



Alphington
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

FLOWERDALE

LEADERSHIP

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1 // 2021

**UPDATE YOUR
ALUMNI DETAILS**

Scan the QR code on the inside back cover to make sure we have your contact details!

**ROHAN PANJWANI'S
ARTISTIC LICENSE**

**2021 ALUMNI
REUNION RECAP**

**BEHIND THE SUCCESS
OF OUR 2020 DUX**

**MR ENVER ERDOGAN:
AGS TO PARLIAMENT**



On the cover:

From left to right

Natalia Hanna, School Vice Captain

Yasmin Zeineh, School Captain

Ji Haozhi, School Vice Captain





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FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK

By Dr Vivianne Nikou,
School Principal

In our post-COVID lockdown era here in Victoria, it is heartening to see The School returning to some sense of normality. While some friends, family and our International students are still struggling to return, we are all thankful for the local freedoms and the good health of our community.

This edition of Flowerdale is a chance to recognise and acknowledge the leadership qualities of many in our school community. We find leadership within both the students still learning here with us as well as those who have since graduated. Many of our alumni are leaders in their own right, and are now carving out paths of distinction for themselves through their diligence, perseverance and empathy. We also take this time to profile our current School Captains **Yasmin Zeineh**, **Natalia Hanna**, and **Haozhi Ji** who, through their own endeavours and passion, have been recognised by their peers as worthy





Two of our Future Leaders hosting tours on our Open Day

leaders of the student population.

In what was, understandably, a difficult year spent mostly in lockdown, I acknowledge the tremendous effort by the **Class of 2020** and congratulate them on their ability to pursue post-secondary courses across a myriad of institutions. I commend to you the heartfelt reflections of our 2020 Dux, **Dimitra Kritsidimas**, who has demonstrated in a warm and open manner her highly developed sense of self. This sense of self enabled her to reach out to others when she needed it, which helped her navigate the emotionally charged years of growing up without her mum. Dimitra is a self-made young woman who has truly demonstrated our school values, particularly through her sense of empathy, a much sought after leadership trait by employers.

We also feature a range of other leaders in the pages of this edition of Flowerdale. The successful placement of **Rohan Panjwani** in the Top Arts exhibition has showcased his creative leadership qualities cultivated over many years, as well as his commitment to pursue his passion for his craft. The interview with Grammarian **Mr Enver Erdogan** (2002), who is now leading the way as a member of the Victorian parliament, is another opportunity to celebrate the diverse undertakings by our now growing Alumni community. We also recognise International Women's Day with an interview with our own **Ms Deirdre Grealish**, recently appointed to the new position of Deputy Head of Secondary.

Our first term was filled with events and special occasions. We recognise these in our Events Snapshot, and take the time to acknowledge the leadership qualities of our Primary Leaders during their management of the Harmony Day event. The recent Alphington Grammarian's alumni reunion was indeed a special occasion to share stories amongst us all and to be able to tour the new facilities our students are fortunate to be the beneficiaries of.

There is much to read and enjoy in this edition of Flowerdale as we honour leadership in all its forms across our school community. I look forward to students and staff returning rested and refreshed for Term 2.

