeful and meaningful. Grammar Women across the face of the planet are known to you and recognise you as an important conduit to staying connected with BGGS. Ellena Papas, Director of Co-Curricular, served as a valued staff connection and brought her own memories as a Grammar student to the table. Thank-you, Ellena, for working with the Committee. Ellena has since moved to Canberra and we acknowledge her in her absence.

The BGGS Board of Trustees, led by Chair, Julie McKay (2000), have continued to ensure BGGS moves forward in our now ever-changing world. They are all valued members of the wider community and I thank them for their time, dedication and purposeful involvement. Julie, in particular, stands as an inspiring role model for the Grammar Women of tomorrow. The Board's support of the OGA is recognised and very much appreciated.

The OGA remains very much connected to the Parents and Friends Association. We all continue to work together to support School projects and one another with our individual endeavours. Attending P&F meetings allows us to stay connected to current developments within the School and also educate parents on the future when their daughters graduate and join the Old Girls Association. I particularly acknowledge the Executive, led by Susan Playford and Cate Campbell, for their friendship and support.

## 2. OGA Representation at School Events

Representatives of the BGGS OGA continued to support and participate in various School activities where possible. Activities were very much limited due to Covid-19 laws and included:

- *Mother's Group Year 12 Family Picnic at Rangakarra – 13 September 2020.* This was a wonderful initiative, led by Mother's Group President, Julie Norris, to organise an event where Year 12 students and their families could gather at the picturesque Rangakarra to interact under the Covid-19 guidelines. Our thanks to the Mother's Group for including the sale of our picnic blankets at the event.
- *Opening of Science Learning Centre – 20 October 2020.* Leigh Fielding and I were honoured to represent the OGA at this important function where the newly completed Science Learning Centre was officially opened.
- *Valedictory Dinner – 18 November 2020.* How fortunate the Year 12 cohort was to still be able to gather with their peers, parents and staff to reflect on their Senior year. It was very disappointing that the guest speaker, Sophie Matterson (2006), could not be present in person

as she was following Covid-19 isolation guidelines that had been suddenly instigated. Her pre-recorded speech was still a highlight of the evening, delivered with warmth and humour. The girls heard how the road less travelled may be the one you face as your destiny and how that decision can impact in so many positive ways. I very much enjoyed sitting next to the Head Girls Elect, Victoria Chen and Sophie McLeod. OGA badges were presented to the graduating students. It was very moving to see the parents of the girls pinning them to the lapels of their blazers.

- *Speech Day – 19 November 2020.*
- *Leader Induction Assembly – 3 February 2021.* The OGA Committee continued the established tradition of making a presentation to the two Head Girls for the coming year. I presented Victoria Chen and Sophie McLeod each with an OGA pendant in acknowledgement of the esteemed position each of them will hold throughout 2021. The motto for 2021, 'When the sisterhood unites, the royal blue shines bright', is a very apt one and certainly embraces not only the current Grammar Girls, but also the Grammar Women who have passed before them.
- *BGGS International Women's Day Concert – 5 March 2021.*
- *Foundation Day Assembly and Afternoon Tea – 10 March 2021.* Stephanie Carter (2007) delivered a Foundation Day Address to the student body. She spoke of how her Service learning at BGGS in Year 10 encouraged her to serve others. She reflected that it was that moment that "shaped her world" and ultimately led to her role now as a Global International Communication Manager. In the afternoon, we welcomed back to the School 60 Grammar Women for a 50+ Years Reunion Afternoon Tea. Grand-daughters and Year 11 OGA volunteers joined the event to interact with the ladies. Such events show how we have all had different experiences across the decades, yet remain connected in so many ways. A special thanks to archivist, Jenny Davis, who supplied so many objects of interest and significance for the attendees to browse through and reflect.

### 3. OGA Led Events

- *Welcome and Presentation to Year 11 OGA Service Girls – 25 February 2021.* I met with the 2021 Year 11 Service Girls to introduce the OGA and explain their role in supporting Grammar Women. There were no events for our volunteers last year, so it was especially exciting to welcome these volunteers back into the role. I thank Ruth Jans for overseeing these girls and preparing them so well for their duties.
- *Mr Percival's Brisbane Alumnae Event – 25 February 2021.* This event was a great success and provided the opportunity for 40 Grammar Women, from across numerous decades, to connect and in some cases, reconnect. It is increasingly important to stay connected face-to-face if possible, especially as limitations on functions and gatherings continue to be a possibility.

## 4. Memorabilia

OGA Memorabilia sales were primarily made through the P&F Shop. The Committee sincerely thanks the P&F, along with Shop personnel, for supporting us. Items are now available for purchase from an online platform. At present, it is just current families of the School who can access this, but we look forward to providing a platform where all Grammar Women have access to this initiative. Two new items were introduced at the end of 2020 – a silver bangle with the School crest and an accessory folio pouch.

We followed up on our decision to move some stock that was not selling by gifting incoming Year 7 students with either a lap top pouch or cooler bag when they attended their uniform fittings. Along with the item was a letter explaining the OGA and welcoming them to the sisterhood. This was extremely well received and has helped to raise the profile of the OGA within the School community. Grammar Girls now receive a gift from the OGA at both commencement and graduation, acknowledging our support and inclusion of them within this Association. The intended gift for incoming 2022 Year 7 students is a letterpress copy of the School war cry. It's never too early to have them chanting it!

Thank-you to both Ann Caston and Samantha Caton for assisting with stocktake and ensuring all merchandise was accounted for. A special thank-you to Chris Bailey, Facilities Manager, for moving all stock to its new safe location and organising everything for easy access.

## 5. Donation

The highlight of 2020, in amongst all of the cancelled events and disappointments, was undoubtedly the construction and eventual opening of the Science Learning Centre. The Committee, on behalf of the OGA, pledged \$50,000 towards this important project. There is, within the building, a room named in honour of the OGA. It is a student 'co-lab' where students can come together and discuss various issues of interest or work on specific projects. We are very proud to have been a donor to this project and in so doing, recognise all of the Grammar Women who were educated in the Sciences and especially those who went on to study Science and work in various related fields. The OGA Committee recognises and thanks Georgina Anthonisz for embracing the Committee and keeping us abreast of developments throughout the construction process.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

The year 2020 will forever be remembered as a year when things didn't happen as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important that we don't just focus on what didn't happen, but rather on what did, despite the difficulties. The OGA Committee remained a connected and supportive body, even though we physically had different challenges. I am very proud of how we have kept moving forward and staying optimistic regarding all that can still be achieved. Our OGA 'mark' is now on all three campuses and we are more connected with students than ever before, whether they are incoming, present or graduates.

The focus on Service has never been more profoundly highlighted. I am very proud to lead Grammar Women who, like myself, willingly give of their time and effort for a common purpose. It has been a honour to serve as OGA President for this term and I sincerely wish the incoming Committee every blessing for the year ahead.

Julie Caton (Cleghorn 1981)  
President, BGS OGA