

The Bell

The Tuckwell
Scholarship
2025 Edition



Australian
National
University



TUCKWELL
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Bell

The annual magazine for the Tuckwell Scholarship Program



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Welcome to the 2025 edition of The Bell Magazine

This publication takes its name from the Tuckwell Handbell, commissioned by Drs Graham and Louise Tuckwell AO and crafted at London's Whitechapel Bell Foundry. The chime of this bell is the first sound to hit the ears of each new Scholar as they are 'rung in' at the annual Commencement dinner. The ring of the bell is fleeting, yet significant; it signals the beginning of each new Scholar's journey at The Australian National University.

This scholarship transforms its recipients by providing opportunities to chase their passions and hone their skills, so that

they may one day share them with their communities. This annual magazine seeks to capture these unique endeavours and showcase what the Scholarship makes possible for every individual. The Bell also provides updates on our ever-evolving community for all Scholars, staff and Alumni within the Tuckwell and broader ANU communities.

In this edition you will catch a glimpse of not only the exciting ventures of Scholars, but also the tireless passion and support of our staff that make this Program so valuable.

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From the Editors

What a year 2025 has been! With an endless flurry of over-achievement, ceilings were shattered and so were windows.

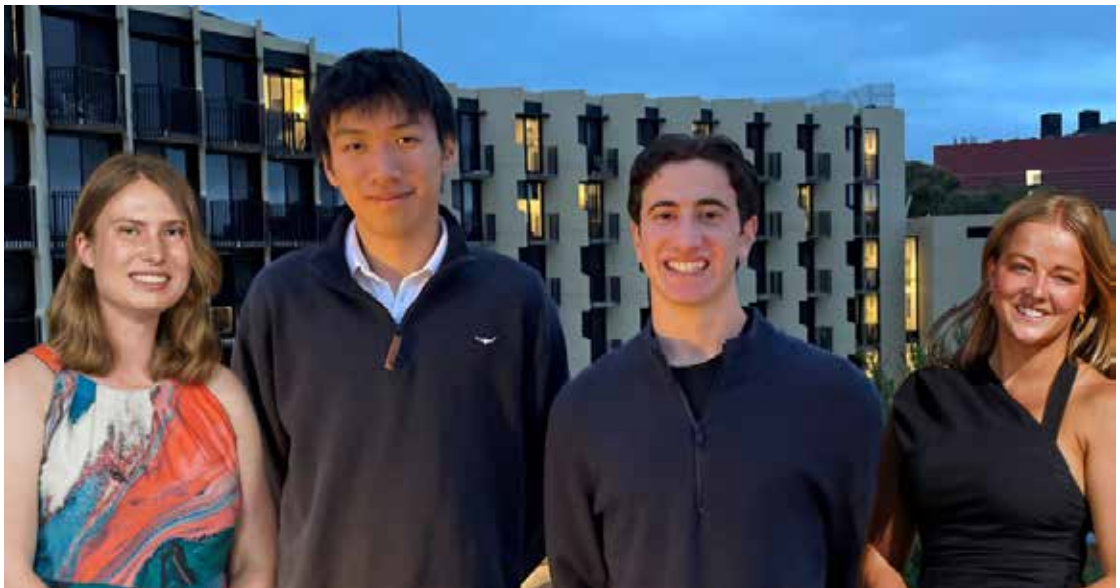
Scholars House, to no surprise, remains a house for many: between the sunroom, kitchen, lounges and lounges being repurposed for power naps, this space of life and laughter truly lives up to its name.

2025 saw Scholars venture across the world and across the workforce, experiencing multiple years in the span of just one. After all, a rare mixture of ambition and spontaneity runs through the Tuckwell bloodline, ensuring Scholars capture rather than become captive to the unforgiving minute.

While we could go on listing the feats achieved and landscapes traversed by our Scholars, that is precisely the point of this magazine; for our community to share their stories with you, and lay bare on the page the inner workings of unique imaginations.

Enjoy each bundle of enjoyment stored in these chapters – we hope they make you laugh, reflect and ruminate on the year that has passed, while inspiring you to carve out your own book-worthy chapters from the year ahead!

Matt, Ethan, Zoe and Leanne



Editors from left: Leanne Adams, Ethan Zhu, Matt Radvin and Zoe Paul.



From Graham and Louise Tuckwell

Every year we eagerly anticipate reading The Bell magazine. Quite apart from being able to marvel at the writing and editing skills of our Scholars, it is fabulous to have a window on all the various activities that Scholars are engaged in each year. Letters from Scholars are a great update on what individuals have been up to, but The Bell provides tidbits and trivia that we would never know about otherwise, such as who bakes in Scholars House, who eats, who cleans up and who doesn't clean up! In other words, we get to know how Scholars House really works.

Speaking of which, we were delighted when Lois Carlton took on the role of Director of Scholars House this year when Dr Fiona Scotney took leave of absence. Lois has done an amazing job in so many ways and is full of energy, enthusiasm and ideas. Together with Kate Hutchison, our Alumni Coordinator, Lois helped organise two inaugural Alumni events this year, in Sydney and Melbourne, which were a great success and likely to become annual events and a blueprint for similar events in other places in future years.

Our buddy system for incoming scholars was given a boost this year under Lois' guidance. Soon after they received 'our call' following interview weekend in early July, incoming scholars were paired up with a current scholar who engaged with them purposefully and answered all their questions about what really goes on in the Tuckwell Scholarship Program. In other words, they gave them all the inside information. A very active Facebook page (which included a photo of our fridge!) along with several catch-ups with buddies from the same state enhanced the system. It has been a great success for all involved and we compliment the current Scholars and the staff at Scholars House for their wonderful contributions here.

Another contribution of huge importance to us, was Alumni being on the Selection Panel for the first time. Two of the eight Panel positions were filled by Alumni. Recognising their early-career trajectory and heavy workloads, each Alumni spot comprised two people, which gave four Alumni a shared role during interviews and selections. As expected, they put in a huge effort, made some astute observations and did not hold back on giving their opinions at the selection meeting! The four Alumni were Joe Dean (2014), Elena Pleass (2014), Mary Parker (2015) and Anthony Ricci (2015) and they will again be on the Panel next year. Thereafter, we will reflect on how other Alumni might be offered a similar opportunity.

Time moves on and so do people, with Fiona leaving early this year and Dr Michelle Barrett, Head of Scholars House and previously a Fellow, leaving at the end of this year. We thank them for their efforts over the last 3 years and wish them well for the future. The new Head of Scholars House will be Dr Iain Henry and we are very excited to welcome his experience and insights as a former Fellow.



Our photo this year shows us in the beautiful Tamar Valley of Tasmania in September the day before our niece's wedding.

From the Staff



Associate Professor Michelle Barrett Head of Scholars House

Dear Scholars,

This is my last entry for The Bell as I finish up my contract. My term with Tuckwell has been like a 'posting' with DFAT or Defence. It has been three years and has run its natural course. It's time for me to see some more patients and help create the new medical curriculum.

My last three years have been sprinkled with the same Tuckwell fairy dust that coats all of you. There have been a startling number of opportunities and achievements – that I will not bore you with but suffice to say I have certainly benefited from moving in your circles. My sincere thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to be a Fellow and then HoSH go to Graham and Louise, and indeed ANU. I have loved this job. One of the hard parts of the job this year was the loss of Dr Fiona Scotney, who went on to manage another Scholarship, but one of the great joys working this year was with our fabulous Fellows: Dr Maryna Bilokur, Associate Professor Mark Ellison, Dr Asilata Bapat and Associate Professor Emma Aisbett. We had wide ranging and fascinating conversations in my little office at Scholars House each week. The dedication of the former Director and all of the Fellows to the Scholars and their well being was remarkable. Maryna left mid last year to work in Switzerland, and Mark is leaving to work in Edinburgh.

This year there are a different swathe of people I would like to thank. Particularly Mr Michael Lonergan who is Chief Financial Officer at ANU and who became a member of the Tuckwell Board in 2025. Michael significantly helped me bring the ship back to safe harbour this year. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Professor Joan Leach and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching), Associate Professor Merryn McKinnon were also breathtakingly supportive of me and the Program this year. Professor Ryan Goss and Dr Fiona Scotney continued to guide me and the Program despite having 'left' and I hope to emulate their generosity to whomever follows me.

You all know how much I must thank Lois Carlton, Gita Raikar and Kate Hutchison as you see on a daily basis, the heart and soul, they give to you and to me. They have worked so hard, and under significant professional and personal strain. Thank you, Lois, Gita and Kate.

It is to you the Scholars, and Alumni that I owe the greatest gratitude. Thank you for a fabulous three years! Embrace your beautiful futures dear young people.

Kindest regards,
Michelle

PS: If ever any of you need me, don't hesitate to email me at michelle.barrett@anu.edu.au



Lois Carlton Program Director

The Bell 2025 edition is a record of the year that was. The year is bookended by two milestone events, Commencement and Graduation Pancakes. Both events have a set structure and rituals which have been repeated enough now they are held as dear traditions. It is a sign that the program is becoming settled in itself, and putting down roots when you can say it has traditions. Each year begins with a rush as we welcome the incoming cohort with a series of events, Orientation, Camp and Commencement. Then it settles into a predictable rhythm, events, stipends, letters, biscuits,

Tuckfit, travel allowance and of course study and assessment. Before we know it, we are at the end of the year farewelling the graduating scholars at Graduation Pancakes.

To best enjoy this edition of The Bell, I suggest you get yourself a cup of tea, find a comfy spot and read it, page by page, don't flick, take your time.

Smile at the humour, **travel** with the scholars on exchange, **cheer** their academic achievements, awards and prizes, **peer** into the world of cohort reflections, **relive** the excitement and fun of the program events, **delight** in the eclectic variety of scholars articles, be in **awe** of the challenges and experience that Scholars gave themselves and **anticipate** yourself as Alumni. As you read you should feel proud that you are part of the Tuckwell community, a community of diverse, talented and motivated people who by virtue of receiving the scholarship, have been given an opportunity to develop themselves in ways that make a positive contribution to ANU, their local community and Australia.

I would like to acknowledge and thank two staff who I have worked with closely who left the program. At the end of January 2026 Michelle finished her term as Head of Scholars House, ending three years with the program. She is returning full time to her medical commitments and will be actively involved in writing the new medical course. Perhaps it was her medical background, but Michelle always put the scholar's welfare first and provided great support to the staff in some personally difficult times.

In April Fiona moved to the College of Systems and Society to establish a Tuckwell style program for the Kim Jackson Scholarship. She joined the TSP in March 2022 and quickly brought life back into the program that had been impacted by COVID restrictions. I know her energy and enthusiasm has already had an impact in her new role, and I look forward to hearing about the program's successes. To you both, thank you for being part of the Tuckwell Scholarship Program: actively contributing to the program and helping to make it the exciting, vibrant and dynamic community that it is.

Finally, a big thank you to Gita and Kate, without them, we would not have had this edition of The Bell as none of this would have happened.

Associate Professor Mark Ellison Tuckwell Fellow

Over the past year, I've felt immense gratitude for being part of such a vibrant and inspiring community. This experience has reminded me of the power of connection, conversation and community in shaping personal and collective growth.

The conversations over coffee have challenged my thinking and sparked lasting reflection. The laughter and shared moments, from workshops to Symposium toasties, reinforced that curiosity and joy lie at the heart of learning.

The dedication and care of the Tuckwell administrative staff have been fundamental to making this experience so enriching. Their warmth, organisation, and genuine commitment ensure that every event and opportunity runs smoothly and meaningfully. The culture of kindness and excellence they foster allows Scholars to flourish both personally and academically.

Above all, it's the Scholars themselves who make this community so special. Their drive, integrity, and commitment to making a difference are truly inspiring. Tuckwell is more than a scholarship—it's a community grounded in purpose and care.

I leave this year with cherished memories. It has been a privilege to be part of the Tuckwell journey.



Dr Asilata Bapat Tuckwell Fellow

My first year as a Tuckwell Fellow has been an incredibly rewarding experience. It makes my day to hear about the Scholars' adventures in our regular meetings, and I feel privileged to be entrusted with the challenges they face. It is especially refreshing to chat with Scholars outside my field, who are students I would not have otherwise met. They remind me of the amazing work we do at the University, and renew my enthusiasm for my own academic work.

I am impressed by the many different ways in which our brilliant Scholars shine alongside their usual studies. These include sports, theatre, debate, leadership roles, research projects and fieldwork, and volunteering and working in the broader community. It is heartwarming to observe the strong camaraderie that the Scholars have with each other, embodying the university spirit of discovery, collegiality, innovation, and service.

Alongside all our Scholars, I am greatly indebted to my fantastic colleagues Michelle, Fiona, Lois, Gita, Kate, Emma, Mark, and Maryna for their wit and wisdom. And of course, thank you to the Tuckwells for making all of this possible!

Dr Maryna Bilokur Tuckwell Fellow

For many, 2025–26 was a final pause before major life changes, shaped by exams, job searches and farewells that marked both endings and new beginnings.

The Tuckwell light will remain in the deepest part of the heart for those leaving the Tuckwell family, including myself, as we step into new beginnings—perhaps back in a hometown, perhaps in a new city, or maybe a new country, far from what has become familiar.

For others, there will be another laugh, another card game on a Wednesday night, another networking event or annual dinner—perhaps without yet realising the depth of the footprint the Program will leave behind. Only those graduating now will truly feel the absence of warmth, inspiration and determination that Tuckwell has been seeding in everyone’s heart.

Many will stay in touch and return as panel members at future Annual Tuckwell Alumni Receptions, sharing the secrets of success and happy love stories. As I begin a new chapter as a research academic in Switzerland, I truly miss the Tuckwell drive and the friendly competition within the walls of Scholars House. I am very grateful to the program and the Head of Scholars House, Michelle Barrett, for her exceptional dedication to the program and her unique talent to reignite the light in those who lost it.



Associate Professor Emma Aisbett Tuckwell Fellow

What a privilege it is to be part of the Tuckwell Scholarship program! I can’t believe I get paid to mentor such a diverse and interesting group of young people! And to see so many examples of amazing leadership! Though there are many inspiring examples, I have space for only a few.

Michelle—our HOSH—your ability to be incredibly supportive without being soft or weak. Lois—clear-eyed and competent, reminding us all of the responsibility that comes with privilege.

Chris Jackson—dancing around in the blazing sun and cheering the 1st & 2nd years on the high ropes at camp (while the rest of us covered in the shade). Audrey Smart—whose Semester 2 letter reflections on weeding with the ANU Intrepid Landcare group are the best exposition I have seen of why we should keep fighting the battles, even when we know we can’t win the war.

Thank you, Graham and Louise, for the vision and generosity that has made this all possible and allowed me to share in it.

2025 Graduating Scholars

This year we had a record number of Scholars graduating from their academic programs and from the Tuckwell Program. We would like to congratulate them, thank them for their contributions to Scholars House and welcome them to the growing Tuckwell Alumni community.