Dr Vivianne Nikou
School Principal



Alphington Grammar School
Primary Swim Carnival



TERM 1
EVENT
SNAPSHOT



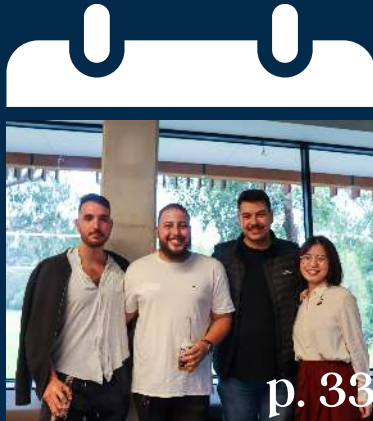
PRIMARY SWIMMING
CARNIVAL
8th February



SECONDARY
SWIMMING CARNIVAL
12th February



OPEN DAY
13th March



ALUMNI REUNION
13th March



HARMONY DAY
16th March



HOUSE NIGHT
19th March



YEAR 7 PARENTS
EVENING
19th March



200 YEARS OF GREEK
INDEPENDENCE
23rd March



SECONDARY HOUSE
ATHLETICS DAY
26th March



Alphington Grammar School
House Night



**2021
SCHOOL
CAPTAINS**



School Captain: Yasmin Zeineh

I am very grateful to be given this amazing opportunity alongside the school Vice Captains. Given the difficult year we have just faced, 2021 is all about positivity, support and hope. Therefore, we have chosen to work on areas that need to be strengthened within our school community; inclusiveness, respect and confidence. By **inclusiveness** we destroy barriers that divide us. By **confidence**, we challenge our limits to become bold and powerful. By **respect**, we treat our peers as we wish to be treated for a judgement free environment. I am so excited to see what this year brings and how different it can be.

I am honoured to be elected as the school Vice-Captain. I came to Australia at the age of 13, and this is my third and last year at Alphington Grammar School as an international student. I enjoy school life at AGS and gained great support from both my teachers and peers throughout the years. With this in mind, my goal for this year is to encourage inclusiveness in our community. By embracing different people, we can learn a lot about the world and ourselves. Let's work together to build connections with each other, and strengthen the bond of this big family. I am looking forward to making 2021 a fantastic year.

Vice Captain: Ji Haozhi



Vice Captain: Natalia Hanna

I am so incredibly grateful to be Alphington Grammar's Vice-Captain for 2021. I believe that this year is going to be amazing, especially coming out of such a challenging and difficult 2020. I believe that confidence is key to showing everyone the best version of yourself and performing your best personally and academically. In order for us to come out of 2021 feeling happy and proud, we must push our limits, step out of our comfort zones, and be as bold and as powerful as we can be. Find out what your strengths are and use them to the best of your ability by helping others and motivating yourself.



Alphington Grammar School
Year 7 Science Class

LOOKING BACK ON OUR CLASS OF 2020



An in-depth look back at our 2020 cohort, all they've accomplished, and where they're heading. This graphic overview takes us through the highlights of our last graduating class in an easy-to-read, visual style.



