

INNER SOUTH

# Past students reach for the stars at Kilvington Grammar

From designing aircraft to blazing a trail in medical research Kilvington's past students have led many and varied paths. We find out what students did after they left school and where they are now.

Moorabbin Kingston Leader

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Jayashri Kulkarni, Andrea Douglas and Julianne Jaques are three of Kilvington's top alumni.

The past students of Kilvington Grammar are a clever and diverse bunch.

From engineers, authors and journalists, to scientists, social crusaders and barristers, these are some of the school's top alumni.

## 1. PROFESSOR JAYASHRI KULKARNI AM, CLASS OF 1975

After leaving school Jayashri Kulkarni has pursued a career as a medical doctor, consultant psychiatrist and later Professor of Psychiatry.

She said founding and becoming director of the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre was one of her proudest achievements.

“What I’m really proud of is establishing, developing and growing the centre which has been recognised globally for the innovative treatments we have developed and delivered particularly for women with mental ill health,” Jayashri said.

“When you make even a little difference in somebody’s life and improve the quality of their life just a tiny bit, it is so satisfying. It also spurs you on to think ‘what’s next?’”

She said her career highlight was receiving an Order of Australia in 2019 for services to the medical profession.

In the short-term future she plans to continue her work as Chair of the Board of Directors of Kilvington Grammar to highlight the special issues for women with depression,



Jayashri Kulkarni says her career highlight was receiving an Order of Australia in 2019 for services to the

anxiety and other mental ill health and develop new treatments for this large group.

medical profession.

Jayashri said Kilvington provided a “brilliant, personalised academic education” that enabled her to springboard into a fulfilling career in Medicine and Psychiatry.

“Even more, Kilvington taught me that we are all equal and everyone has a special set of gifts,” Jayashri said.

“In the ‘70s when Kilvington was a girls’ grammar school we were given the clear message that we could do or become anything we wanted to if we worked hard – and that to help others brought true joy.

“I remember a very happy time at Kilvington and to this day am so grateful to my former teachers and fellow students for all their support, fun and laughter.”

## 2. AMANDA BERRY, CLASS OF 1978



📷 Amanda Berry was appointed an Associate Professor in Education at the Graduate School of Education at Leiden University in 2012.

Amanda Berry completed a Bachelor of Education at Melbourne CAE (now Melbourne University) in 1982, then went on to teach Biology, Science and English in different secondary schools across Melbourne.

Amanda said she soon became interested in the relationship between teaching and learning.

“The questions: What are students learning in my classroom and how is my teaching influencing their learning? led me to embark on a Masters in Education at Monash University (completed in 1997),” Amanda said.

“Through this study, my fascination for how teachers learn and develop was further sparked, leading to a PhD (completed 2005) that was a detailed study of my own university science teaching practices. “

Amanda’s PhD won the Faculty of Education award for best thesis and led to the publication of a book based on her thesis: *Tensions in Teaching about Teaching*.

She continued to develop her research into teachers’ learning and development in STEM education, working with researchers from around the world, as an invited scholar and presenting at conferences and giving seminars.

Amanda said her collaborative work led to significant developments in the understanding of teachers’ professional knowledge and growth with the aim of building a strong and effective teaching profession.

In 2012 she was appointed an Associate Professor in Education in the Graduate School of Education at Leiden University.

“There, I led the World Teacher Program, a bilingual teacher education program preparing teachers for international and bilingual schools in the Netherlands and worldwide, as well as conducting research into teacher learning and development,” Amanda said.

“This was a fantastic experience (albeit challenging!) to learn to live and work in a completely different culture and without any Dutch language background before I arrived.

“I learned a great deal about my assumptions about schooling and education and built my resilience to adapt – and thrive – in a new and foreign environment.”

She said her most recent career highlight was her appointment as Head of Research for the Faculty of Education at Monash.

“In this role, I am leading the development of our research strategy and supporting academics across the Faculty to build their research programs, and to connect our research with the pressing challenges of education,” Amanda said.

“I have just been awarded, with colleagues from Monash and Catholic Education Office, an Australian Research Council Linkage grant, to study the use of problem-based learning in STEM Education with schools in Victoria and Queensland.

“I am very much looking forward to this work over the next three years that can help us better understand problem-based learning and how it can support improved STEM education.”

Amanda said she was grateful to Kilvington for such a positive school experience.

“Even though it is now over 40 years ago, I still have very vivid and happy memories of my years at Kilvington,” Amanda said.

“What stays with me most strongly is the breadth of educational experiences that I enjoyed: a well-rounded curriculum that included everything from music appreciation to cookery to classical civilisation to sciences and even mothercraft.

“I maintained my interests across diverse fields sparked by these beginnings at Kilvington, along with lifelong friendships with my former classmates.”

### **3. JULIANNE JAQUES, CLASS OF 1985**

On leaving school Julianne Jaques undertook bachelor degrees in economics and law at Monash University, and a doctorate from the University of Melbourne for her thesis on corporate taxation. She is a chartered accountant, a chartered tax adviser and a commercial barrister specialising in taxation.

She spent five years with a major accounting firm and five years with a major law firm before becoming senior tax adviser to the Federal Assistant Treasurer during the introduction of GST and business tax reforms.