Name	Degree
Lachlan Arthur (2015)	Doctor of Medicine and Surgery
Laura Ferguson (2019)	Doctor of Medicine and Surgery
Ellie Randall (2019)	Doctor of Medicine and Surgery
Olivia Taifalos (2019)	Doctor of Medicine and Surgery
Olivia Bunter (2020)	Bachelor of Engineering/Bachelor of Economics
Joe Negrine (2020)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Hannah Price (2020)	Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Luca Leonardi (2020)	Bachelor of Environment and Sustainability/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Mackenzie Francis-Brown (2020)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Seb Viner (2021)	Bachelor of Environment and Sustainability/ Bachelor of Science
Janee Emms (2021)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Finn McCredie (2021)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Katja Curtin (2021)	Bachelor of International Relations/Bachelor of Science
Chloe Heiniger (2021)	Bachelor of Economics/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)

Christopher Jackson (2021)	Bachelor of Commerce/Bachelor of Engineering (Research & Development)
Caitlin McManus-Barrett (2021)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Oscar Pearce (2021)	Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Jonno Shiel-Dick (2021)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Maddy Sloan (2021)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Olivia von Bertouch (2021)	Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Ella Wishart (2021)	Bachelor of Environment and Sustainability/Bachelor of Science (Honours)
Max Collingwood (2021)	Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics/ Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Imogen McDonald (2021)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Laws (Honours)
Jordan King (2022)	Bachelor of Science (Advanced) (Honours)
Amanda Bower (2022)	Bachelor of Science (Advanced) (Honours)
Zahra Chew (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Kate Chipman (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Humanities and Social Sciences
Harrison Clubb (2022)	Bachelor of Finance, Economics and Statistics (Honours)
Dhruv Hariharan (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Abby Kidston (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Alex Mirrlees-Black (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Rhys Nickerson (2022)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics
Micah Sinclair (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science

Hadyn Tang (2022)	Bachelor of Philosophy (Honours) – Science
Shanni Yehuda (2022)	Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science
Bo Zeng (2022)	Bachelor of Economics/Bachelor of International Security Studies
Georgia Cochran (2023)	Bachelor of Medical Science
Yuliana Chen (2023)	Bachelor of Medical Science
Jaison Krutik (2023)	Bachelor of Finance, Economics and Statistics (Honours)
Jade Cross (2023)	Bachelor of Actuarial Studies





Scholar Achievements

This year our Scholars and Alumni celebrated many amazing achievements in the Tuckwell community. This page reflects just a selection of those achievements.

- Mehvish Mehboob (2024) – Awarded the 2024 Swiss Prize for an essay written in Italian*
- Bas Braham (2020) – Blackburn Medal for Research in Law (2024)*
- Abby Kidston (2022) – Royal Australian Chemical Institute Prize (2024)*
- Zoe Crooke (2021) – Awarded an Environmental and Exercise Physiology Section Research Recognition Award by the American Physiological Summit; delivered an oral presentation and was selected for a poster presentation in Washington DC
- Hannah Price (2020) – Achieved two top 30 finishes at the World University Games and a top 10 finish in the second largest ski marathon in Italy
- Caitlin McManus Barrett (2021) – Won two bronze medals at the Queen’s Cup and placed 4th in the Open Women’s Pair at the National Rowing Championships in Tasmania
- Joe Negrine (2020) – Awarded a 2025 University Medal (Semester 1)
- Chi Chi Zhao (2023) – Published her first lead author paper at the International World Wide Web Conference
- Hadyn Tang (2022) – Competed in the International Collegiate Programming Contest and awarded University Medal (Semester 2)
- Hannah Wang (2024) – Member of the winning ANU team at the Australasian SynBio Challenge 2025 and recipient of a 2026 New Colombo Plan Scholarship
- Georgia Leak (2016) – Awarded a 2026 John Monash Scholarship
- Bridget Lunn (2020) – Co-authored A Field Guide to Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT
- Olivia Taifalos (2019) – Awarded the 2025 ANU Medical School Graham Wilkinson Prize
- Luke McNamara (2023) – Member of the winning ANU Ashurst Senior Mooting Competition team, awarded best speaker, and part of the winning Arthur Cox Intervarsity Mock Trial team in Dublin.
- Harry Bowden (2022) – Awarded a 2026 New Colombo Plan Scholarship
- Chris Jackson (2021) – Awarded the 2025 ANU Tilyard Prize and a University Medal (Semester 2); launched his podcast The Research Relay and published his first paper in NPG Clean Water
- Elizabeth Salter (2023) – Member of the gold medal winning ACT Under 21s hockey team
- Dr Guy Leckenby (2014) – Awarded the FAIR GSI PhD Award 2025
- Kate Snashall (2023) – Awarded the 2025 Janet Wilkie Memorial Prize for Art History and Curatorship
- Ella Wishart (2021) – Awarded the Field Naturalists Association of Canberra Prize.

*Please note: Some awards and prizes were decided in 2024 but not publicly announced until early 2025, after the 2024 edition of The Bell had already gone to print.



2025 Reflection

Isaac Ford



From paper popes lip-syncing Madonna, to high tea and voracious volleyball at our own Canberra Scholars' home, to spontaneous cohort meetings at the esteemed and very serious Socratic Forum (Badger), the 2025 cohort have certainly dived headfirst into first year (not Sully's).

That first early Canberra morning seems only a vague memory, that of being squashed onto a Murray's bus next to people who were essentially strangers. We were not only on our way to camp but also on our way to our first meals together, first nights spent together and first smiles shared. However, it was not without the trials and tribulations of blind folded tent building or hauling raft supplies up and down hills that were inevitably destined to sink. We were sure to have left camp as lesser strangers, learning

more about each other and the renowned older Scholars who walked amongst us.

Throughout the year, the 2025 cohort was privileged to begin to absorb the culture and traditions of the scholarship. Commencement was a warm evening of welcome with the wider community, 'ringing in' a promising start to our Tuckwell journey. Once again, the breadth of the Scholar community was felt at Academic Dinner, especially seeing the range of academics in attendance. What particularly leaves a mark when first experiencing both events are the special instances of hearing the stories of many Scholars, academics and friends of the community and understanding a new layer of what the program may be about.

It seems commonplace that first years are always in and around the house and we did not buckle this trend whatsoever. There were not many days or nights where a tense game of dice or round table discussion, with tea, noodles or both, was not underway. Tuesday nights were the epitome of our comfort around Scholars when we came together for FYE... or perhaps just a break from college meals and cooking for ourselves. Tuesdays, whether it be line dancing,

bouncing on trampolines or Bill's Mega Trivia Finale, were the glue that strengthened our cohort's bond. Our time as first years in the house was full of such fun and energy that it could have blown a window off.

Moving on to 2026, we are always blessed every day to be here and a part of this community and even more so for the year that we have had together as a cohort.



2024 Reflection

Audrey Smart



When asked to write a reflection for the 2024 cohort this year, I was excited by the opportunity, but daunted by the breadth of our achievements. True, ask any of the cohort and they will share the feeling that we have become quite spread out second years when compared to the togetherness of FYEs, Guess Who, and late nights at Scholars that defined our first year at ANU.

However, when we did finally take our chance to join together after a year of each Scholar spreading their own wings out into in their own skies (it's lucky some of us still had any feathers left on them after the adventures—and misadventures—of first year) at a picnic at the Arboretum, what we found was that each person had exciting horizons to point out to us, both behind and ahead of them.

“2025 was a movie.”

— BAILEY MULARCZYK, 2024 SCHOLAR

From leadership roles and achievements that span colleges, university societies, volunteer organisations and sporting clubs, where each Scholar had the chance to share with someone else in their community what makes them a blessing to know, to feats of academics and athleticism that are a testament to the driven and passionate people we have in our midst (I cannot recall a time where I've damaged the eardrums of the people around me more than when familiar faces from our Guess Who board ran through the chute at IB endpoint), to trips and journeys of learning, competition, and employment that have taken our Scholars and our friends from Melbourne to Vietnam in the interest of both gaining and creating new knowledge and ideas.

The stories and updates shared as we got to watch Kelso's bike make the Sisyphean journey of flying down the Arboretum's slope and eventually crawl its way back up, by a different Scholar with each trip, are testaments to the people that I (and Kelso's poor bike) have the privilege of undertaking this journey alongside, and with everything they do and are, show that whatever the 2024 cohort has done and will do, is always done with heart.

“It's been exciting to see everyone begin to move out and find their friends and interests at uni. It's always lovely to catch up though and never feels as if we've strayed far apart as a cohort.”

— JOSH HERRIDGE, 2024 SCHOLAR

This brings to me what happens to us next, for once I finish writing—and you finish reading—this reflection, time will continue marching us on, and for the 2024s perhaps marching us further away from each other. However, what it will march us towards are the new paths and new opportunities that each Scholar has found and forged for themselves. When someone else from the 2024 cohort is tasked with writing our reflection in the 2026 Bell, they will have journeys and stories of Scholars on adventures from Amsterdam to Singapore to France, new employment, academic, and life opportunities, and even more examples, stories and memories of 2024 Scholars doing what makes them fantastic, and someone I have the privilege of always growing alongside and always looking up to. So, even though us second years have spread out and found our own paths, I have to feel that the bonds formed between us have not loosened.

I'm excited to see us run into each other in the future, as we have this year at all hours at Scholars, in classes, and in cafes. Maybe we'll run into each other as each other's coworkers or interpreters (a special thank you to Oscar Waring in Tokyo), maybe as each other's doctors or lawyers, but always as each other's friends.

Wherever we find each other as time goes on, we can always find this special time in our lives in each other, and we can always find home in each other.

Bon voyage to the 2024 cohort, and the whole Tuckwell community! See you in 2026.



2023 Reflection

Kate Snashall and Blaize Steele



2023 has been a much more divided year for the 2023 cohort than ever before, with people living as far abroad as Helsinki or Belconnen. Between many moving off campus, and a few more heading overseas on short courses or semester exchanges, there have significantly fewer 2023 Scholars around the house than ever before.

A few Scholars, including Liana Henderson-Drife and Jack Dodsworth, have made the admirable choice to stay on campus and take on leadership roles at their respective residential halls. However, most of us have made brave steps into the Canberra housing market, to find share houses and live off campus. Fortunately, we aren't terribly separated as several of our cohort have decided to move in together, such as Jaison Krutik and Margot Harris, who lived together in Dickson,

or Blaize Steele and Finn Currie who lived together in Cook this year.

Even further afar, many Scholars jet-setted around the world on short courses and semesters abroad. During winter, Finn Currie and Will Cassell went to Fiji for a field school in Regional Policymaking in the Pacific, Kate spent a month in London learning about the Global Art Market at Sotheby's Institute of Art, and Jack Dodsworth and Luke McNamara embarked on an ANU study tour of Gallipoli and the Western Front. However, while most of us were suffering the unforgiving chill of a Canberra winter, there were a few Scholars basking in the glory of "Euro Summer" and starting their great adventures abroad for exchange.

Perhaps furthest from home, Rosie spent the second half of her year on exchange in Finland, travelling to 19 countries, running a half marathon, and discovering that her (thick) Australian accent is quite incomprehensible for many Europeans.

Similarly, Caitlyn, who has been stationed in Exeter, has spent her time traversing all corners of the continent, from climbing Mt Olympus in Greece, to swimming off the coast of Italy and seeing the sparkling Eiffel tower in France. Will Maxwell has also been busy travelling, going on hiking trips around Ireland and will spend January on the Trinity College, Dublin University skiing trip. Also at Trinity, Luke McNamara has

been honing his advocacy talents abroad, having won the Arthur Cox Intersvarsity Mock Trial Competition in Dublin.

At home in Canberra, Scholars have been making great achievements as well, such as Narryna Nicholas who joined Fenner's IAC dance team and Lizzie Salter who was part of the ACT under 21s hockey team, which won their first gold medal in 41 years. Last but not least, the greatest achievement of them all, is the Scholars who will be graduating from ANU this year. Yuliana Chen, Jaison Krutik and Georgia Cochran are doing medicine at ANU while Jade Cross will be starting her new job at Goldman Sachs in Sydney.



2022 Reflection

Bo Zeng



As we reach the end of our fourth year, we can't help but feel a bit dazed by how quickly it's all gone by. It has been a massive year for the 2022 cohort. We took up permanent residence in the Scholars House sunroom, embraced our status as "Senior Scholars", and learnt that we may have been exposed to lead paint for four years. We were also everywhere: 2022 Scholars could be found at academic conferences and international competitions, as well as on Parkrun leaderboards and house party DJ line-ups. While our busy schedules meant that we saw each other a lot less frequently than before, events in the Tuckwell Calendar, pub nights at the RUC, or bumping into each other at Scholars House provided ample

opportunity to update each other on what we were up to. Additionally, the plethora of 2022-Tuckwell-majority households in the Inner North provided another avenue of socialisation in our otherwise hectic lives.

With most of us reaching the pointy end of our degrees, it was also a year of late-night essay-writing and freaking out about the future. Many Scholars in our cohort have also been working on their honours projects, which span topics from building coding languages from scratch and studying Antarctic ice cores, to uncovering Norfolk Island's history and analysing the economics of Big Bash Cricket. Meanwhile, the 6 baby doctors

in our cohort have been deep in the throes of their first year of medicine, offering free blood pressure readings and tapping away at their Anki cards. Even though everyone faced unique challenges this year, we knew that we could always go to each other for support, whether that was for testing ideas, procrastinating, or just to have a whinge.

This year also marks an inflection point for the 2022 cohort. Whereas other cohorts see a steadier decline in numbers over time, over half of us (13!) graduated this year. Of the graduating Scholars, some are going straight into postgraduate study, while many will make their foray into the workforce in graduate jobs across Australia. A lucky few are

jetting off for exciting opportunities in places such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Tokyo, while others are taking a well-deserved break to travel and work before beginning their next professional or academic chapter. Good luck to all who are setting off on a new adventure, you will be missed dearly.

Everyone has worked so hard this year, and we are so proud of all of our cohort's achievements. Even as our paths begin to diverge, we will always remain connected by four years of friendship, support, and shared experiences. We are grateful for all that has been made possible by the Tuckwell Scholarship, and look forward to seeing what everyone gets up to next year.



2021 Reflection

Jonno Shiel-Dick



T.S. Eliot, in his 1942 poem *Little Gidding*, wrote that ‘What we call the beginning is often the end / And to make an end is to make a beginning.’ The fifth, and final, reflection of the 2021 cohort signals the end of our Tuckwell experience. Yet it also founds the beginning of a new and exciting phase in the cohort’s life.

Before writing the final reflection, I looked over the outstanding pieces my friends had written in the past. I found that they captured both the spirit of the times in which they were written, and the spirit of our cohort: Liv and Mariane’s sparse paragraph breaks in our first reflection conveyed the frantic pace with which we tried to tackle ANU in 1st year; a nascent self-assurance emerged in Harry and Katja’s 2022 reflection as we conquered both COVID and MATH1115, yet were still finding our feet

as younger Scholars; and confidence in ourselves must have been internalised for the third year reflection to open with ‘G’day from the 2021 cohort! Chris and Jack here...’

One could be forgiven for thinking that 5 years of study might slow down the cohort, but the opposite is the case. The achievements of the 2021 Scholars extend far. They have been to rowing world championships, running ultramarathons, writing and publishing Honours theses, mooting around Europe, sailing around Tasmania, producing radio programs and collecting food security research in Zimbabwe. The 2021s have also fostered cross-cohort collaboration, displayed well by the Annual Women* in STEM Leadership Conference showcased at the Academic Dinner.

The 2021s have also maintained strong connections with each other, and with the program. Commencement was as eventful as ever, though even that was overshadowed by an Addison-esque performance at the inaugural Tuckwell soirée. There were insightful career discussions at the Senior Scholar Symposium, and we learned more about each other's pasts on the Tuckwell podcast. The bittersweetness of final sunroom catch-ups and tennis matches was offset well by the warmth of the graduation ceremony. The cohort is incredibly grateful for the amount of time and effort devoted to producing such gatherings.

Of course, at this stage, the 2021 cohort is already spread far and wide. Among those who have finished their undergraduate study, there is a trader in Hong Kong, an entrepreneur in London/

San Francisco, and PhDs being written from Mount Stromlo to the Matterhorn. The 2021 graduands are off to be lawyers in the Outback, astronomers on mountains, and engineers in remote communities. The connections retained despite these distances, and the example of the alumni, serve as good precedent for the durability of our 'presumptive' friendships.

As the 2021 cohort departs the program, it is a privilege to know that the university-aged version of ourselves will be well stored in the memories of our peers. It is also hoped that the younger and incoming Scholars feel welcome to remain in contact with us. We look forward to seeing where the program, and each other, go next. As Eliot continued, 'to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.'