Congratulations to our
Class of 2020 DUX

Dimitra Kritsidimas

for scoring in the top 4%
of the State with an ATAR of

96.35

96.35

Top ATAR

31

Median
Study Score

77

Average
ATAR

41%

ATARs > 80

40+ scores were achieved in



English



English
Literature



Greek



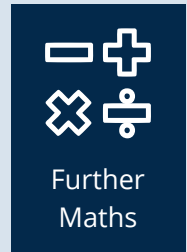
Health & Human
Development



Arabic

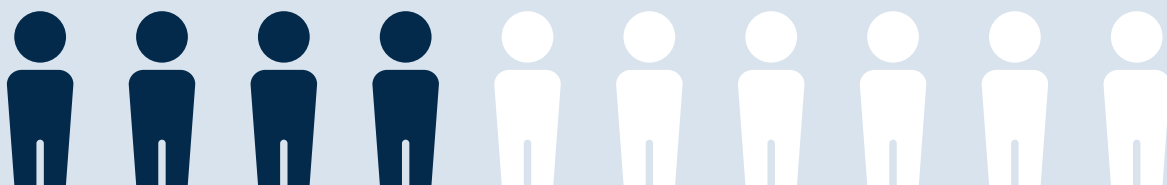


Data Analytics



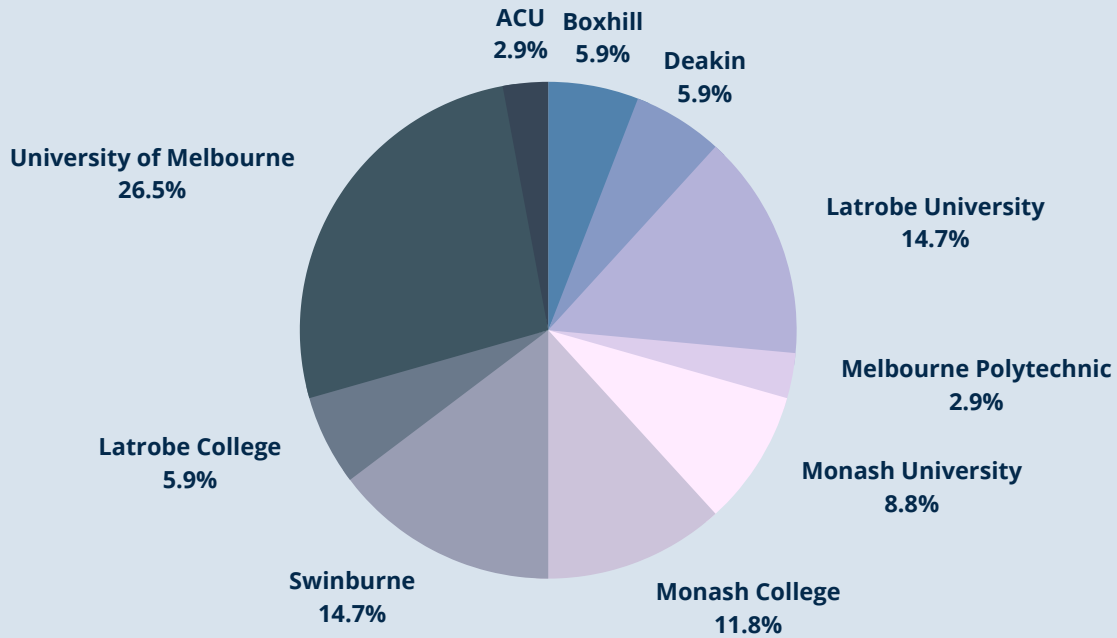
Further
Maths

41% of students

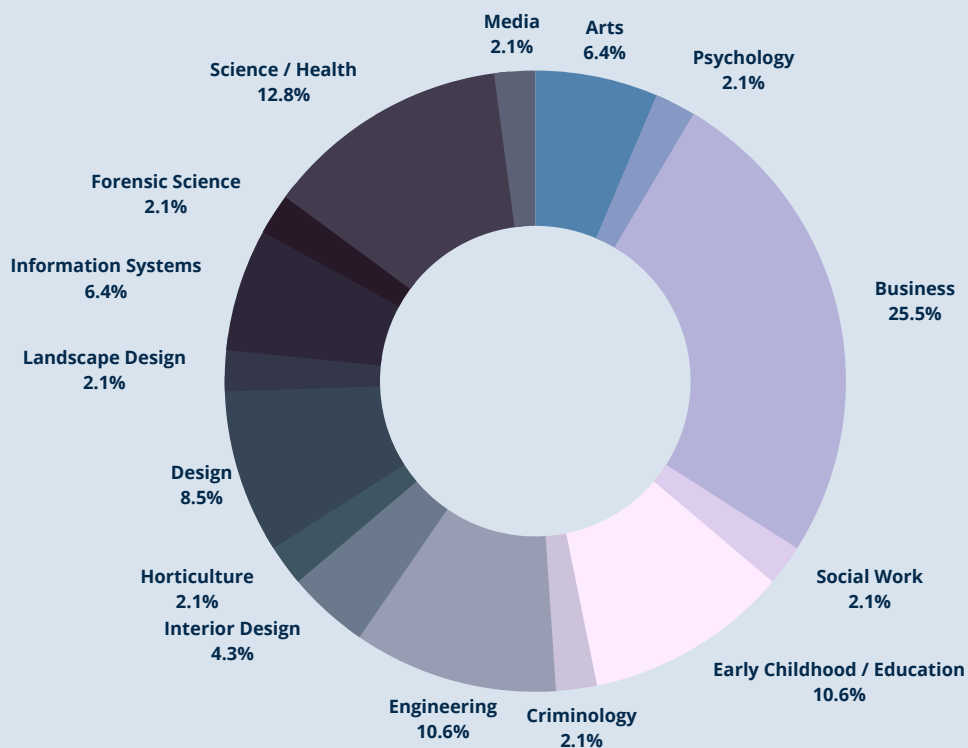


received an ATAR over 80

26.5% of our students will be attending the **University of Melbourne**



25.5% of our students are commencing degrees in **Business**





Alphington Grammar School
Primary School Harmony Day

MS DEIRDRE GREALISH

SPOTLIGHT



Ms Grealish greeting families at our recent Open Day

With International Women's Day being celebrated during this term, on the 8th of March, we wanted to take some time to honour the women in leadership roles at our own school. One such woman is **Ms Deirdre Grealish**, an English teacher and former Head of Byron House who was recently appointed to the new role of Deputy Head of Secondary.