A barrister since 2002, Julianne has appeared in all superior Victorian and New South Wales courts, in the Federal Court, and in the High Court of Australia.

She also holds several board appointments including the Tax Practitioners Board which regulates tax practitioners throughout Australia, and the Board of Taxation which gives tax policy advice to the Federal Government from a business and community perspective.

In 2019 she was acting chair of the Board of Taxation for six months. She is also one of five members of the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority which regulates federal parliamentarians’ travel expenses.

This year Julianne became the first woman to be awarded Chartered Tax Adviser of the Year at the Tax Institute’s 2020 National Tax Summit held in March in Sydney.


The event was attended by 1,500 tax professionals and the criteria for this award included “leadership in the tax profession, tax community involvement and outstanding ethics and professionalism”.

One of her favourite memories at Kilvington was when the debating club was set up by Mrs Barton, and she took part in the first lunchtime debate on the topic, “Australians care too much about sport”.

“I was arguing the affirmative, and I can’t remember who won, but when I stood up to speak to make my team’s case, something just clicked,” Julianne said.

“That was the first step on my path to becoming a barrister.”



 Julianne Jaques became the first woman to be awarded Chartered Tax Adviser of the Year at the Tax Institute’s 2020 National Tax Summit this year.



Just a year later, Kilvington had debating teams in two grand finals in the inter-school competition which Julianne said was a “marvellous testament to the dedication of Mrs Barton, and to the confidence that Kilvington’s supportive culture engendered in its students”.

She said she also remembered with much fondness many of the teachers and students.

“I remember physics classes with Mr O (Mr Osborne), who, one lunchtime, set up a mechanism on the school roof to drop two objects of identical size but different weight to show that they hit the ground at the same time.

“I still use this example when explaining physics to my own children. The year Mr O retired, the student body gave him a standing ovation at speech night that went on for several minutes.”

Julianne recalled the excitement the day Kilvington bought its first computer – an Apple IIe – when each of the 30 students in the class painstakingly filled black lines onto computer programming cards.

“One line in the wrong place and the program wouldn’t work to add two numbers together – very different to the ever-present technology we live with today!”

But her fondest memories are of Kilvington’s caring and supportive culture.

“That gave every student the opportunity to explore their own interests and to find their own strengths – a culture that helped us to see the personal benefit of hard work and service, and lived up to the school motto “*non nobis sed omnibus*” – not for our own but others’ good.

“At Kilvington I made friendships that have stood the test of time – lifelong true friends with whom I have shared the ups and downs throughout the years, and on whom I have always been able to rely.”

#### **4. MARGARET ESAKOFF, CLASS OF 1970**

Margaret Esakoff is the Mayor of Glen Eira having represented the council in that position three times before and maintaining a council position for 17 years.

Margaret said one of her career highlights before working on council would be the work she did with Bert Newton at Channel 9 and 3UZ and having the opportunity to meet so many local and international celebrities.

Another highlight was becoming mayor for the first time, “with my mother there to see it happen, and of course the honour that representing the city I grew up in and live in has given me”.

Margaret said she had many fond memories from her years at Kilvington.

“The good values it instils in students (then and now), the camaraderie of students and support they gave one another, my geography teacher, Mrs Phillips-Rees, who gave me a new-found interest in the subject, along with the many great teachers who had the ability to guide us all in the right direction.”

#### **5. YVETTE GRAY, CLASS OF 1997**

Yvette Gray gained a Bachelor of Arts in Media at Swinburne University and went on to undertake a cadetship at News Limited.

She said she remembers clearly the excitement of handing in her last uni assignment and then getting a call the same day from Leader Newspapers, offering her a job as a reporter.

“I wanted to start my career in print to learn the ropes of journalism – how to write, make contacts and find stories,” Yvette said.

“From there I moved to Albury to learn broadcast journalism, reporting for Win TV. About 18 months later I returned to Melbourne to work in metropolitan news which is where I remain.”



Before joining Glen Eira Council Margaret Esakoff worked with Bert Newton at Channel 9 and 3UZ and met many local and international celebrities.

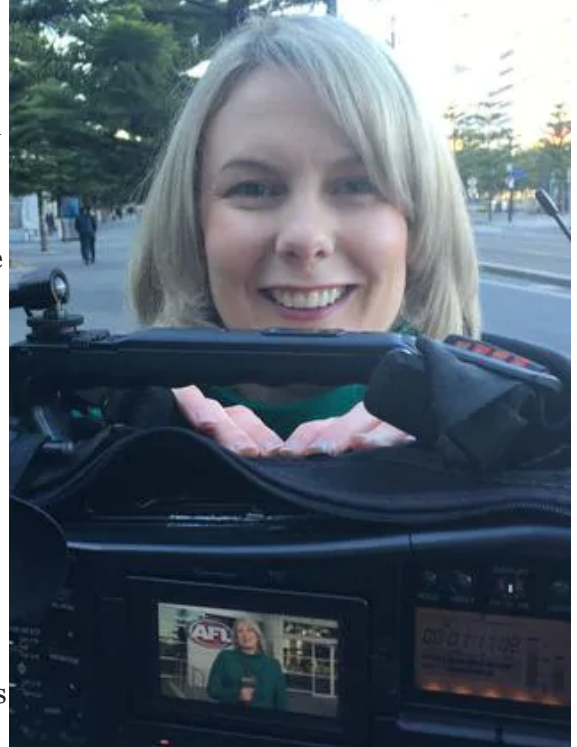
She worked for 10 years as police reporter at 3AW, where she covered many major breaking stories including the devastating Christchurch earthquake in 2011 and the NZ Pike River Coal Mine explosion in 2010. She also covered the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria and some of Melbourne's gangland wars.