2020 Reflection

Olivia Bunter



Six years on from first arriving at the ANU to start their undergraduate degrees, all but the 4 medicine students of the 2020 cohort have now graduated and are well and truly starting their adventures into post-university life, be that postgraduate study, work, travel, and pursuing elite sport!

Given that everyone is now on their own adventures around the globe, we thought it would be great to hear first-hand from some of the 2020's (both the current medicine students, and alumni) on what they've been up to and what their plans are for the future!

Hannah Price: I am currently living in Östersund, Sweden and I will start moving around more for skiing competitions in November! I am currently deep in pre-season training grind for skiing! I

hope to get some really good race results in the winter ahead and maybe qualify for a large scary competition in Milan in February before coming home...but we will see. A few exciting things happened this year, including graduating!! Likewise authoring my first bigger papers (publication still pending). My plans for the future include moving to Melbourne to start as a law grad with Arnold Bloch Liebler, hopefully continuing to do some research on the side and maybe trying out competing in a few non-skiing sports.

Joe Rangiah: I'm living in Bega this year for my penultimate (and first clinical) year of med as part of the Long Term Rural Program. It's been really interesting and rewarding being part of a smaller hospital, and has been a pretty fascinating year medically.

I've seen stoic farmers with several day-old chainsaw wounds, met a patient who told me my English was great (lucky me!), and lots of weird and wonderful diseases, as well as met some kind and very intelligent doctors, nurses and patients. Outside the hospital I've been playing cricket, footy (including playing on Brownlow medal winner Dane Swan!), and getting into surfing. I'm looking forward to being back in Canberra next year for my last year of med school, before having to make a very difficult decision about which specialty program to pursue!

Angus Atkinson: I'm still here in Canberra working at a small cybersecurity business and enjoying it. Highlights included having a bunch of opportunities over the past year to go to conferences across the country, and even given a couple of talks. Outside of work, I'm enjoying having the free time to have friends over at my place for boardgames, drinks and dinner parties, and right now I'm just about to fly out to NZ for a holiday full of day hikes and another conference. No particular plans for the future, just going to keep on enjoying what I'm doing.

Riley Guyatt: After taking a post-uni gap year in 2024, this year I moved to Melbourne to start as a graduate in the Victorian public service. Outside of work, I've been really enjoying exploring Melbourne and Victoria, and I recently got engaged to my partner Monique! Next year I am keen to keep building my life in Melbourne and my career in bushfire management.

Elise Rawlinson: I'm still living in Canberra, just about to sit my final 3rd year medical school exams. Unsurprisingly, my plans for next year are to stay in Canberra and hopefully finish my last year of uni! This year I had the pleasure to spend my 6 week rural rotation in Yuendumu, NT, through which I experienced a different side of medicine and Australia.

Sophie Allister: After finishing off my degree at the end of last year, I'm currently working in the APS as an economics graduate. In about a month the grad program will be complete which is exciting –I'll be staying in a really lovely team working on research commercialisation which I'm currently in and enjoying. I'm still in Canberra! My partner and I really enjoy living here and we're planning to stay for at least a while longer.

Lara Young: After making Canberra my home in 2020 I'm still here, living in leafy Dickson! I'm currently working at Questacon, the National Science and Technology centre, a job I absolutely adore. Earlier this year I spent 2 months abroad learning Polish and travelling around the motherland, though have since returned to Canberra where I have been playing soccer, writing, and experimenting with electronic projects. I also continue to play music, and recently played a gig with circuit-bent toys! I am still uncertain of what the future holds, though I aspire to continue working in professional science communication. The age old question, 'should I do a PhD?' is certainly looming... At the moment, however, I am enjoying the simple freedom of exploring my creative interests while working full-time.

Bridget Lunn: Every year gets busier and busier for me! In September, I had the pleasure of seeing my book "A Field Guide to Reptiles and Frogs of the ACT" on the shelves of lots of bookstores including Dymocks and QBD Books. Brian, Wes and I had a book launch event in October at the Canberra Reptile Zoo and signed over 100 copies before giving a presentation about our work and some general interesting information about Canberra's herpetological inhabitants. I would say my 'career' as a trail runner began this year as well, with my first win and numerous podiums, selection onto the Singletrack Trail Team, and my first official running sponsor (Bix Nutrition).

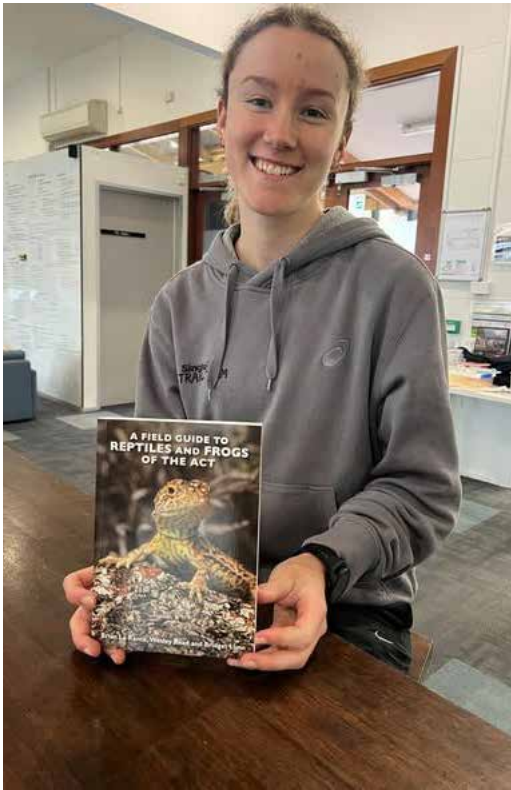
And I'm still studying medicine, with two years to go. While a sequel to our book is still a few years off, I'm working towards an immediate goal of being selected to run for Australia (although not in as big of a competition as Hannah is aiming for!), finishing my degree, figuring out what career I'd like to have in medicine and finding another casual job at the university, as the native mice I was feeding on weekends have been released into the wild!

Marissa Ellis: I'm currently living in Canberra, although in the middle of packing up 6 years' worth of belongings as I'm moving 1.5 hrs away to Gundagai, NSW, for a year-long rural medical placement! I'm going to spend the next few weeks travelling, learning to scuba dive, visiting my partner & family, before heading out west for my first year of clinical medicine. I will return to Canberra the following year for my final year, so while it isn't a goodbye, I've definitely felt a mix of emotions packing things up! This year I spent a lot of time in the books, however, I also went travelling to Perth and Adelaide & surrounds, which was beautiful. I also spent my time exploring some wonderful runs, including my first World Major marathon in Sydney! Next year will be my second last year of medical school, and I'm really excited to be on clinical placement, and looking forward to exploring a lot more of inland NSW.

Samantha Barton: I've settled into a new life of sun and sand on Australia's West Coast and have been trying to make the most of the good weather with plenty of time exploring the outdoors—of which the Perth wildflowers this Spring were a definite highlight. I'm now halfway through a Masters of Teaching on an assisted scholarship with Teach for Australia, which matches teachers to low socio-economic schools across the country to redress teacher shortages and educational inequity. School holidays have made some long weeks juggling full-time teaching and study bearable, with a trip to Japan in my rearview and a trip to China to look forward to in the new year!

Olivia Bunter: I've recently moved from Canberra to Perth after finishing my engineering and economics degree, driving my car and belongings through much of the amazing Australian landscape and outback on the way. I am currently working for the federal public service (now remotely from WA) on net zero policy development whilst learning to surf and being re-acquainted with the sandgroper way of life. 2025 was a fantastic final year in Canberra full of adventure and good people—I made sure to hike all around the ACT and surrounds, see as many wonderful people as possible before I left, and of course hang around Scholars House for chats over a cuppa tea while finishing my last few engineering subjects.





Bridget Lunn (2020).



Olivia Bunter (2020).



Sophie Allister (2020) and Louise Tuckwell.

Commencement Reflection

Aimee Choi (2025) and Reshmi Senanayake (2025)

There is something about walking across a stage that differentiates from classic walking. Perhaps this is simply the over-thinker in me, but I become definitely more conscious of my movements. What is the over-under that I will trip over my high heels? What is precisely the appropriate amount of arm swinging? What is Josh Herridge's secret to having alarmingly good posture? But then again, this is what distinguishes walking across a stage to any other kind. Whether it is graduating kindergarten, or an event as surreal as commencement, a walk on stage is a purposeful act to commemorate something. In this case, it commemorates the

broader 'walk across a stage', that we, as a cohort, can embark on together.

The first event of the day was the commencement lunch. There was a buzz in the air as our cohort and parents keenly got ready for it. The lunch took place in Marie Reay on the super floor, where the parents could fittingly receive a sunny outlook of the city their children would soon call their second home. Michelle, Graham and Louise, the Vice-Chancellor, and Chi Chi presented, setting the tone for the year and what the Tuckwell program would offer.





Aimee Choi (2025).

Our parents had the opportunity to talk to Graham and Louise, and also had the chance to get to know each other, in which a parent WhatsApp group came to fruition.

Whilst the gap between lunch and dinner on most days during semester seemingly stretched on forever, commencement was different. After an outfit change from the obscure ‘smart casual’ to a more defined ‘formal’ attire, we gathered again along the banks of Sullies Creek. Onlookers may have been confused by the sight, as hundreds of us filed onto the steps, capturing the perfect moment for the website header.

The parents were wined and dined by Michelle for the evening. Meanwhile, Scholars had a brief stop by Will Rankin’s room and cocktail hour before they were seated inside Manning Clarke Hall. The 25 of us were lined up like we were in primary school again, a nod to the time our qualities and attributes were developed to become “refreshingly different” (Playing cool math games was an integral part of this process). The night was hosted by Chi Chi, filled with inspiring speeches from Sophie, Nic and Graham. The elusive Bell Prize was also awarded, highlighting Louise’s love for Eric the cat.

Sophie’s bell ringing practice paid off as we each received a single ring before embarking onto our walk across the stage. Those couple of steps were successfully accomplished by all of us, just like the many years of hard work, passion and dedication of every Scholar rung in before us. With each ring we’re officially welcomed to the Tuckwell community, a vibrant group which continues to strengthen over time. It’s akin to synaptic plasticity, a repeated stimulus strengthening neural connections over time, playing a key role in memory and learning. We will remember our first commencement for many years to come while we continue to learn alongside and from each other with each coming commencement. A toast to all the steps we’ve taken leading up to the stage and to our beaming smiles standing together as a cohort, because the truth is our walk across the stage has just begun.



Reshmi Senanayake (2025).

Camp Reflection

Jack Keogh (2025)

Integrating yourself into a new group of people is never an easy task. Integrating yourself into a group of people who are by definition curious, intelligent and refreshingly different can seem that much more daunting. To that end, camp provided the perfect opportunity for breaking the ice and turning presumptive friendship into the tight-knit family which has blossomed through the rest of the year.

In a very Pavlovian way, my time in school and Duke of Ed has conditioned a visceral reaction in me to the word 'camp'. Ghosts of the past that come to mind include rehydrated nondescript meat, tents flying in gale force winds, and carrying the poop tube. Mercifully, arriving in Tharwa promised a much more relaxed experience with the same opportunity for bonding, activities and memories.

As we sat down for lunch upon arrival, the 2nd years revealed their activity for us in the form of word assassin, where we all had a target who we had to get to say a specific word or phrase without giving ourselves away. While I remain perplexed as to how I could have nonchalantly prompted Joel into mentioning the Manuka Public Pool, the best elimination by far was the group effort to get Fordo by forming a prayer circle until he said the timeless words "Dear Father Graham".

After venturing outside into the searing heat for high ropes and a scav hunt, the raft-building exercise at the river was a welcome reprieve, although in an apt contemporary commentary the rules-based order quickly broke down into a game of pirates. Homemade scones from Fiona and

Lois were the next order of the day followed by a financial presentation by Chris Jackson himself which was more informative than two school years of senior economics.

As dusk fell we enjoyed a trivia night which was almost certainly rigged (my team didn't win) before evening activities began. I won't delve into the memories of night at camp as there was definitely an implied NDA and each cohort should experience it themselves, but I will note that in my perusal of Bailey's camp article from last year he cites the favourite activity as the campfire. As much as I would like to share this sentiment, I can't for the simple reason that no one remembered to bring a lighter.

Here I would like to note my longheld belief that some of the best memories and friendships come from when things go wrong; whether it's being caught in a downpour together, having a treasured soft drink knocked out of your hand or being called to rescue a broken down car. So as we sat around the unlit wood, talk and laughter still broke through the darkness until we retired to bed.

Calling on my memory to write this, I realise how quickly close bonds have been made this year. Only months ago at camp I talked to people for almost the first time who I am now both thrilled and proud to call some of my closest friends. This, in my opinion, is a testament to the importance of Tuckwell camp and the traditions that come with it. Even though we had to sit in the dark without a lighter, the warmth in our cohort that was lit at camp has been more than enough to break the ice.



Interview Weekend Reflection

Rhys Joseland (2025)



Interview weekend is such a deeply strange event. In one's life, they'll almost certainly be subjected to a job interview or something of the sort. However, it's pretty unique to be spending a whole weekend with your competition. Thankfully, when all the candidates descended on Canberra from across the country, it didn't feel like they were battling it out at all. Instead, what the current Scholars who volunteered their time and Scholars House staff witnessed was around fifty intelligent, interesting, and impressive young adults genuinely connecting with each other and providing support in what otherwise would have been quite a stressful environment.

As is tradition, candidates had the hard sell put on them for both the ANU and the Tuckwell Scholarship through a packed program of tours, talks, and activities. This included the wonderful

scavenger hunt produced by Kate, the notorious calling all my neighbours exercise, panel speed dating, and fiercely competitive trivia.

Listening to the way current Scholars reflected on their time at the ANU and their involvement in their college and academic life, as well as Tuckwell program itself, served not only to excite candidates, but also as a means for us current Scholars to acknowledge just how grateful we are for the opportunities given to us by the program.

With absolute certainty, all of us who were at interview weekend are thrilled by the prospect of all the successful candidates joining the Tuckwell family and seeing what each of these inspiring people bring to Scholars House. Thank you to all of the work done by staff and Scholars in coordinating this event including senior Scholars Kyle Cavanagh (2022) and Abby Kidston (2022).

Selection Panel Alumni Reflections

“Returning to Canberra for interview weekend was surreal. From a personal perspective, it brought back intense memories from my own interview weekend some 12 years ago (scary!), including dreams of what life at ANU and beyond might hold. As we all remember, the interviews felt high pressure, challenging and, frankly, completely foreign – this was only reinforced even more when participating as a panellist and I certainly left feeling incredibly impressed by the group of candidates. Reflecting on the broader selection process, the energy, planning and care behind it is immense, as it needs to be, and it was great to work with the panellists through this (particularly Anthony who I was paired with). Finally, it was great to see how the program has evolved today and how excited the candidates were about joining the Tuckwell community which is really a credit to all!”

– Elena Pleass (2014)

“It was a privilege to be involved in the selection process for the 2026 scholarship cohort. It was also an enormous undertaking – one that really helped me appreciate the magnitude of the task Louise and Graham have faced for many years. I was struck by the talent and bravery of all of the applicants who made it to the interviews. In the face of intense scrutiny and pressure, they showed us creativity, resilience, and refreshing honesty. A highlight of the weekend was definitely revisiting Scholars House, which was brand new when I was a student, and seeing it so full of current Scholars; so ‘lived-in’ and well-loved! I look forward to seeing the 2026 cohort’s photograph join the other portraits on those walls – and I hope they can forgive me for whatever questions I asked them.”

– Mary Parker (2015)



“It was an incredible experience to come back and sit on the 2025 Tuckwell interview panel. Being invited behind the curtain and seeing the sheer amount of care that Graham, Louise and everyone else put into the lead-up and the interview weekend itself made it easy to understand how each new cohort ends up being such a cohesive mix of exceptional students.