The first thing you would notice about Ms Grealish is, more likely than not, a warm infectious smile. She handles her new role confidently and rarely

seems to lose that air of kindness. She is so nice, in fact, that she readily agreed to do this interview despite not-so-subtly dropping in conversation that these things were definitely out of her comfort zone. With her likable personality and Irish twang, she has been welcomed into Alphington Grammar School over the years and embedded herself seamlessly into the fabric of the School. In this interview we learn all about Ms Grealish's history, her thoughts on AGS, and adapting to her new role and leadership style.

What is a brief history of your life prior to starting at AGS?

I was born in Limerick in the south of Ireland in 1987 and lived there for a year before my family moved to Kentish Town in London. We moved back to Limerick when I was seven. Askeaton, a town in the west of Limerick with a population of about 1,200 people, is home. My family still live in Limerick, and the sooner someone finds a way for me to apparate back and forth between here and there (and skip the 24+

hour journey), the better.

In Secondary school English, History and Art were my favourite subjects — no big surprises there. At university, I completed a Bachelor of Arts Degree, majoring in English and History. I studied at Mary Immaculate College in Limerick, before transferring to the University of Galway for the final year of my Degree.

What about after High School? What has your career journey been like?

Scenic! I graduated with my BA in 2008—just in time for the Recession! For three years after this, I pottered around a little trying to figure out what I wanted to do next. During this time, I worked in a number of schools as a substitute teacher; I worked in a pub, and a gift shop; and I volunteered as docent in a museum and art gallery. I was also lucky enough to combine hobbies with getting paid, painting a mix of theatre sets, signs for businesses and murals, and face-painting at events.

In the summer of 2011, I was interrailing around Europe with my best friends, all set to start a Masters in Art History upon my return to Ireland, when I received an email informing me I had been accepted into the highly competitive English PGCE program at the University of Manchester (English teacher training). I can still see the dingy little internet café I was sitting in in Belgrade reading that email. I think trusting your gut is important, and I accepted the offer there and then, moving to Manchester a few weeks later. My friends thought that this was quite a sharp change in direction — it was — but it felt right and I have no regrets. After a year of intensive study in Manchester, I graduated as a teacher and moved to London where I worked until I moved here in 2015. My partner and I had been together for five years, but had been living in different countries; Niall didn't enjoy the fast pace of London and I wasn't ready to return to Ireland... it turns out that Melbourne was the closest compromise.

How did you find us? What was the process of starting here like?

When I first arrived in Melbourne, I worked at Victoria University Secondary College, but this was a temporary role so I continued to look for opportunities. They ended up offering me a longer contract, but by that point I had already interviewed at AGS and succumbed to its charm.

Used to working in far bigger schools, it was quite the change to feel like I knew every student in the school by



Ms Grealish and Mr Lukas Silver (Assistant Principal, Teaching and Learning) on our 2021 House Night

the end of my first week or two... and if I didn't know all of them, they certainly knew me; there were lots of questions and curiosity about my accent in those early days!

I remember looking out the window during my first week and being struck by how the students interacted with one another. I have never been at a school before where on any given day you are likely to see a mixture of Year 7s sitting at the same table having a chat at lunch with a group of Year 10s and 12s; or a group of Year 8s and 9s playing basketball with Year 11s. It's pretty special, actually.

You took on a new role recently, as Deputy Head of Secondary. What is the best part of it?

Getting to work closely with individuals and groups who I haven't had much to do with on a daily basis before. For

example, I am getting to see a lot of our student leaders, and seeing them tapping into and honing their natural leadership abilities has put a big smile on my face quite a few times this term.

Also, it has been good to start to form a more holistic understanding of how our school functions. Anyone who knows me will know that I adored my time focusing on EHASS and Byron, but it's fun getting a better insight into how other areas of the school function while developing my leadership style as well.

What is the most challenging aspect?

Time management. Being involved in more aspects of school life is wonderful and interesting, but it does mean that I need to be careful about how I spread my time out.

As someone who's been in a few leadership roles already, what does 'leadership' mean to you?