"Being given these opportunities was an invaluable experience and even though they weren't pleasant events, I felt it helped me grow both personally and professionally. It was also comforting to see how communities rally together to get through tough times," Yvette said.

"I have worked very hard in my career and feel privileged media organisations and the public have trusted me in delivering news to them."

Now that Yvette has a baby daughter, being the best mother she can be is her top priority.

"I am extremely grateful to be working part-time at the ABC as a cross-platform reporter in the Melbourne newsroom (TV, radio and online) so that I can continue my career in journalism. I am really enjoying the balance of family life and work."



Yvette Gray says she feels privileged that, in her work as a reporter, media organisations and the public had trusted her to deliver news to them.

Yvette said she knew from Year 7 that she wanted to be a journalist.

"I remember signing up for the debating team to help me with public speaking," Yvette said.

"I used to visit the library every day to read the newspaper and always looked forward to discussions in class relating to news and current affairs."

Her other love at school was sport including tennis, netball, basketball, softball, volleyball and rowing. She won the Head of the Schoolgirls representing Kilvington.

She said she had since had a successful career in rowing and surfboats.

"Going to a school where I had an incredible level of support from teachers, parents and peers really helped set the foundation for life after school," Yvette said.

"I am of the firm belief the values we were taught at Kilvington helped pave the way for future success. I made lifelong friends at Kilvington and hope to send my daughter there in the future."

## 6. SARAH MCSWINEY, CLASS OF 1999



Sarah McSwiney counts her career highlight as the day the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner, an aircraft she helped design, took flight on December 15, 2009.

For the past 15 years Sarah McSwiney has worked as an aerospace engineering manager in the industry between Australia and the USA. She has led teams in a range of engineering disciplines including structural design, manufacturing support, and research and development. She currently leads a team of 28 engineers across a range of disciplines and working across the enterprise to develop new materials, processes and production systems for future aircraft.

She is a Board Member of Aviation/Aerospace Australia, a member of the Monash MBA Alumni Advisory Committee and Boeing's representative to the Women in Aviation/Aerospace Australia Advisory Committee. She also serves as a Board Member for Kilvington.

Sarah said her career highlight was on December 15, 2009, the day the first Boeing Dreamliner took flight.

“I was standing on the runway in Seattle with many co-workers watching the first ever 787 Dreamliner take flight – an aircraft I had been working on to design then support manufacture for the previous five years.”

Sarah said her school experience at Kilvington enabled her to be free to be her own person.

“I remember feeling confident to follow my passions and extend in my areas of interest and strength,” Sarah said.

“In particular, through my education from Prep to Year 12 I was given opportunities to explore technology that were well ahead of the time, and I think this certainly influenced my career path by making me aware how fun solving problems with technology can be.”

## **7. LEAH SWANN, CLASS OF 1988**

Since leaving school Leah Swann has developed a career as a novelist, journalist and speech writer. She is currently in the communications team at World Vision.

In April this year her literary suspense novel *Sheerwater* was published and is selling well with positive reviews. Before that she released *Irina: The Trilogy* a middle-grade fantasy series and *Bearings*, a collection of short stories and a novella that was short-listed for the Dobbie Award.

Leah said it was exciting to see the publication of all her titles especially *Sheerwater*.

“It’s been fantastic to get feedback from readers saying that it’s ‘unputdownable’, ‘moving’ and ‘unforgettable’,” Leah said.

“It was also fantastic to win the inaugural Overland Story Wine prize.”

Leah said she loved her time at Kilvington.

“In those days it was a girls’ school and being a bit shy as a teenager this suited me,” Leah said.

“I have fond memories of all the students, especially in my year level. There was a lot of laughter!”

She said the school had high academic standards, inspiring teachers and was known for its care of the individual and pastoral atmosphere under the guidance of the principal then, the late Warren Stone.

“My sister, mother and aunt attended the school and my grandfather, Fred Swann, was secretary on the school council for about 30 years, so I had the added sense of belonging that comes from an ongoing family connection,” Leah said.

“I enjoyed being in the choir and remember to this day things that I learned in English, English Literature, Art and History and went on to study some of these subjects at Melbourne University.”

## **8. KATIE BENSTEAD, CLASS OF 2005**

Katie Benstead is a professional polymath and philanthropist living with her partner in the US while in the process of getting authorisation to work there.

She is volunteering with the San Francisco SPCA; Project Open Hand – preparing meals for the sick and elderly; SF-Marine Food Bank – packing and distributing groceries for pop-up pantries for families (especially during COVID-19); Salvation Army – making hygiene packs for the homeless community and, since 2015, as an Event Safety Officer at the biennial Avalon Air Show in Victoria.