The invitation itself came out of nowhere (an unprompted “do you have time to chat” email from Louise was definitely not on my 2025 bingo card) but it ended up being the start of a genuinely memorable weekend. Stepping back into Scholars House for the first time in years was a highlight. When I finished my degree in 2018 the place was just beginning to feel full, with five years of Scholars finally overlapping on campus. Coming back seven years later, it was clear that the community has grown into something self-sustaining. Seeing the vision that Graham and Louise used to talk about a decade ago now fully realised was very special, and it made the responsibility of being on the panel feel even more meaningful. We were helping select the students who will carry that culture forward.

Sitting on the other side of the table for the first time was surprisingly nerve-wracking, almost as much as being interviewed! But once a few were behind us, it was clear how thoughtful, impressive and genuinely interesting the candidates were. I don’t speak to many high school students in my day-to-day life, and it was a privilege to spend two days talking to fifty who were so smart and engaged. Their energy was contagious and it made the time pass by in a flash.

Overall, I’m incredibly grateful that Graham and Louise chose me as one of the alumni panel members. It was a fantastic few days, and I’m already looking forward to meeting the 2026 Scholars again in a more relaxed environment.”

– Anthony Ricci (2015)

“I remember discussing the future of the Tuckwell Scholarship with my fellow 2014 Scholars during the program’s early years. There was always a feeling among us that Alumni should be involved in the selection process as the program matured. It was a great honour, then, to be invited by Graham and Louise to join the Selection Panel this year.

Three things I took away from the other side of the table: First, an enormous amount of work goes into reviewing the paper applications and “knowing” the finalists as much as possible before the interview weekend — but nothing beats the real thing. Sometimes, you interview exactly the person you were expecting. Other times, you realise your initial understanding of the person was totally wrong, and often the surprise is wholly positive. Second, while I was grateful to be an interviewer rather than an interviewee this time around, some of the nervousness of the 2013 interview weekend rushed back in my first few interviews. I was conscious that as an interviewee, it can feel very difficult to convey the whole of your personality in a little over ten minutes. There are no breaks for an interviewee if they have a bad interview; chin up and onwards to the next room. Interviewers have a responsibility to gather information and gain an understanding of the person as best as they can in that context. Third, the ANU and Australia have bright futures. The 2026 cohort comes from all over Australia from public and independent schools, has collectively achieved essentially everything a high school student could ever hope to achieve, and will straddle virtually all the major undergraduate academic disciplines at the ANU. From what I have seen of these 25 intellectually curious young adults, I have no doubt each new Scholar will contribute substantial depth to their cohort’s phenomenal breadth.”

– Joseph Dean (2014)



Academic Dinner Reflection

Jordan King (2021)

Over the last 10 years, since its inaugural event in 2015, Academic Dinner has become one of the most anticipated and valued events on the Tuckwell calendar. In 2025, on a miserably rainy spring evening, more than 200 Scholars and staff braved the wet weather to gather at the National Museum for an evening which promised thought-provoking discussion, new ideas, and reflection.

For Scholars to be afforded the opportunity to share a meal and exchange ideas with world-leading academics over three hours in such an intimate and candid setting is remarkable. Even more remarkable is the fact that many academics arrive at the National Museum having never met their assigned Scholar before. In this way, for many Scholars, the evening becomes something of an academic blind date. These encounters can feel far more daunting than the conventional kind, with academics boasting impressive h-indexes and extensive publication records — enough to intimidate even the most confident Scholar. Unlike most blind dates, however, these academic ‘dinner dates’ continue to be resounding successes year after year.

This success is a testament to the dedication of the Tuckwell staff and the Scholars themselves. In 2025, the increased number of academics in attendance was no doubt a reflection of Lois’s ability to craft enticing and alarmingly efficacious emails. Just as importantly, the event’s success rests with the Scholars, who guide conversation at the table and ensure their academic guests enjoy their evening as much (and hopefully more than) the food. While this

can seem daunting at first, every year, without fail, it takes little more than an exchange of pleasantries and the first round of appetisers before the museum erupts in rich conversation. The event is designed to be Scholar-led, with a Scholar MCing the evening, Scholars speaking about their work at ANU, and Scholars driving conversation with academics throughout the night and beyond. This remains a defining strength of Academic Dinner.

The event would not be what it is today without the inclusion of incredible guest speakers who set the tone for the evening and the conversations that follow. This year we had the pleasure of hearing from four Scholars—Marissa Ellis (2020), Mariane Johnstone (2021), Zoe Crooke (2021), and Hannah Wang (2024)—who shared their involvement in the ANU Women* in STEM Leadership Conference over its five-year journey, offering personal reflections and highlighting the importance of shared leadership. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Andrew Meares—award-winning photojournalist, educator, skier, and ANU cybernetics research lead. Andrew’s address, “Chasing Change and Finding Hope”, offered a powerful reflection on adaptability and navigating change across our lives and careers.

Scholars left academic dinner with a noticeable spring in their step—a sense of renewed certainty about their career trajectories, or a fresh perspective or idea to mull over long after the evening concluded. A big thank you to the staff for ensuring Academic Dinner continues to reflect the very best of the Tuckwell Program.



Academic Dinner Speech

Marissa Ellis (2020)

Good evening everyone, my name is Marissa and I am a second year medical student at the ANU. I am now an Alumni of the Tuckwell program, having started as a 2020 Scholar, although I am grateful to still be very welcomed into Scholars House. Tonight, along with Mariane, Zoe, and Hannah, we get the joy of sharing the story of the ANU Women* in STEM Leadership Conference with you.

On behalf of the four of us, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land in which we gather tonight, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people. I'd like to pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the longstanding and continued contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Sovereignty was never ceded.

The ANU Women* in STEM Leadership Conference is a conference that began in 2021, as the brainchild of a good friend of mine, Tegan Clark. It is an event aimed at female-identifying and non-binary undergraduate STEM students at the ANU. The Conference seeks to help students develop their leadership skills, network for opportunities, and more broadly, facilitate community. It is a lot more developed now than it was back then, but tonight we'd like to share some insight into what it was like building this from the ground up. In the first year, Tegan was the Director of the conference, and I was an Event Coordinator, with a small team of others.

Tegan and I went to the same school—a large public highschool in the heart of Cairns in Far North QLD. I

don't think either of us ever thought we would end up at ANU. I certainly didn't.

However, when we got here, Tegan a couple of years before me, what we found was that we were a little out of our comfort zones. The world is a big place—that is a feeling I am sure that many feel when beginning university. However, STEM at ANU felt even bigger; having both taken first year maths and physics, at the time, we were each one of very few women.

Tegan had an idea—she wanted to start a conference—a place for community and connection, and building leadership skills to walk a pathway that didn't seem to have much guidance. She asked for a small amount in funding from the College of Science. We used this to cover some sandwiches from Subway and got some coffee vouchers for participants.

We didn't have merch or anything of the like; Tegan made the slides, we had a student run panel. We looked back and realised we didn't actually run a leadership session—at a leadership conference. It wasn't super refined.

But what we did have was 25 keen young women and non-binary students in STEM who had had similar experiences to us and felt like there wasn't a space where we could connect within the community. We'd had 65 students apply to attend, but with limited funding, and not much else of a clue how it was going to go, we stuck with a smaller group, and worked hard to pull together something we thought would bring value to the community.



Hannah Wang, Marissa Ellis, Mariane Johnstone and Zoe Crooke.

We ran the conference, and it was a huge success. Mariane attended that first conference.

The following year, with a foundation laid, we'd ignited a bit of passion within ourselves and motivation to build on the work we had done. In the next year Tegan and I Co-Directed the conference. With her founder knowledge, my knowledge of events and planning, and willingness to learn about finances and procurement, we thought we'd be in a good position to build.

We then sat down, that following year, and we wrote an aims document. It was so clear to us what the aims were that it is still one of the proudest documents we have written. I remember printing it out and sticking it up on my wall at college at the time.

We put in many hours of work and the conference grew immensely that year, with 65 attendees and now a 2-day event, including an academic dinner similar to the one you are attending now.

Tegan and I, and Associate Prof. Merryn McKinnon have since published research looking at the effectiveness of this conference as a gender equity STEM event, and shared some of our lessons learnt from working on this conference from the get go.

The insights we gained from this research show that gender equity in STEM initiatives do not need to be complex or onerous to make a difference. While the conference is certainly more complex now than when it began, its basis was really straightforward – founded on the simple idea of wanting to connect.

The conference is now in its 5th year. I'm very proud and humbled to say that. While the four of us speaking here tonight have had the unique string of Tuckwell to connect us all, there have been many women and non-binary people who have attended, held various organising roles and contributed immensely to this community.

I think, at a university, it can sometimes be easy to get lost in it all. Looking back, what was truly special for me was that we started small, but the community we built together was incredible, and the feedback was, and continues to be, heartwarming.

I propose to you to consider that, whatever difference you want to make in your community or in this world, it does not have to seem huge at the time, but it can have a lasting impact. I'd like to pass on to Mariane to continue this story.

Mariane Johnstone (2021)

Good evening everyone, my name is Mariane, I'm a 2021 Scholar in my Honours year, looking at food security for rural agricultural communities in Zimbabwe.

As Marissa mentioned, I attended the inaugural conference in 2021. It was a powerful moment in my first year where I felt seen, supported and inspired, in a new world that had felt huge, intimidating and unfamiliar. Marissa and Tegan used that feeling and channelled it into making a space that challenged these feelings by building community. By the end of the 2021 conference, I knew that it was something special.

I wanted to be involved with sharing its magic with more of the ANU STEM community, so, I applied for the 2022 organising team and became one of the Speaker Coordinators, alongside one of my now-best friends, Jamie Cheeseman. The role was a blur of meetings, learning to communicate professionally, and learning to connect with everyone from futurists to nervous first years. I loved discovering the diverse range of careers that exist in STEM and the stories that came with them, finding throughlines of inspiration and connection, and building events that would help platform these experiences to hopefully inspire the attendees.

The rush I felt seeing our events come to life in April was unmatched. I was filled with pride and purpose, so when the opportunity came around to become a Co-Director, I jumped at the chance.

In 2022 and 2023, together with Wanin Tessema, I experienced one of the steepest learning curves of my life, and one of the most fulfilling projects I've ever worked on.

Many many meetings, inspired texts, frantic calls, brainstorming sheets, emails and applications later, we'd planned a conference schedule, built a budget, and selected an organising team. That team included

our very own Zoe Crooke, a day-one university friend who I love very much, and was thrilled to be sharing this experience with.

We kept key sessions and structures, but modified and added a few sessions to make it ours, like the Intersectionality session, the market day lunch, the opportunities workshop and industry-led workshops.

The conference's legacy was beginning to grow, and we had all kinds of organisations reaching out to us, wanting to be involved. From big pharmaceutical companies through to small GIS modelling companies. The conference was being recognised for its impact. I felt a mounting pressure to deliver something that would have an impact in the way the last two had. A pressure to give back, knowing how much the conference had given me.

Suddenly October was April and it was conference time. Though we encountered enough hiccups in the last month to arm me with an array of 'difficult situation' stories for any job interview, it all went smoothly and successfully. It was a true privilege to be involved and one of my proudest moments seeing it come to life, and seeing the community grow.

Beyond community, the magic of the conference, in my opinion, can be put down to passion.

Passion is something that I've always thought to be one of the unofficial Tuckwell attributes. Something that links us all here tonight. Though the focus may be different, everyone here goes about their days and lives with passions that give them purpose. It's infectious. In a similar way, passion linked everyone at the conference. The team, the attendees, and the speakers. The team cared deeply about the injustices faced by women and minorities in the traditionally patriarchal structures of science, technology, engineering and maths. The attendees cared about everything from algal blooms to coding medical breakthroughs.

The speakers cared about sharing their experiences, creating community, and building a sort of ladder behind them that helped lift other women and non-binary people up in STEM fields.

It's that passion that brought me back for one final year, again as a Co-Director, but this time alongside Zoe and Charlie Aitken. My role was, however, much smaller in 2024. Zoe was a driving force in its success, so I'll hand it over to her.

Zoe Crooke (2021)

Good evening, all. I'm Zoe, I'm a first year medical student and current Tuckwell Alumni after commencing the program with Mariane and many others in 2021.

Unlike Marissa and Mariane, I wasn't there for the first or second conference. My journey began in 2023, when I joined the team as Finance Coordinator. By then, the conference had already grown into a full-scale, 2.5-day event with a \$20,000 budget. Reflecting on that, especially after hearing Marissa and Mariane speak about how much groundwork went into those early years, I realised just how fortunate I was. For me, it was as simple as applying, being welcomed onto the team, and then suddenly being responsible for balancing the budget and feeding 65 attendees for three days. I had stepped onto a ship that was already sailing smoothly, with every cog in the machine turning neatly to deliver a professional, well-established conference. That in itself is a credit to Marissa and Mariane, and something they should be incredibly proud of.

After that year, I applied to become Finance and Logistics Director. Being interviewed by one of my closest university friends wasn't exactly on my bingo card, but Mariane handled the conflict of interest well (from my perspective), and I was lucky enough to be offered the role. Alongside Mariane and a now-great friend, Charlie Aitken, I joined a newly energised team of three. I was excited and optimistic — until our very first meeting. As Mariane ran us through the

timelines and endless to-do lists, I realised just how little I knew about what I had signed up for. Being one cog in the wheel was one thing. Being the one holding the whole thing together, I quickly learned, was something else entirely.

Like anyone in that position, I adapted as I went. But we hit one big hurdle early on: Mariane and I both went on exchange — she to France, me to England — while Charlie, and all our partners and sponsors, remained in Australia. To complicate things further, Mariane is a morning person, while I'm not truly functional before 9am. Combine that with the Europe–Australia time difference, and you can imagine how unideal that situation was. Still, we made it work. For six months, our lives became a cycle of 6am and 10pm meetings, squeezing in interviews for new team members at odd hours, and leading our team from across the world.

When I returned to Australia for our first full, in-person team meeting — at a reasonable hour, thankfully — it felt like a breath of fresh air. We worked hard, hit a few road bumps, but by April, seeing everything come together and the smiles on the faces of our attendees was one of the most rewarding experiences I've had at university. As Tuckwells, we're fortunate to have access to events like this: opportunities to invite professors, connect across disciplines, and engage in meaningful conversations. For many attendees, the Women in STEM conference was their very first chance to experience this kind of space. Opening that door to passionate women and non-binary people in STEM was deeply inspiring. On a personal note, it was through this conference the previous year that I met my honours supervisor and now mentor, and watching others form similar connections — with future mentors, lecturers, supervisors, or simply friends — made me feel that in some small way, I had been able to give back to this community.

My story with WIS doesn't carry quite the same pioneering weight as Marissa and Mariane's, who

were instrumental in creating this event. But I am proud to have carried the baton forward. This role challenged me. But I am proud to have carried the baton forward. This role challenged me, but it also gave me a new respect for the unseen effort behind events that may appear seamless from the outside — and a deep appreciation for the people who volunteer their time to make them possible. As a Tuckwell, I feel incredibly fortunate to have been supported throughout university, and grateful that I could use that privilege to give something back. Now, it's my turn to pass on the baton — to Hannah, who attended the 2024 conference and has already played a key role in continuing this journey.

Hannah Wang (2024)

My name is Hannah, and I'm a second-year student studying a PhB in Science. With the farewell of Mariane and Zoe as Co-Directors of the 2024 Conference, I was left to fill some very large shoes alongside my Events Co-Director, Bronte. Bronte had already been part of the organising team as a Speakers Coordinator, and it was such a blessing to have someone who understood what went on behind the scenes.

It's one thing to attend a conference, but it's another to witness the months of preparation, challenges, and decisions that go into creating a three-day event.