Can I cheat and include a quote? What an English teacher move! "A brave leader is someone who says I see you. I hear you. I don't have all the answers, but I'm going to keep listening and asking questions." (Breneee Brown)

I think leadership is about showing up; trying your best to be your best; not asking someone to do something that you are not willing to do yourself; recognising the strengths and potential in the people around you, and asking for their support and expertise; being as consistent and clear as possible, even if that means sometimes having a difficult conversation; being brave enough to make a 'big picture' decision even when you know some people will find it difficult, while

supporting those people who are likely to struggle with it; admitting when you have made a bad call and need to redirect; and reminding people that tomorrow is another day—whether that tomorrow involves a chance to keep 'kicking goals' (how Aussie of me!), or to start afresh.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced, and how did you persevere through it?

One of my biggest challenges was feeling utterly bewildered and directionless when I came to the end of my Arts degree in 2008. In modern society, we often define people by what they do, linking people's identities to their professions, with the follow up question to 'what's your name?' usually being 'what do you do?' I remember feeling quite embarrassed and self-conscious when I didn't have a clear answer to that second question, which in hindsight, of course, is silly. I was very lucky to have a supportive and caring family and partner. 'What's meant for you won't pass you by' is a favourite line of my mom's; and I heard that a lot around that time.

What is your greatest achievement and how did you achieve it?

I think it was probably finishing my teaching practice rounds with a grading of 'Outstanding.' Returning to study teaching as a mature student was daunting; and my confidence and self-belief had taken a little bit of a hit after my degree spending a few years figuring out what the next chapter would be. The PGCE was probably the first time in my life that I decided 'I'm all in.' Prior to that, if I'm honest, I think I felt like I had fluked some of my successes, rather than fully earned them.

Deciding to dedicate 100% of my efforts was quite exposing as it meant that if I failed, there was no option to say 'well, I wasn't even trying that hard.' They say you treasure the things you fight hardest for, and I couldn't agree more. I think the experience forced me to be more reflective, to become more resilient, and to understand the importance of facing hard truths about yourself while learning to celebrate the small wins.

Lastly, what is a personal motto, rule, or belief that you live by?

Over the past few years, my biggest note to self has been 'be kind.' I think being kind isn't as glamorous as being the most innovative person in the room, or the most exciting, or the most creative or driven... but the people I remember most, and the people who have had the biggest impact on me, are the people who have shown me kindness; so I try to put 'being kind' at the centre of what I do (even if that sometimes means being cruel to be kind... hopefully the kids who have been at the receiving end of a detention or two read this bit!).



Ms Grealish (left) as Marie Antoinette for AGS Pop Culture Day

FROM STUDENT COUNCIL TO STANDING COMMITTEE

We speak to alumni and current Member of Parliament Enver Erdogan on his career journey and roots here at Alphington.

By Adelle Greenbury

When we think of leadership, one of the first places many of our minds go is to our political leaders and government. With this in mind, it is with great pleasure that we interview one of our own alumnae and current Member of Parliament, **Mr Enver Erdogan** (2002).

Mr Erdogan, member of the Victorian Parliament and Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure, always had a passion for politics and economics, even during his time as a student at Alphington Grammar School. Mr Erdogan started at Alphington in 2000 and attended for Years 10, 11, and 12, graduating in 2002. While he was only here for three years, Mr Erdogan believes that Alphington had a significant impact on his life and future career.



Mr Enver Erdogan

"AGS gave me the opportunity to study economics for the first time," he writes to me, "which has turned into a lifelong interest."

He makes a special mention of **Ms Eleni (Helen) Mallis**, who was his VCE Economics teacher and encouraged him to pursue his passion during his time as a student.

Alphington supported him in other ways, too, and some of the things Mr Erdogan did as a student foreshadowed his future career in more ways than one. Apart from his budding interest in economics, Mr Erdogan also spent time on the Student Council, furthering his passion for leadership and representative offices. This ended up leading to a few steps in his career, first as a Local Government Councillor and, now, as a Member of Parliament.

"I always had an interest in politics and public policy," Mr Erdogan writes about his aspirations as a student, "and I knew I wanted to be in a role where I could give something back."

When asked about his time at Alphington, Mr Erdogan writes that he enjoyed how well-rounded the teachers

and students were, with interests not only in the academic side of things, but also in sports and community service. He admits that he took his studies very seriously, but also tried his best to make the most out of every opportunity. Mr Erdogan has definitely grown and changed since his time at Alphington, but some things remain the same.