Since leaving Kilvington, Katie has studied undergraduate Criminology and Linguistics, and postgraduate Psychology and IT. Some of her subsequent varied occupations include:



Leah Swann has been excited see response to the publication of all her titles but especially her latest suspense novel *Sheerwater*.



- Living and teaching English in Mianyang, Sichuan, China in 2014-15 at the Mianyang Foreign Languages School.

- Transcribing post-mortem reports for the Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine.

- Anatomical Pathology administration at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre.

- International and Partnerships administration for Deakin University as well as casual work in the Science, Engineering and Built Technology Faculty and the Faculty of Business and Law.

- Travel consultant.

- Legal and medical transcriptionist for the federal, family and high courts of Australia as well as transcriptionist for Victoria Police suspect interviews.

- Bank and finance reconciliation with the NAB.

Katie said her career highlights were many and varied.

“Every bit of my experience simply adds to a long list of highlights and exciting adventures,” Katie said.

“However, if I had to pick a few, teaching in China is something I will never forget; I will always treasure those memories. I had over a thousand students and enjoyed my time with them and local travels.

As a self-confessed aviation nerd, she also looked forward to the Avalon Air Show, which usually occupied two to three months at a time.

“Currently, my favourite days are those I spend with the SF SPCA where I get to train, socialise, walk, feed, pet (and cuddle) hundreds of different dogs and prepare them for fostering and adoption.”

Katie said she was positive about her future wherever it might lead.

“My plan for the future is really to play it by ear! If my history is anything to go by, I could be anywhere in the future, though we do plan to move back to Australia within the next few years. I will go wherever I’m needed!”

Katie said she left Kilvington 15 years ago but still had dreams about school.

“I still dream that I’m late to school. Just the other night, I dreamt of walking through Dalton Hall to see which musical production will be performed this year,” Katie said.

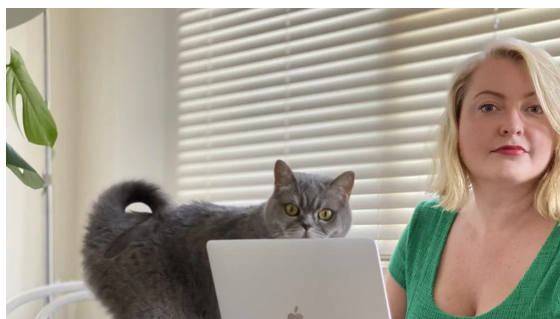
“As an alumna with previous leadership in terms of house captaincy and various roles within the music department, I will always treasure the skills and memories I’ve retained since my time there.

“You can always tell a past Kilvington student by a few of the following: excitement to clap for someone at any opportunity, a love/hate relationship with the colour magenta, bonding over how Mrs Venn used to encourage us to sing, and of course, there are always the few who, after a round of *Happy Birthday*, sing Kilvington’s birthday song, much to the confusion and bemusement of those around us. We will never change, and we couldn’t be happier about it!”

## 9. JAC BENSTEAD, CLASS OF 2002



Since leaving school, Katie Benstead has studied undergraduate Criminology and Linguistics, and postgraduate Psychology and IT.



Jac Benstead is the CEO of her own business Gorillacom and CXO (and co-director) for a company called The Hacker Exchange (HEX).

Gorillacom focuses on the creation and automated distribution network of e-commerce products while HEX works at the intersection of tertiary education and entrepreneurship, delivering reimaged academic experiences.

Jac spends most of her time creating and leading global innovations programs across San Francisco, Singapore and Tel Aviv, Melbourne, New Zealand and there are another six locations in the pipeline.

She named the following as her career highlights:

- Winning the Dr John Miller prize for the highest achieving graduate of her MBA.
- Being asked to lead a trade mission for the Victorian Government to SXSW in Austin.
- Working in educational institutions across the globe including Japan, Canada, the UK and Australia for more than 10 years.
- Currently being able to work from anywhere (including on a train through India).
- Releasing an album with my band (I play drums).

Jac said she had clear plans for her future.

“I am very much enjoying my work at HEX and looking forward to being able to get back out into the world post-COVID,” Jac said.

“We have recently expanded GCom to the US market which is currently keeping me busy, but my life's ambition is to open a brewery, so I think that has to be the next major project down the track.”

In relation to her school experience Jac said: “I definitely enjoyed my time at Kilvington, even if I did get into a little trouble – I met two of my closest friends in pre-prep at Kilvington when we were five.

“I also have fond memories of winning house arts as music captain (Burman) and being made hockey captain.”

## 10. HALINA PIETRZAK, CLASS OF 2013

On leaving school Halina Pietrzak achieved a BSc (Honours) through the University of Melbourne (2014-2017); undertook an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (2015-2017) and works as a scientist mentor at the Gene Technology Access Centre.