Looking back, 2025 was the year when everything changed — because for the first time, the biggest challenge wasn't logistics, speakers, or venues. It was money.

In 2023 and 2024, the conference operated on close to \$20,000, with more than half of that funding coming from ANU colleges. But in 2025, all three of those colleges, under their own financial pressures, wrote to us confirming they could no longer contribute. Suddenly, we were less than a month out from the conference with under \$2,000 in rollover funds — and a decision to make: postpone, cancel, or somehow continue.

I still remember being back home in Sydney, sitting at the kitchen table with my parents, completely distraught. This was meant to be the year we scaled up — opening to 75 applicants. Instead, it seemed like we were about to lose it all.

After long discussions, Bronte and I decided to go ahead. We cut catering, merchandise, and prizes. And then, in what honestly felt like a series of miracles, ANU Co-Lab stepped in 11 days before the conference. Six days later, SEEF approved our funding request, after having rejected our initial application. It wasn't everything — but it was enough. We could run the conference.

This year's theme was "Leadership at Every Level." While our program — our speakers, workshops, and mentoring — reflected that theme beautifully, what I'm most proud of is how the organising team embodied it. Every single member stepped up, and together we kept the conference alive.

Now, I'll be honest: I'm nowhere near the most qualified person to stand here and speak about leadership. But even from my small amount of experience, I've learned that leadership doesn't require certainty, resources, or titles. It's about what you do when those things are stripped away. And sometimes, it means choosing to keep going when the easier choice is to walk away.

Leadership often starts quietly — by noticing a need, responding with passion, and creating opportunities for others. That was the spark Tegan lit, and the torch that Marissa, Mariane, Zoe, and I had the privilege of carrying forward. Initiatives don't have to be complex or onerous at the beginning. What matters is passing the baton on, so that what starts small can grow into something greater.

This year, for example, we introduced LinkedIn badges for attendees. I've seen so many posts from speakers and students proud to say they spoke at or attended this conference. And that's what excites me most: students creating opportunities for other students.

As Tuckwells, we have access to dinners, events, and networks that make the university feel smaller and more navigable. But for many of our attendees, this conference was the first major event they'd ever been part of. And it mattered. It gave them a chance to feel included, to connect, and to dream about the kind of impact they could make. It made ANU feel less scary.

As Co-Director, I've seen how much community this conference builds — not only among attendees, but

across disciplines, backgrounds, and experiences.

STEM is an evolving field, but community, passion, and opportunity remain timeless. One of the biggest takeaways I've gained from this experience is that we can use our resources to give back — and to create spaces like this.



Soiree Reflection

Isaac Ford (2025)



Everyone knows where they were when Neil Armstrong first set foot on the moon and forever sent shockwaves through the history of exploration, science and the human endeavour. Me? I wasn't alive. My parents were not even born. However... I do remember where I was when I experienced a similar radiation of awe, iconic imagery and timeless commentary. The inaugural Tuckwell Soirée saw 14 brave and daring Scholars take to our makeshift stage, signposted by rearranged furniture and crowded instruments.

Lift off came from the Tuckwell Trio and... Bart, who performed 'Various Songs Arranged by Ethan', which began in a rather sombre manner but surprised all with a theatrical festive twist. It truly was an international affair, with Luke McNamara and Will Maxwell participating via a video recital of Banjo Patterson's 'Clancy of the Overflow' in the flow of daily life around Trinity College Dublin. The poetry form continued with a recital of 'Highs and Lows' from Narryna Nicholas, accompanied by a touching story of her connection to the piece.

Some pearls were clutched, and most stomachs hurt with laughter at the 'mixed-media, multimodal interpretive performance' by Rhys Nickerson and Chloe Heiniger, which saw a violin, sequin dance pants and a powerful cover of Ben Platt's cover of the Addison Rae song 'Diet Pepsi'. We were further blown away by the musical prowess of our Scholars, with Jack Keogh firstly belting out 'Your Song', 'Money, Money, Money' and 'I Dreamed a Dream'. This was followed by two skillful instrumental pieces from Nayl Fassi Firhi and Bill McCart, who played 'Ice Windy Skies' on Guitar and 'An excerpt from Saint-Saens' Oboe Sonata' (accompanied by Jack Keogh on piano), respectively. We were then surprised by an interesting shark tank-esque business venture from Oscar Pearce to collectivise our stipends for the purchase of an IGA in Deakin. Descending for touchdown, we were once again rearranging furniture to line dance with our resident dance instructor, Sophie Fleming.

The performances were not exclusively on a stage or before an audience. Of course, there is no launch without ground control. Our Houston was clearly the wonderful birth of this idea from Lois and the massive support she offered to make the day happen. However, it was also the hard work and generosity of Aimee Choi and her accomplices who crafted a wondrous landing meal for all in attendance; her many late nights and hours spent crafting a grand display of nibblies were incredible.

Where, in 1969, the world witnessed its capabilities as a civilisation, we, in 2025, received a vision of what will hopefully become a very strong and lasting tradition of the Tuckwell Program. It is said that the historians of S.H. endlessly debate the competing significance of both events, and by all accounts, the jury is still out.

Inward Bound

Josh Herridge (2024) and Kelso Wentworth (2024)



Inward Bound was good, then it was awful, then it was over.

High spirits at Drop

We both had the misfortune of running Div 1 for our respective colleges, Josh for Wright, and Kelso for B&G which meant getting dropped at around 7pm on what seemed like a random road somewhere on the south coast. We had 40 mins of scout time, enough to travel a good distance and get some scout notes which were of varied aid in finding out where we'd been dropped. For Wright, we'd agreed to leave drop by 8pm and after pouring over the maps to no avail as the sun set began to set on us, we started packing up our bags with 5 mins to go in hope of running west and finding some notable feature to tell us where we were. Having one last look at the map before heading off, Liv, my co-nav and I spotted a road on the map that seemed to match up with what our scouts, Max and Leo had drawn. We ran up to the next intersection and found half of the teams sat down again planning routes and reevaluating where they thought they were. Seeing all the other teams take the west road, Wright made the choice to back their decision of where they thought they were and head south, seeing Bruce and other teams running back up

this way to follow the mass of other teams through the west route. Every new intersection matching up with what we'd expected gave the Wright confidence that we'd picked drop correctly and to keep moving along the distinctly less popular south route in solitude, Max and I singing Taylor Swift, happy and unknowing to what was about to unfold.

The Early Days

BnG didn't quite know where we were going. We picked a direction and the navs read the maps while running—until Owen tumbled into a ditch. Then, 2 ks on, we found a sign! Owen and Nea now knew where we were and routed us through to home. Admittedly, the feeling was bitter-sweet: we knew where we were, so we knew to cross the river. The water was freezing and socks now squelched. But the sun had set, revealing lights of Batemans Bay and a sky with crowds of stars. We could see little possum-eyes glinting and I was buzzing off caffeine.

Then, we took a short-cut through a beautiful section of bush. We moved through nests of roots and fronds, popping out to some giant boulders. We saw clusters of torches spread through the valley and we knew that another division had joined us in the bush. We burrowed down the hill. With a cheer, we found the road! Those were the days—pre-blisters, pre-drinking from puddles, pre-going the wrong way.

Cheese sticks lost in the forest

There were lots of sticks across the road so B&G invented a song about cheese sticks. There we were, singing and walking, happy as can be.

I completely blame Yukeembrook for all that happened next. We met them on the hill and we sang karaoke together. We walked for an hour, chatting about bike repair and how good endpoint would be. It was lovely to bump into other humans,

and I think this stunned us a bit. We forgot to check the compass and, an hour later, we realised we were lost. It was 4am and the news was poorly received. We stumbled back down the hill and I had a sore knee and I really wasn't in the running mood. There was an hour of quite grumpy silence. We went back to the creek to find the turn we should have made. A net of tree trunks had fallen across the creek. We yelled at them but they didn't move—we had to climb them.

But spirits lifted when Griffin—our mortal enemies—revealed the hidden turn-off with their torches. We could finally go the right way. And then, a kilometre up the track, we met two other BnG teams!! We chattered excitedly about our drops and scratches and bush bashes. Before long, light peeked over distant trees. My panadol and caffeine tablets kicked in as the sun rose. We could see lush ferny leaves and hills glowing in the distance. We were happy again!

Trudging along south

Meanwhile as B&G is singing away Wright is moving along their isolated south route in near silence, hearing nothing but the occasional voices of each other when someone could overcome sleep deprivation and muster up a coherent thought. The night before IB, Liv, my fellow Wright Nav and coach was diagnosed with tonsillitis and glandular fever, something that became very real when 10 km into the course she was throwing up. After taking a brief break and redistributing some weight between the rest of our packs we set off again. After a year of training for Div 1 she didn't want to let it stop her from finishing. Wright's next goal was to keep moving to the road crossing. Over the next few hours we followed power lines past many properties which we wrongly picked to be other teams' head torches, motivating us to keep moving ahead of them all the way towards Nelisglen—which was reached at 1am. Met by a concerned group of volunteers who immediately asked how Liv was, we stopped, refilled our water, and kept jogging on. From this point onwards Wright didn't see another soul for nearly 7 hours until the sun had risen again and we bumped into a series of Div X teams from ADFA

crawling up one of the many hills on course. As the night continued we continued to move on but at a pace growing only slower. Till when sunrise came and there was a series of 11 creek crossings in a span of 3 km surprisingly giving us a burst of energy which was quickly put to rest as we began climbing back up to the ridgeline from the creeks, faced with one of the many seemingly never ending hills on course.

Endpoint (with a Detour to North Canberra Hospital)

As the day wore on and the heat became sticky, Owen made B&G run. We had to run between every second reflector, then between different bits of shade. We were sick of it. I remember getting snagged in a vine and swearing at it till the team reminded me that vines don't respond to that. We fell into a silent procession behind Owen. After several hours, we heard doof doof music of endpoint.

'Just a couple hundred metres', Owen said. This turned into 4 ks. We hobbled dejectedly, too tired to even be grumpy.

Then, finally, we bumped into a couple of spectators. 'Not far!' they chirped. The end seemed possible and we stumbled the last hundred metres. We rounded the corner to screams and ringing bells. There were hundreds of cheering friends! And we'd finally made it home.

I remember hugging Audrey Smart and Rozza McLennan at endpoint. Then, I fainted. After that, I was a bit delirious and kept on losing my stuff. I got driven home but forgot how to get to my room at B&G, then jumped into the shower fully-dressed. I thought something was probably wrong, so my friend Sammy drove me to North Canberra hospital.

They took blood and gave me an icy pole which was pretty good. As it turned out, I'd overdosed on caffeine. All those tablets (and, I realised, the energy gels and redbull...) had somehow led to dehydrated confusion. So they gave me a drip and I felt a lot better. Slowly, brain cells returned, and somehow IB became a happy memory. I talked to a few people and they said it goes like that—horror converting to happiness through the workings of 'type B fun'.



Walk, run, eat, collapse

At midday, Wright emerged from the overgrown Shoebridge trail with 5 hours to go and roughly 20 km along an exposed road in the heat of the afternoon sun. We knew it would be tight with time, a feeling all too familiar to Liv and I who ran Div 4 together last year and unfortunately DNF'd as we finished the course 22 mins past cutoff. We had a plan though, run for one minute then walk for another minute. Just keep moving along at the pace we needed. After hours of this grueling regime which turned into hobble for one minute, hobble faster for another we could eventually hear the cheers from endpoint. We turned off the dirt track and onto the road toward the reserve, unable to run, we trudged through the last few hundred meters towards the mass of spectators surrounding the chute.

As a coach for Wright this year our one goal was to have all seven teams finish, something we kept saying the whole race, as to have all seven teams finish, we needed to also. Coming down the chute into endpoint the first person I saw was race director and Wright ex-ressie Matt, who held up seven fingers to us and said the only words we needed to hear, “you’re the 7th wright team to come in!”.

After nearly 22 hours on course and being physically unable to move faster than a contorted shuffle I'd be lying if I said this didn't make us all emotional, as we walked past the line

of spectators arm-in-arm and tears streaming down cheeks. We collapsed at the scrutineering tables and had a very tense 10 minutes checking we didn't drop any gear on course, but after that we had done it, with half an hour to spare too.

The next few hours were thankfully less confusing than Kelso's although I remember none of the bus trip back to ANU and only waking up to the sight of Wright Hall, whereby I promptly devoured a burger with several servings of chips, and litres of choccy milk. The next few days were a mix of pain and pride spent hobbling around and wondering why we decided to sign up for IB after all. It's a memory I'll never forget, and one which grows fonder the longer time goes on, and something I'm sure all runners look back on as testament to the crazy things we get conned into at university.

Also a shoutout to Jacob Gome (2021), Hadyn Tang (2022) and Chloe Woodburn (2020) on committee for making this event possible and their hard work leading up to it.



2025 results

Abby Kidston –Div 7 (Wright); **Ben Durkin** –Div 5 (Div X);
Ethan Zhu –Div 2 (Bruce); **Hannah Wang** –Div 3 (Wright);
Jonno Shiel-Dick –Div 5 (Div X); **Josh Herridge** –Div 1 (Wright); **Kelso Wentworth** –Div 1 (B&G); **Liv Sanderson** –Div 6 (B&G); **Pat O'Connor** –Div 3 (Fenner); **Tom Dunbabin** –Div 5 (Div X);



Bell Ringer Speech

Sophie Fleming (2024)



Vice-Chancellor Genevieve Bell, Doctors Graham and Louise Tuckwell, distinguished guests, Fellows, and both our current and Alumni Tuckwell Scholars; it is my honour to address you all tonight, at the 2025 Tuckwell Commencement Dinner.

When I put pen to paper beginning to write this speech, I found it more difficult than I'd possibly imagined. Not only because it's a privilege to be given this opportunity to speak with you all, but because I could write a dozen semester letters on the wonderful Tuckwell Program and all of the wonderful members that create it. It took me a long time to craft the words that capture the essence of our community, so I hope you will stay with me as I tell you a little Tuckwell tale, with plenty of memories and musings that accompany all good stories of course, and perhaps you will understand why this speech is quite so dear to me.

When I moved to Canberra this time last year, I was so excited for everything to change. I spent much of my time as a kid longing to see and experience the world outside of the bubble I was growing up in, you'd often find me reading underneath the shade of a tree somewhere in the scrub of South-West Queensland, dreaming of my future which was so starkly different to the place that had surrounded me my whole life.

But all of a sudden when I got here, the differences in everything felt enormous – how fast life moves, how the world opened up and even how the landscape could vary in only 12 hours of distance. I longed for flat land, feeling small between the towering mountains surrounding Canberra, and I even disliked the

kangaroos, knowing that they weren't the ones from home.

It sounds silly, I know, but I think in our own way we all feel this shift when we leave one place to come to another, when your world axis tilts, and you have to readjust. I know our 2025 cohort may be feeling that way at this stage in their university journey, but thanks to commencement tonight, we have the privilege of formally welcoming you into the Tuckwell community – the community that will always be here for you, grounding you, particularly when you're feeling that axis tilt this year as you've left one home to build another. It was my cohort who kept me grounded here last year, who burrowed their way into my heart and helped me recognise that I could love home and Canberra at the same time, seeing the beauty in both. I can't exactly pinpoint the moment my cohort turned from strangers to friends to what felt like one big family, but I think it was blurred somewhere along the lines of of FYE activities and soccer games, tea and chats at Scholars, or maybe movie and pizza nights. Perhaps it was paintball or laser tag, puppy time with Cara, and definitely all of the badge dinners and subjective guess who games. And if you couldn't tell by that long list, I found that quality time together became some of my favourite memories from 2024. They each inspired me from the moment I met them with their beautiful hearts and minds and unwillful ways of falling into Sullies creek.

Thank you guys for caring for our cohort and making it such a special first year. I'm so excited to make more memories together in our future years of study and I'm proud to be a part of a group of people who are so thoughtful and kind, funny and extraordinary – no wonder we need 13 Tuckwell attributes, when they shine so brightly in each of you.