Ms Helen Mallis

"I love soccer and footy just as much as I did back in my AGS days!" he exclaims.

After graduation, Mr Erdogan's passion for economics and social justice fuelled his tertiary education. He went on to study and complete a Bachelor of Economics and Bachelor of Laws at La Trobe University while simultaneously working for a Federal Member of Parliament. He was later elected as a Local Government Councillor at Moreland City Council.

When asked about the challenges he faced in his career, Mr Erdogan makes a notable mention of the struggle that many graduates face; of trying to secure a job in their field after graduation. Although finding work in his field was daunting at the time, Mr Erdogan pushed through this setback and persevered. He did not let



Year 11 in 2001 (Class of 2002). Mr Erdogan is in the middle row, first from the right, next to Ms Helen Mallis

“

ENVER ERDOGAN, CLASS OF 2002

LIFE IS LONG, AND
SETBACKS WILL BE
A PART OF THE
JOURNEY, BUT
THERE IS ALWAYS A
WAY TO OVERCOME
THEM.

”



Mr Enver Erdogan on a site visit at the Melbourne Metro tunnel construction

himself be discouraged, attending numerous job interviews and familiarising himself with the job market. His efforts did not go to waste; he ended up finding a job that he thoroughly enjoyed, working as a lawyer at one of Australia's top social justice law firms, Maurice Blackburn.

“ I was able to make a difference in people's lives one case at a time.”

While public policy has always been – and continues to be – a very large part of his life, Mr Erdogan writes that he is grateful for the

opportunity to do many other things during his career. This includes his foray into law, which was once again brought about by his interest in social justice.

“I was able to make a difference in people's lives one case at a time,” Mr Erdogan writes about his law career.

It was not until August of 2019 that Mr Erdogan joined the Victorian Parliament and became Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy and Infrastructure. While being able to help individual people was extremely rewarding, Mr Erdogan's new role in the Government allowed him to contribute to Parliamentary

debates on public policy, potentially impacting an even wider range of people at a time.

“I thought a role in Government would be one avenue of affecting positive change,” Mr Erdogan reveals.

It seems that every twist and turn in Mr Erdogan's career has been powered by his passion for social justice, his hard work and dedication, and his motivation to achieve his goals.

“ Representing the people of the Southern Metropolitan Region ... has been one of the greatest honours of my life.”

From his early years at Alphington all the way to his life today, Mr Erdogan has had a love for economics and public policy. Hearing about his single-minded drive and initiative to make a difference in the lives of Victorians is extremely inspiring. When asked about his current role, Mr Erdogan comes across as very humble, and does his best to convey his gratitude.

“Representing the people of the Southern Metropolitan Region in the Victorian Parliament has been one of the greatest honours of my life,” he writes.

It seems that Mr Erdogan has now come full circle, from member of his Student Council at Alphington Grammar School to member of the Victorian Parliament, and learning this fills all of us with immense pride. We truly hope he feels the same.

PRIMARY HARMONY DAY

By Assistant Principal and Head of Primary,
Mrs Tracey Nicholson

On the week of the 15th of March, Alphington Grammar School celebrated Harmony Week. The Department of Home Affairs leads national celebrations for Harmony Week each year to recognise diversity and inclusion activities that take place during the entire week. Harmony Week also incorporates the 21st of March, which is the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Since 1999, more than 80,000 Harmony Week events have been held in childcare centres, schools, community groups, churches, businesses, and federal, state and local government agencies across Australia.

Harmony Week is a time to celebrate Australian multiculturalism, and the successful integration of migrants into our community. Harmony Week is about inclusiveness, respect and belonging for all Australians, regardless of cultural or linguistic background. Given the nature of our own school, it is particularly apt that we join in the celebrations.

In the Primary School, we designated Tuesday 16th March as our 'Harmony Day'. Students came dressed in the traditional costume of their family heritage, or in casual clothes with a 'hint of orange', orange being the colour of communication.



In the afternoon, all students from Prep to Year 6 rotated through a range of activities in their House groups for some cross-age fun and co-operation. There was Dance, Karaoke, Sport and a STEM activity, capped off with a mass bubble blowing event. There was a great deal of excitement in all activities and the sunny weather complemented the day perfectly. The whole afternoon was a wonderful example of co-operation and respect. Students loved being able to work, co-operate and enjoy activities with students in other year levels, and our Primary student leaders did an amazing job of helping to organise and run the activities.