She is currently a PhD candidate in Medical Biology and Parasitology at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute

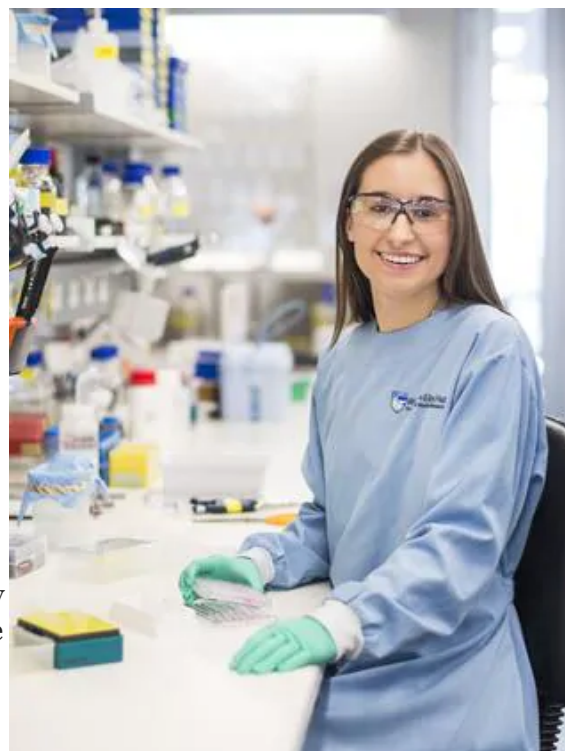
Halina said she had always planned to become a scientist and study infectious diseases.

“I have had many fantastic experiences and opportunities through both the University of Melbourne and the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, where I am currently completing my PhD, conducting research into malaria infection,” Halina said.

“However, one recent highlight has been the publication of my first paper, investigating immune memory responses to severe malaria infection, in the journal *Parasitology*.”

But she admitted she had no idea what the future would hold.

“Until now I have had a clearly defined idea of what my career would be – becoming a scientist to study infectious disease. Now I am on that trajectory, I can see that ‘the more you



📷 Halina Pietrzak says a career highlight was the publication of her first paper, investigating immune memory responses to severe malaria infection, in the journal *Parasitology*.



know, the more you don't know' .... and that aside from finishing my PhD and (finally) not being a student anymore, I absolutely don't know where science will take me."

Halina said growing up in Murrumbidgee, Kilvington was very much a local school, just a short bus trip away on the 625.

"It provided a friendly and supportive learning environment where I was able to develop not only academic but real life skills," Halina said.

"I fondly remember the support, guidance and encouragement provided by Kilvington and the way we were always reminded that, as individuals, we would all play a role in the wider world.

"I also appreciate how nice it is to still have a connection to the school – and to have their continued interest in what I am up to!"

### **11. KYLIE ROBERTS, CLASS OF 1989**

Kylie Roberts spent the early part of her career in marketing and brand management with large brands including Coca-Cola and ANZ after completing an undergraduate and then postgraduate degree in marketing.

She then moved to Adelaide "for love" and worked in brand management for Pernod Ricard looking after their Wyndham Estate wine brand in the Hunter Valley.

In 2004 a decision to join forces with a friend changed everything.

"I was itching to start my own business and after wanting to enjoy a day spa experience in Adelaide and realising there were none available like there was in the eastern states, I joined forces with a friend and we bought the SA franchise for Endota Spa," Kylie said.

"At the time there were four Endota spas. I also took on the role of the first marketing manager for them.

"I am still a franchisee today and the Endota network now has more than 100 spas across Australia."

Kylie later bought into the Endota Group and created their first Endota organic skincare range.

In 2014 she decided she wanted to create her own business from scratch and, along with friend Claire, Aleenta Barre was born.

"At Aleenta we wanted a space for women to enjoy some time out and focus on their own health and wellbeing," Kylie said.

"As women we are so used to looking after everyone else, we wanted women to escape the treadmill of everyday life and nourish their mind, body and soul.

"We now have seven studios in Adelaide, Melbourne and Queensland, and have just recently introduced our online platform so that you can experience Aleenta anywhere and everywhere!"

And, Kylie said, the big plans don't stop there.

"I love constantly evolving and developing the business to grow and change as the world around us changes," Kylie said.

"More than ever, our Aleenta community provides connection and a focus on mental and physical wellbeing during an uncertain time in the world. I am now navigating teenage-dom and secondary school with my eldest!"

Of her school experience Kylie said she embraced every opportunity.



Since leaving school Kylie Roberts has started her own business Aleenta Barre and now has seven studios across Australia.

“I absolutely loved my time at Kilvington; I feel so blessed that my parents chose the right school for me.

“I took part in every possible activity I could – playing sport, dancing in musicals, debating, playing the cello. I was also lucky enough to enjoy leadership roles at school which set me up well to lead my team today.”

But she said the biggest influence Kilvington played in her life was through her friendship circle.

“My closest friends are all still my friends from my time at Kilvington.

“Although I now live interstate, we all still have girls’ weekends away and catch up regularly when I am in town. There is nothing like having lifelong friends who have known you since you were 12 years old.”

## **12. GENEVIEVE MARTIN, CLASS OF 2007**



Genevieve Martin says receiving the General Sir John Monash Scholarship was a real thrill and responsible for changing her career trajectory.

Genevieve Martin completed her medical studies at Monash University in 2013, during which she undertook research into the impact of HIV infection on monocytes from women living with HIV. In 2019, she completed a Doctor of Philosophy (DPhil) at the University of Oxford which focused on the impact of early initiation of antiretroviral therapy in HIV infection on T cells, and the implications of this for HIV cure strategies.