This extends beyond the 2024 cohort of course,

to the characters in the years above us. Thanks to your lead, we can foster the Tuckwell spirit in the shade of the trees you've planted – both literally and metaphorically. Your big-sibling energy over cuppas at Scholars is something we are truly grateful for, as are the traditions you carry and begin, such as the already iconic house in the house. And I don't know about you guys, but I wouldn't want to sing 'You Are My Sunshine' at the Governor-General's house with anyone else.

To the Scholars House team, Michelle, Fiona, Lois, Gita and Kate, to our Fellows and extended Selection Panel, you are the glue holding the pages together in the Tuckwell program with your commitment, passion and care. From all of us, thank you.

To Louise and Graham, thank you for partnering with ANU to compose the book that is the Tuckwell Scholarship with your vision, and the generosity and hard work you channelled into making it a reality. Not only did you give us the opportunity to study and live at the wonderful ANU, you gave us the community to help us to love it so – the community that supports one another unconditionally. It is the greatest gift, and we hope to give it back to the world one day when our time contributing to the chronicles of Scholars House runs out.

To our 2025 cohort, tonight I am overjoyed to have rung the Bell that begins your journey here at ANU as a Tuckwell Scholar, and although it's customary to offer some advice, I'm afraid I don't have much advice that you don't already know. After meeting you all I can see how capable and how amazing each of you are. However, I am a self-proclaimed expert on homesickness so I can offer you this, for when you miss your loved ones back home. Carry them with you in everything you do. For me I remember how the day I left home to move to Canberra, it was the first time

I'd ever seen my grandpa cry. He was so proud of me and whenever I doubt myself, I remember everything I felt in that moment. Choose those moments that remind you of who you are, where you come from and where you intend to go, and use them to centre yourself at university.

And then go for it. Run, read, journal, join uni clubs, eat lots of Scholars biccies and watch a stranger turn into a friend over coffee. Do a cartwheel on Fellow's oval just because you can, hike up Black Mountain, explore the National Museum and learn something that challenges your worldview in a class that you're passionate about.

Watch the hot air balloons dance across a pink sunrise over Lake Burley Griffin and emerge from the coldest winter of your life when you see the tulips of Floriade explode in the springtime. And maybe even learn how to line dance if the

opportunity arises, you never know which ones will emerge at ANU, especially when it comes to the ambitious, brave and sometimes crazy Tuckwell Scholars.

Above all, I hope you fall in love with Canberra, just as I have. Even if at times your heart longs for the kangaroos of home, you'll keep them in your memory as you meet and vibe with the kangaroos here, I'm positive.

And so—here it is to 11 incredible years of giving and growth, in the vibrant Tuckwell Program, and the years that will inevitably follow, where we look to connect our community further, whilst celebrating our past and traditions. Here's to the tale of Tuckwell and the wonderful people that narrate, create, illustrate and breathe life into all of its chapters. And finally, here's to the story of 2025—may it as always be refreshingly different!





Graduation Pancakes Speech

Finn McCredie (2021)



When I was recently at my parents' house doing a big clean-out I found this photo which some of you in the 2021 cohort might recognise as the group photo we took on our very first day in Scholars House. And on camp we sat down and wrote letters to our parents which were then slotted inside the frames to give to them at graduation. At the time it felt like an absolute lifetime away but now, here we are.

Looking at this photo now I can't help but laugh and very much question the choices of my younger self. Most people chose to put on smart "first day as a Scholar" attire—maybe a button up shirt, long pants, a nice top. Meanwhile, I appear to have selected some very loud tie-dye exercise shorts, a Burgmann o-week t shirt and some funky watermelon socks.

My first thought was wow I really misread the situation. I genuinely can't believe I was wearing Lululemon the first time I met Ryan Goss! But looking back as a graduating Scholar, maybe I didn't misread the situation at all. Maybe turning up completely myself, loud shorts, carefree and completely amiss to any decorum, but sporting a beaming smile, was exactly right. Because in my experience, this program has never been about trying to change who you are to fit the ideal of a Scholar, or the ideal of a university student. It wasn't about imposing standards on you but about welcoming you as you are. Scholars House was not meant to be an interview room or classroom, but exactly what it says on the tin, a home, a place of comfort.

When I was going through the usual turbulent seas of university life, whether it was missing my family, exam anxiety or first-year friendship drama, this is the place I came to get away. A place where I could stop to take a breath and lean on someone else for support. When I needed advice about changing degree, moving overseas for exchange or navigating the wide world of careers after uni, there was always a friendly face in Scholars ready for a chat and to help ease any nerves.

In the last five years I've seen many people come and go and lots change in the program, but Scholars House has always kept that core sense of being a home on campus. Like any home its slightly chaotic, occasionally a bit too boisterous, but always full of people who genuinely care about each other.

And if I may extend the trite family metaphor just a bit further, people often talk about the wonderful friendships from the program, and for me graduating with the other Scholars in my cohort does feel a bit like graduating with

a group of siblings. Some people are incredibly close, other just say hi for a quick chat in the sunroom, but no matter what we're all connected through this very special, very formative, sometimes strange but overall wonderful experience. That's a connection that will always be there in the decades to come.



With that I'll wrap up and say a big thank you to Michelle, Lois, Kate and Gita for organising today, and for supporting all of us over our time at university. We're so grateful to have you all in this community and I hope that being a part of it is as enjoyable for you as I know it has been for myself. To all the graduating Scholars congratulations. I know the young teenager that sat down to type out their Tuckwell applications, with bright eyes of what they might achieve as a university student, would be incredibly proud of you now. You've all achieved amazing things to get to this point, and I can't wait to see what you will all do in the many years to come.

Alumni Speech

Nic Mayrhofer (2021)

I was asked to do the Alumni Speech – I’m guessing Henry Palmerlee was too expensive.

It seemed right to start this speech by saying that it ‘feels like only yesterday’ I attended my first Commencement. But I had to think about it, and I’ve realised that this just really isn’t true. It was 4 years ago that I had my ringing in, and even though that’s not actually a very long time, I still feel like that time really hasn’t flown. And it’s not because I wasn’t having fun. It’s been so, so much fun. More than that, it’s actually been the most incredible, wonderfully rewarding 4 years that I could imagine.

The thing is, that when someone tells you something is going to be rewarding, the quiet part usually is that it’s actually not going to be easy. You weren’t all rewarded with a Tuckwell scholarship for only doing easy things. And first years, I can tell you now that the next 3, 4, 5 years are going to be a journey of growth, of development, of deep learning about who you are, what you value, what place you want to occupy in the world. And figuring that stuff out, is actually really, really hard. So good luck.

I probably learned millions of life lessons in the last 4 years. I’d like to share a few quick highlights.

Firstly, you have to get used to introducing yourself. I did some very back of the envelope maths, and I reckon that through living on campus, joining some clubs, travelling overseas, working a bunch of different jobs – I think I’ve introduced myself to someone maybe more than 10,000 times since starting uni. And it’s something that you can very easily gloss over, but when you think about what it takes to accurately summarise to someone else who you are, where you’re from, and what you’re about, you might start to hone in on that thing we

call ‘knowing who you are’. And weirdly enough, discovering who you are is probably half of what your ANU journey is about.

Second. As you get to know yourself, you’ll also get to know so many other people. Some of them will become the most important people in your life. You hear this so many times, but it’s so important and so true: the networks that you make at ANU, in the world if you travel, in the workforce once you start building a career – these people, if you treat them right, will want the best for you. And when you need it, they’ll set you up with the support and guidance that you need to overcome whatever gets thrown at you.

There’s a tricky side to this. You’re going to make some big mistakes. And the mistakes that hurt the most aren’t the ones you make on your exams, or at work. They’re the ones where you upset or hurt the people that you care about. Accidentally, I hope. But trust me, it’ll happen. So, you need to learn to apologise. And it sounds silly because we all learned to apologise in kindergarten but trust me when I say that a lot of us young adults are weirdly out of practice. I won’t go into what makes a good apology or a bad one. But trust me, a bad apology is sometimes just as bad as none at all. Don’t make that mistake.

Final reflection. As I’ve said, I’ve met so, so many brilliant and inspiring people since moving to Canberra. And I’ve begun to realise that all of the people I’m most strongly dragged towards, the people I find myself wanting to talk with and wanting to learn from: they’re quite simply the people who made the most fascinating choices, who took up the most interesting opportunities.



So I suppose if you want to be a memorable person, which probably helps with your networking; choose the interesting opportunity when it arises. Go on that exchange. Do that solo trip even after your friends drop out. Take up the interesting job. Or the interesting hobby. You'll have so many great stories to tell. And great stories are a currency that will get you really far.

Scholars who've recently graduated alongside myself, welcome to the Tuckwell Alumni community. I know you all chose the interesting

opportunities, and I know that accepting a Tuckwell scholarship was just one of the first. Weirdly, as I've recently discovered, being a Tuckwell Scholar is temporary. But being a Tuckwell Alum is permanent. I hope you feel permanently connected to this extraordinary program, and that you stay connected to this community.

Graham, Louise. Thank you for making it all possible. Many of us wouldn't have learned these lessons without your support.

Enjoy the rest of your evening.

First Year Experience

Jack Keogh (2025)

The below reflection was originally published in The Chime on 24 October 2025.

Following last night's heated finale, us first years are now being forced into accepting the sobering reality that First Year Experience (FYE) is over. This semester, with the burden on us to organise our own activities, the first years met the challenge with vigour.

The semester began with a Scholars House escape room created by Reshmi and I, followed two weeks later by a cathartic and much needed trip to Bounce run by Liv and Joel (Jolivia? Loel? Much consultation couldn't decide the appropriate portmanteau). Aly and Fordo took on the formidable task of coordinating older Scholars for an exchange panel before Reshmi and I had our encore running the annual Canberra scavenger hunt. That brings us to last night, where Bill McCart's hours of effort

produced a comprehensive trivia night which only got slightly heated. But the real winner of this all was Niamh, who was somehow on the winning team every time and has amassed \$150 of uber eats gift vouchers. Was this correlation or causation? Perhaps we will never know.

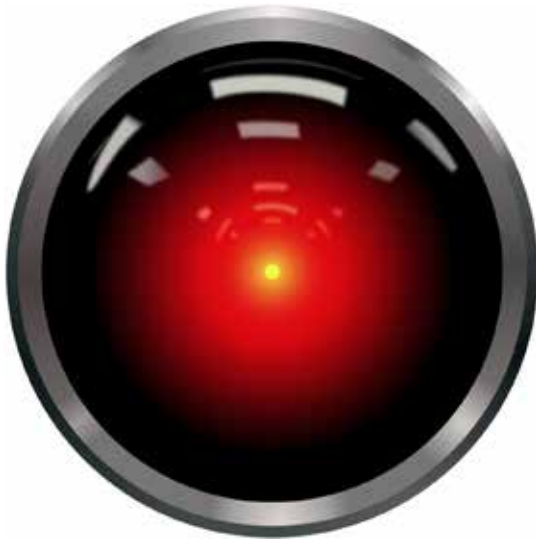
I think I speak for our cohort when I say FYE was an absolute highlight this year which brought us all closer together. Thanks again to our Sem 1 FYE leaders (Molly, Remy, Sophie and Max) for all your effort in producing some of the most memorable FYEs, and also to Lois for supporting (and not shutting down) our ideas both spiritually and financially. While this chapter in our Tuckwell experience may be over, we will always have the memories as we move on to leading the '26ers next year. As in the immortal words of Fordo: "It's all about finishing at the right time".





AI is listening – the loss of a human art

Elise Rawlinson (2020)



I was surprised during an online meeting early this year to get the following message pop-up: “AI is listening”.

When I asked the meeting organisers, I was informed that an artificial intelligence model was ‘attending’ the meeting to synthesise the discussions into succinct notes to be distributed to attendees after the fact. The meeting proceeded without further interruption. As expected, after I left the call, I received a well put together summary of the goings-on, including comments I had made. This technology has advanced rapidly since, with fireflies.ai and other AI bots being regular attendees at many Zoom lectures these days.

That initial message made me uncomfortable for several reasons, not just that I felt unnervingly surveilled in what was otherwise a regular low-stakes meeting. For me, it raised the question: is listening what makes us human? This may seem a large logical jump but bear with me. Listening is the focussed application of an individual’s attention which can be used, essentially, to learn through relationship. It has been one of the cornerstones of human evolution, as a way for us to communicate, to teach and learn, to love and build community. We use it every day to understand and interact with those around us.

The key clinical skill medical students often get told they’re lacking in? Listening. I have been told so many times—a patient will tell you what’s wrong with them if you listen. So, what does it mean to include AI in these human spaces, where nuance and non-verbal cues are so important to the interpretation of meaning?

In an attention-deficit society driven by a need for faster dopamine release, it’s unsurprising we’ve applied an AI bandage to a human flaw. But what will it mean for our culture, our communication, our stories? I can’t say for certain, as a tired student who would love conveniently typed notes without the effort. What I can say is that I fear losing this important human art, and that it might be time to break out the tinfoil hat.

Reflections on the *Corpus Callosum*

Yuliana Chen (2023)

I wrote my first novel when I was eleven.

Looking back, was it a terrible book? Yes, absolutely. Was it also 90,000 coherent words that had somehow come from the mind of someone who was just over a decade old? Also, yes! I like to think that my unusually strong dedication to creative writing at that point in my life was the product of my obsession with Harry Potter and my newfound touch-typing skills that I was all-too-eager to show off at school.

At some point, I convinced myself that I wanted to be a professional author when I grew up.

So, you might be thinking...Yuliana, why are you studying medical science?

I'll admit it's a good question, but to me, the answer is inexplicably simple. I think I speak for many of the Tuckwell Scholars when I say that we are a group of people each dedicating ourselves to countless aspirations. By the time I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, most of my writing had transformed into putting together scientific reports. I fell in love with STEM in this way. My science studies have been equally as rewarding as my creative pursuits, though I never really stopped writing stories whenever I could squeeze it in.

Some may describe this as a dilemma between the left and the right brain, referring to the popular notion which describes the right brain as our creative centre and the left as the logical side. However, this has been debunked as a myth. Frankly, when I'm going through what feels like thousands of Anki cards during my



study sessions, I feel like my left and right brains hurt equally as much, but I digress. What is certainly not a myth is that the two halves of the brain are inextricably connected by the corpus callosum, a bundle of nerve fibres that facilitate communication between the two hemispheres. Just as the corpus callosum serves as a bridge in our minds, medicine serves as an interlinking thread between all the past versions of myself. Throughout my medical science degree, I've experienced valuable moments in laboratories, listened to lectures about novel drug discoveries and practiced scientific writing. I have also been able to spend almost half of my courses studying arts. Through this, I've learned about many social issues which complement topics in my science courses and continued to write creatively.



The marrying of creative writing with medical studies is not a revolutionary idea — in fact, Stanford University has a well-established ‘Storytelling and Medicine’ program encouraging medical students to explore their creative expression skills.

This is all to say that the corpus callosum is an undoubtedly underrated part of the mind. It’s probably not even half as popular as the hippocampus, and nowhere near as well-known as the famed frontal cortex. And yet, it represents something so extraordinarily important to me; there is no need to choose one side or the other. Despite the widespread pressure for students to either surrender their creative pursuits in favour of their passions for STEM or vice versa, the arts and sciences have always had and will continue to have an undeniably strong positive resonance with one another.

Shut the door! What happens in the sauna stays in the sauna

Rosie Sewell (2023)

What first comes to mind when I say Finland? Lapland? the Northern lights? Or maybe Alexander Stubb's (president) golf dates with Trump?

Although all very noteworthy answers, I, with my insurmountable credibility armed with a Finnish resident card, assert that 'sauna' is the correct answer.

Had a long day at the office? Sauna.

