



THE GIRLS & BOYS  
BRIGADE

# Stories from the GBB

SUMMER EDITION 2024

## Celebrating a year of impact at the GBB

As we begin a new year here at The Girls & Boys Brigade, I couldn't be more grateful for our fantastic supporters who make our work possible.

The last few months have been so busy in the best of ways. We ended 2023 by facilitating opportunities for our year 6 cohort to get their hair done for their end of year school celebrations. It was a special opportunity to help them feel celebrated on this monumental occasion.

Thanks to your incredible generosity, all families at the GBB were provided with lovely Christmas food hampers to help make their season merry, along with many presents for the children and youth. It was truly heartwarming to be able to provide this support during a season that can be really challenging for families in need.

This month, our focus has shifted to providing excellent school holiday experiences for our young people before they start another year of school. They were absolutely over the moon to be able to go to the waterpark, the cinema, and to Watson's Bay on Ferry, as well as many other special activities in and out of our centre.

With a grant that we received, we were even able to purchase 6 guitars and fund group lessons for our kids. As you can imagine, the centre is as pleasantly noisy as ever, with guitar strums added to the chorus of laughter and chatting that usually abounds!

I am so excited to see what we can achieve together in 2024. Wishing all of our supporters a fantastic year ahead.

Stefan Lamour-Jansson  
Executive Officer



# From the Homework Room to High School

## Thanks for being part of Zara's journey to becoming dux

The Homework Program helps children learn book by book, day by day. Some of their efforts are met with immediate wins, such as a mastered list of spelling words or a great result on an assignment. But often, accomplishments come after many months of persistence and determination. This was the case for 12-year-old Zara, who was recently named Dux of her primary school.

"It wasn't really something I was working toward, it was more like something that came along the way of my learning," said Zara. "I was just trying to be the best I could."

Some school subjects came more easily to Zara than others. Writing, art, and sports are just a few things she enjoys, and she dreams of one day being an author or an artist. Math, on the other hand, required a lot of hard work and focus for Zara.

Fortunately, Zara knew the perfect place to go to improve her math skills: the Homework

Room! Zara often came down to do homework, read, or work on projects on the computers.

"Upstairs can be really noisy, so it was nice to be able to come work in a really peaceful place," said Zara. "There were always kind people who were willing to help me. My friends went there as well, so I could talk to them about my assignments."

After Zara got Dux, her mother told Miss

Steph, the Family Support Coordinator at the GBB. When a kind supporter donated a bicycle a few days later, Miss Steph knew that it would be the perfect gift to celebrate Zara's huge accomplishment.

"I had a bike before, but it was too small and I couldn't ride it anymore. I wasn't expecting a new one," said Zara.

While Zara is a little nervous to start high school this year, she is up to the challenge! Thank you for the support you provide to help kids like Zara excel at their goals.

**"It was nice to be able to come and work in a really peaceful place. There were always kind people who were willing to help me."**





## GBB makes a splash at Jamberoo

In November, the youth at the GBB had the great pleasure of attending camp in Shellharbour. It was a fantastic camp, with highlights including the ninja course at Reddall Reserve, lots of time spent swimming in the pool at the accommodation, cooking together, and playing games during free time. But one activity stood out a notch above the rest – an unforgettable day at Jamberoo Action Park!

The youth arrived to the park bright and early, ready to challenge themselves on the biggest and scariest slides. As the young people at camp were all preparing to go from the children's program to the youth program, staff wanted to give them more autonomy on this camp.

"After we arrived, we told everyone that they must stay with at least one buddy, or they could go in a group. They all naturally formed groups, and no one was left out – it ended up being a really lovely experience for all the kids," said Miss Diane, Programs Manager at the GBB.

Everyone agreed to check back in at 3:30 pm, when they planned on leaving the park. But by the time 3:30 rolled around, everyone was having way too much fun to leave. They unanimously voted to stay another hour, and then another hour after that, until they were finally the last ones to leave at 5:30 pm.

"They just loved it so much, we couldn't get them out of the wave pool!" said Miss Diane. "They were right in the deep waves."

Their bravery also extended to the water slides. The Perfect Storm is regarded as one of the tallest, longest, most exciting water rides of its kind in the world, taking riders through the vortex of 3 powerful twisters. A lot of the youth (and staff!) were apprehensive at first, but it proved to be a great opportunity for them to build their confidence and encourage each other to step outside of their comfort zone.

**"By the end of the day, they were all absolutely beaming. They were so thankful for such a great day. Some of them asked if we could come back the next day."**

"They were all saying, 'oh my gosh! That was so scary but so fun.' A lot of them wanted to go back up again," said Miss Diane. "We were all just really impressed that when you give

them a little bit of responsibility, they were all able to get back on time."

After camp, the children completed a feedback survey. Nearly all of the young people reported feeling happier, more confident to be themselves, more comfortable with staff, and more empowered to ask for help than they did before the camp.

Not only was it a lot of fun, but it was the perfect experience to share with the children before they start high school.



Save the Date!

## Our sellout Trivia Night is back March 2024

Get ready for another fantastic evening of dinner, drinks, and trivia! Invite your friends because this is an event not to be missed. With so many exclusive prizes, anyone can be a winner - but who will be crowned the trivia champion?

Details and tickets coming soon on [www.girlsandboysbrigade.com.au](http://www.girlsandboysbrigade.com.au)

## Summer School Holiday Fun

Thanks to you, the children and youth at the GBB have had a busy month full of fun activities and excursions. Here's a glimpse into some of the things we did this summer!

Cooking and baking are always popular activities during school holidays, but not quite as popular as a third activity - eating! Sausage rolls were fun and delicious!



Thanks to a grant from the NSW Department of Education, we were able to purchase 6 guitars and hold group lessons for the children.



Water activities were the perfect way to enjoy the summer weather, including trips to Manly Water Works, Water World, and Prince Alfred Park Pool.



The children were in stitches over the giant seagulls chasing them around the CBD as part of the Sydney Festival. Of course, the kids chased the gulls right back!

While the stories in this newsletter are true, names and other identifying details of children mentioned have been altered to protect their privacy.

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