



# Stories from the GBB

SUMMER 2026



## Embracing Change: A New Year, A New Us

As the new year begins, we reflect on how shame and fear can hold us back from learning new things. As leaders in the charity sector we can be guilty of this too, of the desire to keep things as they are or have been, rather than taking a risk and losing something. 2025 was a huge year of change for us. We try to offer our staff the same holistic care that we offer to our families. We sat with each member of our staff, and we redeveloped their work development plans and roles, giving many of them new titles, responsibilities, and possibilities.

We also gained three key new staff members – a Child Protection & Compliance Manager, a new Social Worker, and we are proud to say that one of our alumni, Natasha, has also joined the team. Not only did Natasha attend as a child, but two of her children continue to attend and be a part of our community. She is now the third alumni on our staff, and hopefully not the last.



As an alumnus myself, I remain so proud of the impact that The Girls & Boys Brigade has on its community, and the ways in which that community continue to gather around with pride and nostalgia. On the last page of this newsletter, you can read about another of our alumni, Heith, who used his strength and courage to try something new on the world stage. With the help of supporters like you, lives in our community will never be the same again.

Stefan Lamour-Jansson  
Executive Officer

# A Leap of Courage: Discovering Play

In a world where imagination knows no bounds, the Mike Hewson Playground at The Art Gallery of NSW stands as a beacon of creativity and adventure. For one little girl, this extraordinary playground became the canvas for her most transformative experience.

Growing up, she was never taken to a playground, and the concept of play was foreign to her. Her days were spent in the safety of routines, guarded by a deep-seated fear of the unknown.

When she first arrived at the playground, the sight of swings and slides filled her with apprehension. She sat on the swing, frozen with fear, terrified of falling and needing the comforting presence of our children's educators to hold her steady.

Her journey to embrace play and take risks began with the unwavering support of our dedicated staff, who provided her with the encouragement she needed to face her fears.

The playground at the art gallery is no ordinary play space; it is a whimsical fusion of art and adventure, offering children the freedom to explore, climb, and imagine. Its innovative design encourages risk-taking in a safe environment, fostering

courage and resilience in those who venture within.

With each visit, the little girl grew bolder. She learned to swing higher, climb taller, and laugh louder. The once intimidating playground became her playground, a place where she discovered the joy of play and the thrill of taking risks. Her story is a testament to the transformative power of play and the importance of environments that challenge and nurture young spirits.

As she continues to explore the wonders of the playground, her newfound courage shines as brightly as the sunlit paths she now fearlessly treads. This is more than just a playground; it is a place where children like her can truly soar.



# Datu's Journey: Pedals and Dreams

In the bustling heart of Sydney, a teenage boy named Datu, age 15, once felt a world apart from his peers. Raised by a hard-working single mother with four children, Datu's family budget had little room for luxuries such as bicycles. When growing up he would listen to his classmates excitedly share tales of their birthday and Christmas bicycle presents, and he would be filled with embarrassment, like he was somehow falling behind.

At school, Datu's friends would ride their bicycles home after classes, a ritual he could only watch from the sidelines. He often felt he lacked the talents or smarts of his peers, simply because he had never had the chance to learn how to ride.

At The Girls & Boys Brigade, we are committed to empowering youth like Datu. This year, we partnered with Revolve ReCYCLING, a service committed to restoring abandoned or used bicycles. The collaboration meant that

meant that if we bought a

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bicycle, they would give a free bicycle to our families in need.

When Datu was first asked if he wanted a bicycle, he hesitated and declined. His reluctance puzzled our staff until he finally revealed his secret: he didn't know how to ride. Datu's story was not unique, as many children from similar backgrounds experienced the same barrier.

Recognizing this gap, The Girls & Boys Brigade launched a new initiative, offering bicycle riding lessons and maintenance courses. Over the summer, children and youth were guided through the fundamentals of riding and caring for their bicycles, with sessions held around the scenic bike tracks of Sydney Park.

Datu's transformation was nothing short of inspiring. The shy boy who once felt embarrassed now rode confidently alongside his friends, his face alight with joy. Datu's story is a testament to the power of opportunity and community support—proof that with a little help, everyone can experience the freedom of two wheels.





## Alumni Abroad: Championing Culture and Sport

Carrying the heart of Dhanggati country, Heith Sines-Wainwright's journey from The Girls & Boys Brigade alumnus to representing Australia on the world stage is nothing short of remarkable. At just 21 years old, Heith has embraced the ancient art of sumo wrestling, a path that has seen him break barriers and inspire countless young Australians, particularly within Indigenous communities.

Heith's passion for sumo ignited after leaving the supportive environment of The Girls & Boys Brigade, where he found his calling. Thanks to his hard work and the support of readers like you, he was able to attend the 2025 World Sumo Championship in Thailand.

Competing at such a prestigious event, Heith had the honour of meeting some of his sumo heroes, further fuelling his commitment to the sport.

His transformative journey has been punctuated by significant achievements,

notably at the Oceania Sumo Tournament in Sydney. There, Heith clinched silver medals in the heavyweight, open weight, and team categories, marking him as a formidable presence in the sumo scene.

**"This is more than just a tournament," Heith reflects. "As an Indigenous athlete, I want to break barriers, represent my culture with pride, and inspire other young Australians, especially Indigenous youth, to dream big and step into spaces they've never seen themselves in before."**

Heith described the joy of being surrounded by people who shared his body type and passion, and what it meant to train and wrestle with people from around the world. He was very nervous but he said the experience was amazing. He was proud to represent Australia and his indigenous community.

Heith's story is a testament to the power of perseverance, cultural pride, and community support. As he continues to champion both his sport and heritage, Heith remains a beacon of inspiration for many, proving that with determination and the right support, the sky is indeed the limit.

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

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