Hot and sweaty after run club? Sauna.

Beer at the pub? No, beers in the sauna.

If you've been to a sauna in Australia before, you might question why this hot sweaty wooden box is a cornerstone of Finnish culture.

But when it's dark outside at 3pm, you haven't seen the sun in 2 weeks, and the cold threatens to bite your nose off, you start to understand why a 90 degree room is so appealing.

But saunas are not only used in the wickedness of winter, but all year round. So what more does a sauna offer? Community.

If you're familiar with the stereotype, Finns aren't the most outgoing social bunch: Maximum personal space, silence, and no small talk are the norm. But all of this changes when you enter a sauna (or drink alcohol, or both!)

Personal space dissipates like the water tossed over the hot rocks; silence sheds its skin, and conversation grows as the temperature rises.

But it's not small talk that slithers from silence, rather

honest, meaningful, and reflective words that hang in the heat.

It's parents talking about the welfare of their kids, colleagues discussing the stress of work, and business people making deals ... sometimes naked, and sometimes, well no, traditionally naked.

This inviting, calm, and reflective nature of the sauna hallmarked so many of my memories in Finland. It was a place where I could sit in silence, laugh with friends, decompress, and energise myself with a cold dip into the sea.

I sauna-ed with friends in the south of Finland, in the very north of Norway (with a dip in the Arctic Ocean), in the early hours of the morning, and naked a few times—cultural respect at its finest.

Yet, my favourite time sauna-ing was also my last time. Set in the east of Helsinki, next to the Baltic sea, sits a community-run sauna called 'Sompa Sauna'. Wooden sheds, no showers, no change rooms, these saunas are as barebones as you can get; but are a symbol of equality, unity, and the public need for a 24/7/365 operating sauna.

However, there is one rule to follow: don't be stupid. Don't cut yourself while cutting down a tree, don't burn yourself putting the wood into the fire, and DO NOT open the door when the saunamaster has just created löyly (steam).

Simple enough right?

Oh and there's no swearing in the sauna might be a problem for us Aussies.

In praise of sucking at something new (because being an expert is overrated)

Narryna Nicholas (2023)

I have a quiet rule for myself: I only do things I know I'm good at. It's a comfortable rule, but I've come to recognise that it keeps my world small. So, this year, I decided to break that rule: I entered myself into the Interhall Arts Committee (IAC) dance competition, despite never having danced before. I made this decision to push myself to try something new and something I was almost certain I'd be bad at.

To be honest, it was difficult. I thought about quitting multiple times. In the first few weeks, I saw how quickly the other girls picked up the choreography and also noticed how long it took me in comparison. I felt a like a burden, slowing down the pace of learning for the whole team.

As time went on, my confidence grew, but there were parts of the routine that my body just refused to learn, no matter how much I practiced. That was the hardest part; getting stuck. Dance isn't like writing, where you can delete and rephrase, and it's not like math, where there's tried and tested tools and methods to solve problems.

It's just you and your body, and for me, it felt like the mistakes were becoming ingrained in my muscle memory.

I'd heard that dance improves confidence, and that's one of the reasons why I signed up. While I know I seem confident to others, I often feel 'on edge' in physical spaces, conscious of not taking up too much room. I was surprised by how much performing in a group helped with that.

Beyond confidence, dance has been proven to be beneficial for cognitive and mental health. One study even showed that dancing had an associated

reduced risk of dementia by 76%! Furthermore, dance has a strong social aspect. For me, this was something I experienced directly. I joined the team with a close friend, and through the competition, we got much closer, while forming new friendships with the other team members as well.

When we finally got on stage, I felt like the performance was a blur, and it was over in just a fraction of time. My inner critic went into overdrive. I made several mistakes, fumbling little things I'd spent so much time perfecting. Walking off stage, I was convinced I had let everyone down. There was no way we could win.

While we waited for the results, I felt a strange mix of disappointment in myself and pride for what we had accomplished as a team.

Then, the announcement came. Lo and behold, our team won!

It was a fantastic moment. All the hard work, the frustration, and the pushing past my comfort zone had paid off. I was so proud of my team, and quietly, I was proud of myself for daring to be bad at something new.



Bega? Like the cheese?

Joe Rangiah (2020)



I've been lucky enough to spend this year – my 6th year at ANU, which makes me feel very old – down in Bega. If you, like me this time last year, know absolutely nothing about Bega – it's a town of about 4,000 people in Southeastern NSW, about 30mins away from Merimbula, known mostly for the cheese factory (which admittedly, I thought was called BEQA).

To first explain why I was down there: at ANU, a Doctor of Medicine and Surgery is a four-year postgraduate degree. The 1st and 2nd years are mostly lectures and classes, taught over seven blocks that are divided broadly into body systems (e.g. the gastrointestinal system). The 3rd and 4th years are made up primarily by clinical placements, with rotations through all of the broad medical specialties, across The Canberra Hospital, North Canberra Hospital, the Sydney Adventist Hospital and the Rural Clinical School. The Rural Clinical School divides 28 lucky students amongst six towns in regional NSW each year, where we spend the whole of our 3rd year. I was fortunate enough to end up on the Sapphire Coast, in Bega.

My first taste of clinical medicine was 12 weeks

spent at the Pambula Medical Centre, a GP practice where Dr Rob Morton and Dr Janet Watterson (two incredibly skilled and diligent rural generalist doctors) allowed me to see my own patients, sit in on consults with them or the practice nurses, and to round with them at Pambula Hospital. Pambula is even smaller than Bega, with only about 1,700 people living there, but it's a stunning part of the world with beautiful beaches, national parks and dairies surrounding the town. The placement itself was great, with fascinating patients who were always happy for the awkward med student to sit in the corner, or for me to run a consult before they saw their GP. I've got plenty of stories to tell from my time in Pambula, but my favourite case was a stoic elderly farmer who had run a chainsaw through the side of his leg while chopping wood, and only presented three days later because his wife was complaining about the smell of his leg – the tissue was gangrenous and infected (he was fine, he just needed some wound care and antibiotics).



I then spent the remainder of the academic year at the South East Regional Hospital (SERH), rotating through paediatrics, medicine, surgery and emergency medicine. Comparing stories to my friends in the Canberra and Sydney hospitals, one of the major advantages of spending the year rurally was that we got significantly more involved in patient care. I was allowed to work up my own patients straight out of the waiting room in ED, I scrubbed into high-stakes surgeries, excised massive cysts (basically pimple-popping on steroids), I got to discharge patients, explain diagnoses, and really felt involved—something that can be difficult as a student. For any prospective medical students that read this, the long-term rural program is a genuinely transformative experience that I cannot recommend enough!

One of my favourite moments at SERH was during my emergency rotation, when a retired farmer with Parkinson's had an angle grinder slip and slice his thumb. The man was on blood thinners, and direct pressure needed to be applied as he had perforated an artery. As the med student, I got the job of holding gauze on the thumb until it stopped bleeding, which ended up taking over an hour. During that hour, I learned all about his life, his family, his beautiful garden and what he valued in life. It was a fantastic reminder of how privileged doctors (and med students!) are, getting to hear every detail of a person's life, and how much you can learn by slowing down and listening to someone.

Another, much funnier highlight was having a lovely elderly patient tell me he wanted to have a beer with me, before following it up with “you should be so proud of yourself, your English is great!”

During my time in the hospital, I was mentored by our academic coordinator, a palliative care physician and GP, Dr Amelia Russell, who provided

invaluable guidance throughout the year. Amelia patiently and kindly listened to me switch from absolutely gunning to become a cardiothoracic surgeon at the start of the year, paediatric surgeon and then gastroenterologist in the middle of the year, before finishing the year wanting to be a paediatrician. This will undoubtedly change yet again, but I am nonetheless so grateful for the advice and guidance that she, and several other doctors in Bega and Pambula provided.



On a different note, life outside of the hospital was just as fun on the South Coast. Whilst there were definite downsides (e.g. a chainsaw-murder and revenge arson a couple hundred metres from our house), it is such a beautiful part of the world to live in, made better by living with close mates. Whenever my partner, Sophie, visited from Canberra we would explore the national parks, swim at beautiful, secluded beaches, and drop into the smaller towns in the valley for a coffee. My parents and one of my sisters came to visit too, providing great excuses to visit breweries, do hikes or to go for a float along the Pambula River mouth.



I trained for the Canberra Marathon by running along the Bega River or Merimbula Lake and I played a little bit of cricket for Bega-Angledale. One of my mates and I also joined the Bega-Tathra AFL team, where we were lucky enough to play in the club's first ever win, and I briefly played on Brownlow Medal winner Dane Swan who kicked 9 goals (the photo isn't Dane, sorry).

My friends and I ran some sessions at the Bega Valley Science Week teaching local kids about snake bite management, how to avoid germs and a little bit about the human body. I was lucky enough to be interviewed on ABC radio before Science Week and found myself incredibly out of my depth explaining how to treat a snake bite, based off of the 6-minute St John Ambulance video I had watched just before the interview.

Probably the highlight of life in Bega, however, was spending time at the beach; we could surf in the mornings before placement or classes, and I was lucky enough to be out on the water a few times with dolphins and seals metres away. There was a shark attack on a 7yo whose board was split in half but was otherwise fine, and we did

once confusedly watch a bloke on a jet ski film something while we were in the surf, only to see the next day that he had posted a video of a big shark that had since gone semi-viral.

Shark scares and chainsaw incidents aside, Bega now has a special place in my heart. I've learned so much this year, I've met so many generous, compassionate and gifted doctors and allied health workers, and to repeat myself – I cannot recommend the long-term rural medical program enough. If any Scholars would ever like to have a chat about Med School, the rural program, or what it's like to be lactose intolerant in a town exclusively reliant on the dairy industry, please reach out – I'm always happy to chat!



The parable of the broken window

Max Thomas (2024)

In his 1850 essay, *That Which is Seen and That Which is Not Seen*, French economist Frederic Bastiat introduced the parable of the broken window. Consider a scenario where a child accidentally smashes a shopkeeper's window and then it has to be replaced. Could the increase in demand for labour and circulation of money in the economy arising from that accident be a net benefit to society? No way, says Bastiat. Or probably 'non, monsieur!', because he was French. This does not consider what the shopkeeper could have otherwise done with that money, the question of his next best alternative, which astute Microeconomics 1 graduates would recognise as the opportunity cost.

Those who made it to Macroeconomics 1 might then ask how the broken window parable squares with Schumpeter's theory of 'creative destruction', which says that the dismantling of long-established practices and capital clears the way for innovation and growth in an economy. One first-year Tuckwell Scholar might just have the answer.

Our story does not begin in a French patisserie, but in Scholars House. On one late evening in October, an indoor cricket match was taking place. After continuous pies being hurled down leg-side from a bowler who, for legal reasons, will remain anonymous, a soccer ball was fetched from the sports shelves. One unfortunate kick later, and Scholars House was to return to the 10pm lock-up time, and the program left with a rather expensive bill. But there is one more interesting finding: there was lead in the windows. Scholars House was to close for several days, lead-removal works

to take place, and our lungs to be better for it. Could this unintentional and careless act of 'butter fingers' have saved us all from a graver fate—and the Tuckwells and ANU from waves of negligence liability in thirty years time?

At this critical juncture, I propose a new addition to the literature: the Winslow-Window theory of destruction. This posits that destruction can yield a net social surplus if it compels the revelation and remediation of a latent structural defect, whose long-run cost of going unfixed, exceeds the marginal cost of repair. This is not a free license to go breaking windows. But it is enough to say that the unnamed Scholar should be off the hook.

Addendum from Lois:
Nice attempt to link late night high jinks with an outcome for the better good, but lead in the paint was a known factor and Scholars House was booked in for remediation works 6 months before the incident.





Our ode to Vietnam

Sophie Fleming (2024), Mehvish Mehboob (2024) and Stephanie Ovington (2024)



One year later and we still cannot believe it. We were sitting in the Fenner kitchen area, reading our emails together and screeching in excitement. We had just found out that we'd been selected (as first years much to our surprise!) to be a part of the 20 students who would travel to Vietnam in January 2025 for a three-week intensive field school. Our joy could not be tamed knowing we'd be going on this great adventure together and what an adventure we had! We began our travels in Hoi An, meeting our crew of ANU students from every degree imaginable. We spent our days biking around the chaotic alleys of the Old Town, eating delicious food and interviewing locals with the help of our guides for ethnographic research projects. We played many games of Spot It, notably on a lantern-lit rooftop in the Ancient Town and even experienced the dizzying energy of Vietnam winning the ASEAN soccer cup. Outfitted in the team's merch, we watched and cheered with locals and cycled around the streets with cries of victory. We then left for Bach Ma National Park, spending a few days hiking through thick jungle and hiding from the rain (and leeches!) in haunted French 19th-century buildings after our tents

became flooded. We froze, donning nearly every item of clothing in our backpacks, and ate some questionable meals (one included the discovery of a cockroach) but the scenery was so breathtaking that nothing else seemed to matter.

When we arrived in Long Xuyen City in the south, we were very enthusiastically greeted by our buddies, students at the An Giang University, who were eager to learn all they could about Australia and share their lives with us. Throughout the week, our buddies would take us on journeys throughout the area, including us in all their daily activities, whether it was helping their parents cook traditional meals or filming TikToks together. A particularly memorable day in Long Xuyen began with half of our cohort dropping like flies after food poisoning from an unknown source (just ask Sophie—it was a tough day!). We then travelled to a faraway rice paddy, where many of the locals had never seen foreigners before. They were beyond thrilled to show us their paddy fields, cook us their local fish and even joined us as we danced and revelled, often to the tune of a slightly drunk villager attempting karaoke. Another highlight was visiting a primary school and giving a presentation on Australia to a very enthusiastic crowd of adorable kids who asked for our autographs. From freezing cold mountains to tropical rainforest, we definitely experienced a wide spectrum of Vietnamese biomes. Our course came to a hot and humid end at Cat Tien National Park, which also proved to be the most active part of our journey. From hiking to a bat cave, kayaking around a lake and biking to see monkeys and moon bears in a ride that nearly killed us, we barely had time to finish our final assignment. We finished our reflective



journal just in time to see a stunning sunset of warm orange and pretty pink. On our last night, we gathered around the fireplace to sing and dance with the locals, our laughter tinged with a hint of sadness knowing that our journey was already over.

Mehvish: Before going to Vietnam, I tried my best to prepare for the field school. I borrowed a book from my Vietnamese course convenor about Vietnamese culture and history. I learned basic phrases in preparation for the language quiz I saw in the course outline and started doing all the pre-readings. It wasn't until I stepped out of the airport at Da Nang that reality struck me...I was in a whole different country, about to start an intensive course, and I was still very, very unprepared. It took me the rest of the course to understand that uncertainty is okay, that travelling brings all sorts of surprises and regardless of whether they're magical moments or a deathly illness, they all serve to help you grow as a person. For me, the highlight of the course was being able to see parts of Vietnam I probably would never have seen as a tourist. As I look back on all the things I saw, I'm grateful to have been able to capture

so many different threads of the rich tapestry of Vietnamese society. From living in different homestays and watching the local families begin their day at sunrise to farm to learning from the local market vendors and going on wild adventures with Vietnamese uni students, I felt like I was travelling and exploring in its truest sense. The infinite hues and aromas of Vietnam are still vivid in my memories, and I can't wait to return one day.

Stephie: I was fascinated by the Vietnam Field School course as it provided me with an opportunity to branch out of my entirely science-focused degree. I landed in Vietnam uncertain as to what it would entail and left blown away by the generosity of its people and everything they had taught me! Whilst on the course, it was such a whirlwind that I am not certain I was truly able to appreciate how much I was learning through the many experiences.