She is currently working as a clinician at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne, where she is undertaking specialist physician training. Her clinical interests lie in the intersection between infection and immunity.

Genevieve counted receiving the General Sir John Monash Scholarship, which funded her studies in the UK, as a real thrill and responsible for changing her career trajectory.

In the future, she would like to combine a career in clinical medicine with translational research in either infectious diseases or haematology. She hopes to be able to work towards developing novel immune-based therapeutics.

Of her school experience Genevieve said: “Kilvington was such a supportive place to complete my secondary schooling and I have fond memories of my time spent there – as well as friendships that have lasted in the years since.”

## **13. SUZANNE JOHNSTON, CLASS OF 1975**

Suzanne Johnston has achieved the rare distinction of being recognised equally for her success in opera, music theatre, and as a concert and cabaret performer.

She made her debut in 1981 with the Victoria State Opera as Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus*. This was followed by numerous operatic roles, as well as Melbourne and Sydney seasons as Eliza Doolittle in the VSO’s hugely successful production of *My Fair Lady*, opposite Anthony Warlow. In 1985 Suzanne debuted with Opera Australia, for whom she performed more than 20 major roles.

Suzanne made her international debut in 1989 as Thisbe in *La Cenerentola* at the Salzburg Festival.

In 1991 and again in 1992, she appeared as Dorabella opposite Renee Fleming’s Fiordiligi, in Trevor Nunn’s new production of *Così fan tutte* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera under both Sir Simon Rattle and Bruno Weil. She has several times been a guest artist on the nationally televised Carols in the Domain and Carols by Candlelight, toured for Musica Viva, and has performed with each of the Australian state symphony orchestras.

Suzanne's many accolades include a MO Award (now known as a Helpmann Award), Churchill Fellowship, and four Green Room Awards. She also won an ARIA award for the CD "Perfect Strangers" with Judi Connelli and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

Video recordings include *Hansel and Gretel*, *Les Huguenots*, *La Cenerentola*, *The Gondoliers*, *Fledermaus* & *Pirates of Penzance*.

Suzanne is a highly respected adjudicator and examiner, currently runs a successful private teaching practice, and is a Teaching Associate in Voice at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne.

In October 2019 she returned to the stage to play the role of Lady Beaconsfield in the 25th Anniversary concert of *Jekyll & Hyde*, with Anthony Warlow & the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra.

Suzanne said she had many career highlights including performing opposite Dame Joan Sutherland in her final Australian operatic appearance in a season of *Les Huguenots*.

Suzanne said memories of Kilvington held a special place in her heart.

"I loved my time there, and attended from Prep right thru to HSC.

"The skill, kindness and generosity of the teachers made an indelible impression on me, and I can remember many of them with great clarity even now.

"The most influential was music teacher Patsy Venn, without whose encouragement I would not have embarked on what turned out to be such a wonderful career. We are still in touch, and I recently attended her 80th birthday celebration."

#### 14. NATALIE KLENNER, CLASS OF 2011



Natalie Klenner has worked with thousands of young Australians in high schools delivering preventive mental health programs.

Natalie Klenner has a portfolio of experience in social entrepreneurship, facilitation, social and emotional intelligence education. Previously Natalie was a founding team member of two social enterprises focused on eliminating youth homelessness. She was recognised as one of Australia's Young Social Pioneers in 2017, and the former CEO of Game Changers Australia. She has worked with thousands of young Australians in high schools delivering preventive mental health programs. She's also lived overseas in France, Canada and Morocco. Currently, Natalie works full time at the Foundation for Young Australians and supports the training and development of 30 female facilitators at Flourish Girl.

Natalie said the highlight of her career was the knowledge that she had helped so many young people: "That every time I leave a program I've facilitated with my team I've made a lasting impact on the way a young person views themselves, their community and their place in the world.

She is currently publishing a children's book for young girls, *She's Like Me* putting profits towards girls' education globally, and continuing to explore how she can make a meaningful impact to girls and women across the world.



Suzanne Johnston's many career highlights include performing opposite Dame Joan Sutherland in her final Australian operatic appearance in a season of *Les Huguenots*.



Natalie said she was very grateful for her school experience.

“I’m most grateful for the teachers I had at Kilvington who challenged, supported and believed in my potential,” Natalie said.

“The school provided a wonderful support network and community. Through my work at schools across the country, I’m often confronted with the harsh reality that not every young person gets the same opportunity to learn in such a supportive, safe and nurturing environment in the way that I did.”

### **15. JIYOON LEE, CLASS OF 2012**

As a neuroscientist and a medical student Jiyoong Lee is aspiring to build a career with a humanitarian focus within the medical industry, and to fully use her knowledge in Neuroscience and Medicine to provide innovative solutions to the questions that matter.

These are Jiyoong’s past achievements:

- As a neuroscientist she researched the neuropharmacological interventions of acquired temporal lobe epilepsy.
- As a social entrepreneur she co-founded a not-for-profit organisation that connected international students to a network of mentors to enable experiential learning programs within their chosen industry.
- As a researcher created innovative digital tools for Telemedicine in remote and extreme environments.