We were completely immersed in the culture, sharing many special conversations with our guides, who quickly became friends, as well as the many interviewees. Delicious meals shared each day alongside the beautiful stories we were trusted with across the course, meant we were experiencing Vietnam in such a unique way-I felt like I could truly see the people as well as the places. After the course came to an end, I undertook an extended research project on Vietnam. The field school enriched this process immensely as I wrote from a perspective of passion and a different level of understanding on a subject of science and technology which I would never have considered or been able to capture without such a course. I left Vietnam and submitted my project with such a strong appreciation and love for Vietnam's culture and people.

Sophie: My first group project in Vietnam was called “Love Letters to Hoi An”. We interviewed many locals of the lantern city, exploring anecdotes of love in all of its forms. My most memorable stories were a mother’s longing for her son when he left home for compulsory military service, a playful old gentleman selling fruit at the markets who still spoke of his wife with a twinkle in his eyes, and a badass woman who was a 15-year-old fighter in the Vietnam War (now turned fierce butcher who is a beloved member of her community!). But my love stories didn’t end in Hoi An. My favourite part of the trip was being with my homestay family on Cat Ba Island. The warmth and consideration they showed me touched my heart. We made the most delicious home-cooked meal together, peeling pumpkin flowers and vegetables on the floor. When my buddy’s mother grasped my hand, the language barrier didn’t seem to matter at all. My buddy’s father took us fishing, the three of us somehow fitting in the most narrow canoe where he cast an intricate handmade net into the river. There was this one moment, where he pulled his haul up and held it high in the air. The setting sun lit up the water, casting diamonds that shone

in my eyes and the fish seemed to fly against the blue sky. It was like magic. When we finished the field school with a hefty personal essay reflection, I asked if I could write mine in a small notebook I bought in the Hoi An markets, attaching memories to my pages with sticky tape and glue.

Our professor said yes – much to my delight! I loved not having to use a computer almost as much as I loved that little notebook, filled with reflections and flyers and maps of our travels. However, I don’t recommend handwriting 3000 words after hiking, biking and kayaking – I just submitted it one minute before our 5pm due date on our last day! Perhaps some things never change for a university student, whether we’re on campus or a world away! Overall, we adored Vietnam and you’ll be sure to catch us there again one day. We loved travelling together and it was a privilege to take such an amazing course, where we learnt not only academic skills, but more about ourselves and the world around us in just a few short weeks. Why can’t we always feed bears or wander through temples or dance with locals to learn? Until next time Vietnam, một hai ba yo!



Researching Food Security and Nutrition in Silalatshani, Zimbabwe

Mariane Johnstone (2021)



I'm in Silalatshani, rural Zimbabwe. Standing in a dusty field of dark orange dirt, I'm being introduced to the grandmother whom I'm about to interview. I can't name her for confidentiality reasons. Three of the five grandchildren she raises single-handedly, peek out from the round, mud-brick hut behind us, giggling to each other about the *mlungu* (white person) in their front yard. I look at her, admiring her beautifully patterned dress, and the pink scarf wrapped around her head. I'm in awe of her, and how strong she seems. Behind her, dark grey clouds rumble. It's November and the rainy season has begun. Suddenly, a lightning bolt crashes to the ground, about a kilometre behind her.

The image will forever live in my memory.

She ushers us inside, passing small wooden stools to Shantel, my research assistant, and I. It's dark, and the rain begins to fall with such an intensity that we can barely hear each other over the rainstorm roaring on her tin roof. The grandmother speaks little English, so Shantel does the interview in Ndebele. We huddle our heads together to make

out each other's voices. Between questions, I gaze around the room. We sit by a raised mattress wrapped in plastic. I wonder if it is a protective measure for the rainy season, which goes from November to March. Behind me there are cabbages, wrinkled and admittedly smelling rather strong. They were harvested many months ago and have to last until at least May. The grandmother tells us about how her husband passed away some years ago, and how her children have moved to South Africa, something that is common in Zimbabwe. Job opportunities are better there. She is occasionally sent remittances, but largely provides for the five grandchildren on her own. Recently, she adopted the climate-resilient agricultural technique, conservation agriculture, to grow maize in her front yard. Maize is the main staple crop in Zimbabwe, eaten grilled on the cob, or dried, ground, and cooked into a polenta-like porridge, called *sadza*, or *isitshtwala*. She also has a small plot of land in the irrigation scheme, to grow cabbages and other vegetables without depending on the increasingly inconsistent rain. The vegetables supplement the *sadza*, called *relish*. While the children are at school, she does 'piece work', the local term used to describe ad-hoc work for the households who are able to pay other community members. This way, she ensures the children can eat year-long.

Not all households are able to do this. The highly seasonal nature of subsistence agriculture in the region means that harvested crops begin to run out in October. The peak lean season, January to March, sees many households resort to skipping meals, mothers sacrificing their portions, and men going to

pan for gold, a dangerous practice due to the unstable and outdated mining infrastructure. Social welfare in the form of ground maize is given to the most vulnerable households. Cases of child malnutrition are treated with calorie-dense powders and vitamin supplements. Whilst neither constitutes a complete diet, they help tide households over to the next harvest.

Unless there is no harvest.

As climate change intensifies, Zimbabwe feels its impacts viscerally. The rainy season is more variable. There are years where the rainy season never really comes. In 2023, there was a devastating drought, whose impacts I see in the worry lines etched into the faces of the many farmers I am so fortunate to meet. Wealth here is measured in livestock, and that season, many cattle, goats and donkeys passed away. Crops failed, and more households were dependent on food aid.

May this article be a somewhat gentle reminder that even though our feeds and TV screens may not feature climate stories as often, the impacts are still very much present and worsening globally.

The Silalatshani community is absolutely not, however, without hope.

The local Environmental Health Technician put it best: “We can say experience is the best teacher. If you talk about climate, without people going through climate change themselves, it’s difficult to come up with a plan. But now people are developing their own plans, their personal plans, because they know that climate change could affect them at a personal level. And mostly we’re affected at personal level. So now people are better equipped.”

One of the village heads tells me about a nutrition care group hosted in her backyard. Mothers come to learn how to cook nutrient-dense meals for their young children, to prevent them from experiencing chronic health issues into the future.

Agricultural extension officers have introduced the concept of both community-owned and household nutrition gardens. They’ve also introduced

conservation agriculture, to increase the odds of households being able to harvest in times of low rainfall. Traditional grains like sorghum and finger millet are being re-introduced into household crop rotations, for their climate-resilience and nutrient density. The project I am researching under, the ‘Circular Food Systems in Africa’ project, has been working on integrating agricultural production types in partnership with local farmers, to develop and integrate small, medium, and micro enterprises into the communities. The project aims to accelerate rural development with embedded circularity, using water, carbon, and nutrients more cyclically, whilst limiting negative environmental externalities and eliminating greenhouse gas emissions.

The faces and places of Zimbabwe will stay with me forever. The lessons learnt have strengthened and shaped my perspectives on the world, on climate, on food systems, and on myself and my own life. My time there was for my honours research. Thank you to the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, the ANU, the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics and its Bulawayo team, particularly Thabani Dube and Angie Mujeyi. To my research assistants, Shantel Dube and Nyasha Mukwakwami. To my supervisors, Karen Parry, Jamie Pittock and Xolile Ncube. And thank you to the mothers, household heads, community leaders and farmers that gave me a look into their world, and taught me about community, resilience, strength and adaptation. I’m so inspired and so grateful, and I hope that my thesis can give back to the community in some way.



Alumni Highlights

Kate Hutchison, Alumni Coordinator

What a year! Looking back over the four bumper editions of The Quarter Bell this year, it really strikes me just how much has been happening across the program. The Alumni program has truly stepped up a gear. From the brilliant commencement speech by Nic Mayrhofer, to everything that followed, it's been a year full of connection and momentum. We saw the introduction of state catch-ups and a record number of Scholars graduating, it has been an action-packed year.

Thank you to the Alumni who have given back to the program in so many ways — updating their details, jumping on panels, popping into Scholars House, attending events, taking part in the Occasional Speaker Series, or sitting down to chat on the Tuckwell Talks podcast. Here's to a very big year, with even more to come in 2026!

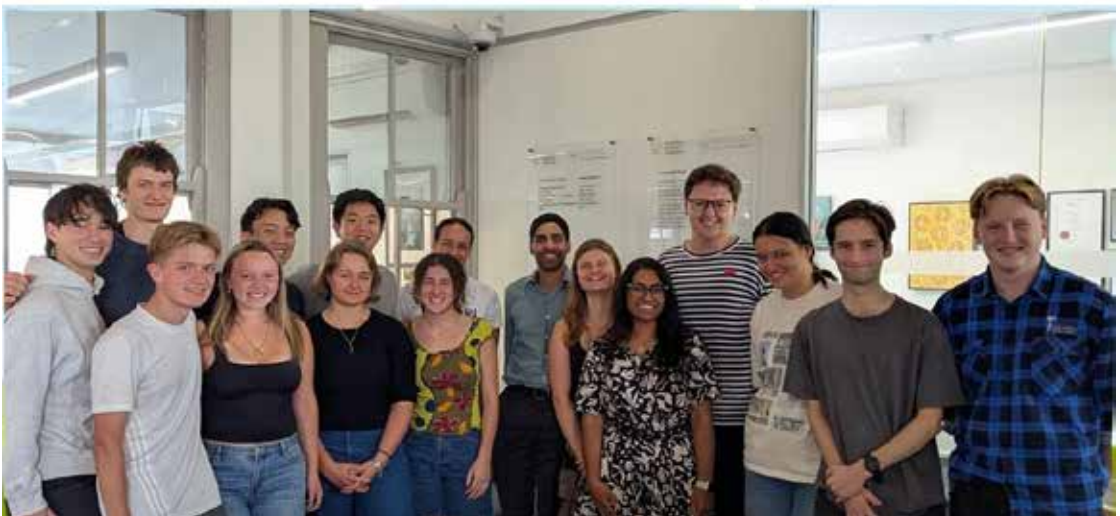
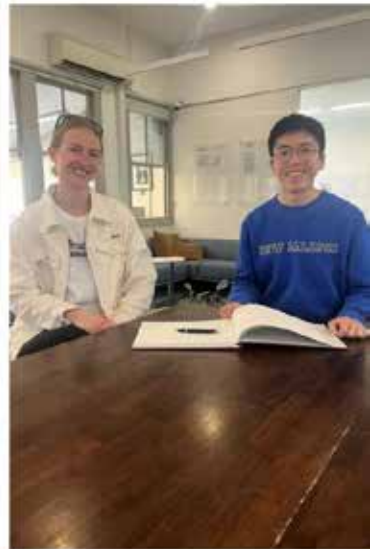




Sydney Alumni event.



Melbourne Alumni event.





Scholars on exchange

Summer 2025	Margot Harris (2023) Study Tour: Yunnan, China
	Sophie Fleming (2024) Study Tour: An Giang University, Mekong Delta, Vietnam
	Mehvish Mehboob (2024) Study Tour: An Giang University, Mekong Delta, Vietnam
	Stephanie Ovington (2024) Study Tour: An Giang University, Mekong Delta, Vietnam
	Oscar Waring (2024) Akita International University, Tokyo, Japan
Semester 1 2025	Finn McCredie (2021) Study Tour : Paris, France
Winter 2025	Rhys Nickerson (2022) Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan
	Will Cassell (2023) Study Tour: Suva, Fiji
	Finn Currie (2023) Study Tour: Suva, Fiji
	Luke McNamara (2023) Study Tour: Turkey, Belgium, France
	Kate Snashall (2023) Sotheby's Institute of Art, London, United Kingdom
	Mehvish Mehboob (2024) Study tour: Rome, Italy
	Daniel Fihrer (2024) London School of Economics, United Kingdom
Semester 2 2025	Matt Clark (2023) Nottingham University, United Kingdom
	Will Maxwell (2023) Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
	Luke McNamara (2023) Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland
	Rosie Sewell (2023) Aalton University, Finland
	Hannah Stewart (2023) Heriot -Watt University, Edinburgh, Scotland
	Stephanie Ovington (2024) Stockholm University, Sweden
	Caitlyn Martin (2023) University of Exeter, United Kingdom

Podcast

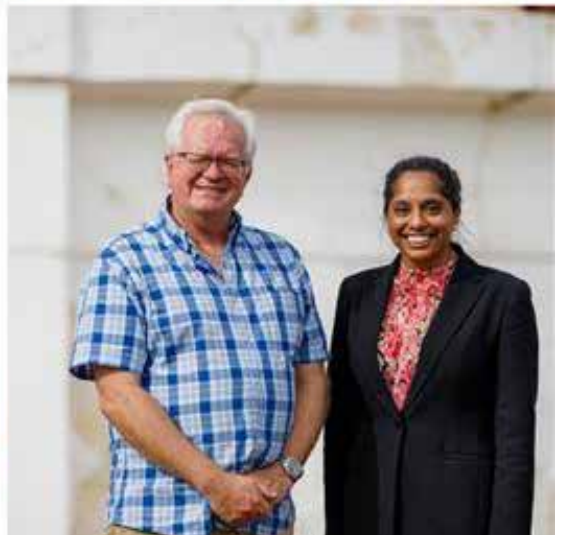
Tuckwell Talks - Conversations with Scholars

Our conversations continued throughout the year, with Scholars from different cohorts stepping in as hosts for several episodes. In 2025, 18 episodes were released – 6 of them featuring Alumni.

Altogether, we now have 40 episodes, all accessible via our website:

tuckwell.anu.edu.au/news/podcasts

Episode 23	Fellows Associate Professor Mark Ellison, Dr Asilata Bapat, Associate Professor Emma Aisbett & Dr Maryna Bilokur
Episode 24	Matthew Jacob – 2014 Scholar
Episode 25	Caitlin McManus-Barrett – 2021 Scholar
Episode 26	Lachlan Arthur – 2015 Scholar & Chris Jackson – 2021 Scholar
Episode 27	Nic Mayrhofer – 2021 Scholar
Episode 28	Joe Negrine – 2020 Scholar
Episode 29	Farewell Dr Fiona Scotney
Episode 30	Finn McCredie – 2021 Scholar
Episode 31	Patrick O'Connor – 2021 Scholar
Episode 32	Janee Emms – 2021 Scholar
Episode 33	Olivia Taifalos – 2019 Scholar & Bartholomew Cheng – 2025 Scholar
Episode 34	Jonno Shiel-Dick – 2021 Scholar & Luke McNamara – 2023 Scholar
Episode 35	Abi Rajkumar – 2014 Scholar & Kate Chipman – 2022 Scholar
Episode 36	Matt Bowes – 2015 Scholar
Episode 37	Mary Parker – 2015 Scholar & Anthony Ricci – 2015 Scholar
Episode 38	Katja Curtin – 2021 Scholar
Episode 39	Carina Stone – 2017 Scholar
Episode 40	Guy Leckenby – 2014 Scholar, Caitlin McManus-Barrett – 2021 Scholar & Katja Curtin – 2021 Scholar







No ordinary Scholarship

The Tuckwell Scholarship Program stands apart because it's built on far more than academic achievement. It's a commitment to growth, leadership, wellbeing, and community — a holistic experience that supports Scholars as people, not just students.

At the heart of this experience is **Scholars House**.

Scholars House is many things

- **A physical home base** — a place for study, reflection, quiet focus, and the comfort of familiar faces.
- **A social hub** — where friendships form, ideas spark, and conversations stretch long into the evening.
- **A support network** — offering guidance, mentorship, and a sense of belonging.
- **A program of events** — workshops, FYE dinners, discussions, Alumni pop-ins, food trucks and opportunities that shape Scholars into thoughtful leaders.
- **And yes... a stress-relief rubber toy** — the iconic squishy Scholars House, a playful reminder that even high achievers need to decompress.

The following page is a collection of the 2026 Tuckwell Scholars' own squishy Scholars Houses in their personal space — a small symbol of a very big community they are about to join!





Contact us

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[Tuckwell Talks Podcast](#)