Jiyoong said her career highlights included:

- Winning team at the MIT COVID-19 Challenge 2020 – recently designed a solution to leverage existing distribution networks of large FMCG companies and humanitarian organisations to disseminate information on COVID-19 and resources such as DIY masks to under-resourced communities around the world.
- Participant and finalist of the Harvard Medical School & Massachusetts Institute of Technology Healthcare Innovation Bootcamp 2018.
- Presenter at the American Epilepsy Society Annual Conference 2017.
- Leaders in Communities Award at the University of Melbourne.

Jiyoong said looking back on her school years she recognised some of the most crucial and formative moments of her life.

“The compassion, empowerment and authenticity that underlay all the relationships and experience that I had at the school have shaped my perspectives and character,” Jiyoong said.

“I realise how lucky I was to receive such holistic education surrounded by truly wonderful people throughout high school, and this gratitude is at the root of many of my aspirations in life.

“Being a Kilvonian has given me faith in the transformational impact of education and belief that everyone deserves an equal opportunity to realise their potential. I hope that these values will be reflected in the work that I do in the years to come.”

### **16. ANNIE ZHENG, CLASS OF 2007**

After leaving school Annie Zheng graduated from Melbourne University with a Bachelor of Science and a Juris Doctor. She spent the next three years working at Allens Linklaters, one of Australia’s top-tier law firms. She then spent two years working as in-house counsel for JB Hi-Fi. Currently, Annie works as a mergers and acquisitions lawyer for Kirkland and Ellis, the largest law firm in the US, in their San Francisco office.

Annie said passing the California Bar Exam this year was to date the highlight of her career.



📷 Neuroscientist and medical student Jiyoong Lee says looking back on her school years she recognised some of the most crucial and formative moments of her life.

“It’s a notoriously difficult exam and this year the exam had a pass rate of 26.8 per cent, so I’m very glad I passed,” Annie said.

“It allows me to become qualified as a practising lawyer in California.”

Annie plans to continue building on her legal experience in the US for a few more years, visit some of the great national parks in North America, and find a way to give back to other law students and young lawyers in Australia.

She said her school experience gave her the tools she needed to pursue a law career.

“Without the support of friends and teachers at Kilvington, I would never have had the self-confidence to pursue a law degree in the first place,” Annie said.

“My best friends from Year 7 and 8 are still my best friends now, and continue to be my constant support network – we WhatsApp about 10 times a day! It just goes to show how strong the bonds forged over Year 7 English and maths can be.”

Annie said her favourite activities at Kilvington included House Arts (“go Barrett! I think we won in Year 12”), English with Mrs Dillon, “who always managed to breathe life into every lesson”, and Biology with Ms Lampman, “who always encouraged us to be curious”.

But Annie said her best memories were made up of the small things: random conversations in the hallway between classes; joking around in the Treehouse (Y12 space) and making Jasper Rd Maccas runs during free periods.

“Class of ’07 was made up of kind, funny and caring girls, and the same can be said of our teachers, who were always generous with their time and advice. I consider myself very lucky to have grown up at Kilvington.”

## 17. CARA STEPHENSON, CLASS OF 2006

Cara Stephenson works as a nutrition technical adviser with Swiss Red Cross in the north of Laos.

Cara said the work was in partnership with the Lao government, building the capacity of Lao government health personnel around maternal and child health projects.

“We work side-by-side with the government to prevent, identify and treat children and mothers with malnutrition,” Cara said.

“Acute malnutrition rates are high in Laos, and these children are at greater risk of dying before their fifth birthday. It can be a confronting job, but also incredibly rewarding.”

She said she was grateful for her work especially during COVID-19.

“I’ve been pretty blessed to have had my work take me to many countries around the world – from working in rural villages in Malawi to conducting training in Indonesia on the border of East Timor,” Cara said.

“I’ve enjoyed every second and wouldn’t change it for a moment. I’ve been able to travel the world for a living, and in this current time, I don’t take it for granted.”



Annie Zheng currently works as a mergers and acquisitions lawyer for Kirkland and Ellis, the largest law firm in the US.



Cara Stephenson is grateful her work as a nutrition technical adviser has taken her to many countries around the world.

Cara said she planned to spend the next year in Laos, before returning to Australia with her partner and hopefully starting a family. She would also love to continue her career in community nutrition, particularly working with children and marginalised populations.

Her favourite memories of school include: the fun of being house captain leading swimming cheers, arts, sports tournaments and debating events; maths methods with Mrs Cole and playing indoor cricket.

### **18. ELLIE PIETSCH, CLASS OF 1999**



Ellie Pietsch is now a leadership coach but says school provided her with the foundations for a full and active life.

Ellie Pietsch currently works as a change leadership coach at Deloitte.

Formerly a leader in netball, swimming, lifesaving, and other NFP organisations, driving participation and engagement during times of change, Ellie is now taking her experience and learnings to share with corporate and government organisations to support other leaders on their journey.

Ellie said one of the high points of her career so far included the time she volunteered in Sydney, alongside her full-time job, as the live-in caretaker of Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club. She lived in the surf club for three years (the closest building to the beach in Sydney's eastern suburbs), providing cleaning, security and maintenance of the 100-year old facility,.

“We met, and were welcomed by, the most incredible community of people – lifesavers at Tamarama beach – one of the most dangerous beaches in Australia, the 100 volunteers trained and served the community with volunteer patrols, migrant beach safety days and other amazing social activities.

“We were welcomed into this incredible family and served them and our community for three years – also welcoming our first baby about half way through!”

Of her school experience Ellie said Kilvington had provided her with the foundations for a full and active life.

“It also taught the value of putting up your hand and having a go, appreciating the diversity within teams, looking for the good in people, and speaking your mind,” Ellie said.

“The focus on serving others by sharing your own talents was an invaluable lesson in humility and self respect.

“I still catch up regularly with girlfriends from school, who continue to challenge and support me, even through the really tough times. In particular, I look back fondly at the incredible relationships I formed with staff, now 20 years on – who taught me so much more than how to read and write. I can't believe I count my teachers as friends!

“Their wisdom and curiosity showed in their passion for teaching and I am so grateful for the amazing opportunities they gave me to fail, learn and ultimately shine!”

### **19. ANDREA DOUGLAS, CLASS OF 1986**

Andrea Douglas has carved out a career as a scientist and biotech executive. She leads CSL's (Australia's leading biotechnology company and largest company on the ASX) Organisation Transformation Office, which integrates and drives major organisational design changes that have broad implications to the business across areas of strategy, structure, governance, process and people. She also leads government relations strategy in Australia.

Andrea has held various roles at CSL since 2005, including vice president, R&D strategy and external affairs where she led the global R&D strategy, product portfolio, R&D investment and prioritisation



processes. She was also vice president, licensing, head of global R&D project management and program director, influenza.

Before joining CSL Andrea was the CEO of the Gene CRC. She also held a senior research role at WEHI where she studied the molecular genetics of breast cancer.

Andrea has a PhD degree in Forensic Medicine from Monash University. She also holds a Masters degree in Health Administration and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She is a director of the Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute and BioCurate and was a director of AusBiotech from 2013-2019.

Andrea said one of the highlights of her career was between 2007 and 2019 when she led the R&D strategy of CSL Limited.

“In that position, I helped build CSL’s global R&D portfolio, supporting the development of new medicines and to enable future growth,” Andrea said.

“In 1994, the year that CSL was privatised, it spent about \$20 million on R&D. In 2019, it spent more than one billion dollars.”



Andrea Douglas was recently awarded the 2020 BioMelbourne Network’s Women In Leadership award.

For her work Andrea was recently awarded the 2020 BioMelbourne Network’s Women In Leadership award.

Andrea said she had just moved out of R&D and into a broader organisational role which would keep her challenged for the next few years.

“I’m fortunate to be in the medical research and health sector which makes getting up each day pretty easy. As long as I keep finding the work challenging, I can’t imagine working in another industry,” Andrea said.

“I have supplemented my executive role with Board roles in the past few years and I can imagine in future I will spend more time in that capacity.”

She said she had great memories of her time at school.

“I have great memories of growing up and learning in a safe and nurturing environment and of fun and friendship,” Andrea said.

“I still catch up regularly with my closest friends from Kilvington and go on an annual girls’ trips.”

## 20. NICOLE STEWART, CLASS OF 2005



Nicole Stewart was just 24 when she worked as a performance coach with Joann Formosa, Australia’s gold medal winning Paralympic equestrian athlete at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

Nicole Stewart always thought her career trajectory would be in the horse industry but a life-changing accident led her down a different, albeit, rewarding path.

In 2008 Nicole had a serious equestrian accident that led to a loss of confidence as a horse rider. She started searching outside the box for support and solutions.

“I started doing life coaching and personal development work for myself, and knew almost straight away that I wanted to become a coach,” Nicole said.

“I got qualified in 2011 and have been coaching people since. It just comes naturally to me, and I love it so much!”

Nicole competed to two grades down from Olympic standard in the equestrian sport of three-day eventing. She spent many years early in her career exclusively coaching other equestrian athletes because of her own journey.

In the past four years, Nicole has transitioned to working with women (and some men) in a variety of fields. She work with dentists, surgeons, CEOs, athletes and entrepreneurs to help them get better results and live more fully expressed, authentic lives.

Nicole said her career highlight was working as a performance coach with Joann Formosa, Australia’s gold medal winning Paralympic equestrian athlete at the London 2012 Olympic Games.

“I was just 24 when Jo won her gold medal at London, and it was early in my coaching career,” Nicole said.

“Jo and I are still friends to this day. It was such a delight to contribute to her achievement.”

Looking ahead Nicole said she and her partner, Paul, had made the decision to remain childfree.

“We have two gorgeous and weird cats. I want to continue to travel lots, and continue to serve women all over the world to crack out of the cage they’ve learned to live in, so they can be their authentic, fully expressed, powerful selves!

“I want to experience all that life has to offer, see far-off places, go on wild adventures and always be challenging myself to see what is possible.”

Of her school experience Nicole said: “I was never the most academically-oriented person at school. I was grateful to be surrounded by some amazing women at Kilvington, some of whom are still my close friends today.”