It is events such as these where students often get their first taste of leadership; planning the activities, coordinating the elements involved, and working in a team to ensure the success of the event. What a great opportunity for our senior Primary students to be able to role-model their learnings and work with aspiring leaders in the junior Primary.





A young Dimitra and her family

A LOOK BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF OUR 2020 DUX

A conversation with Dimitra Kritsidimas, the Class of 2020 DUX and Valedictorian, on the unseen struggles behind her success.

By Adelle Greenbury

Shy, reserved, and quiet are just a few of the words that 2020 DUX and Valedictorian, **Dimitra Kritsidimas**, used to describe how people perceive her at first glance. Despite this first impression, Dimitra continues by revealing that she "...actually consider[s] those qualities only a minute part of who [she] truly [is]".

Dimitra started at Alphington Grammar School as a gentle and withdrawn 5-year-old, easily overwhelmed by large groups and loud conversation. Recalling her time in Prep, Dimitra explains that she was "deathly afraid" of speaking in groups with more than two people. In contrast to the scared girl she describes, the Dimitra of today is determined, ambitious, and motivated, armed with strategies she uses to manage her occasional bouts

of anxiety. She has adapted to and overcome the challenges of her childhood, and through this, has achieved amazing things as an academic leader, DUX and Valedictorian of the Class of 2020.

Having started at Alphington in Prep, Dimitra had plenty of time to form long-lasting relationships with the people around her. In fact, Dimitra cites the support and strong friendship of her AGS classmates and teachers, as well as the unique experiences offered through Alphington, as big influences on her transformation.

"From the school camps and trips I went on ... I learnt the benefits of stepping out of your comfort zone," Dimitra reveals. "It eventually resulted in me becoming more

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DIMITRA KRITSIDIMAS, CLASS OF 2020

IT SHOWED ME
THAT MY HARD
WORK AND
DEDICATION
REALLY DID PAY
OFF!

”

independent and learning the skills required to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings.”

Dimitra also discovered her passion for music and sport here at Alphington. She writes to me about her love of netball, and of developing a keen interest in playing the bass. You can tell by her enthusiasm that these are more than just hobbies, but rather things that have become part of who she is.

“They were sources of leisure and distraction... especially in the later years of High School, when the pressure began to mount,” she admits.

“ I am fortunate enough to have a dad who truly went above and beyond.”

Growing up, Dimitra’s life was not devoid of hardship; she lost her mother at a young age and grew up without her. However, when asked about her childhood, Dimitra gushes about the love and support she was constantly surrounded by.

“[Many people believe] that being raised by a single parent can disadvantage a child,” Dimitra confesses, “[but] my personal experience has led me to disagree ... I am fortunate enough to have a dad who truly went above and beyond.”

In addition to a father who constantly supported her, through both the “enjoyable and the difficult times” of her childhood, Dimitra also had her strong bonds with her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins to help shape her into the person she is today. While she admits that her childhood was not always easy, pleasant, or simple, Dimitra credits her family for teaching her valuable lessons, pushing her to work her hardest, and being there for her to talk to when life became challenging.

Unfortunately, despite the bountiful support she was surrounded by, not all issues are so easily solved. Particularly when it comes to mental health. As school progressed, Dimitra found herself experiencing increasing levels of self-doubt and anxiety, and this insecurity led to something Dimitra herself described as a “toxic mentality”. Whenever she would fail to meet her own, often unrealistically high, expectations of herself, Dimitra would find herself experiencing high levels of

self-doubt, losing confidence in herself and belief in her own abilities.

“I was constantly comparing myself to other classmates,” Dimitra admits.

Thankfully, Dimitra didn’t let her dark mentality isolate her too much or forcefully alienate her from the people she loved. Instead, she took matters into her own hands and sought out the support she needed.

“A few years before entering Year 12, I began speaking to some supportive staff at school about my issues,” Dimitra admits.

“ Overall I found that a positive mindset ... helped me cope with the stress I endured.”

This was definitely the right thing to do, as speaking to support staff at school allowed them to better understand what Dimitra was dealing

with and help her get through it. School staff provided Dimitra with advice and techniques that she could implement in her life to help manage her mental health and her studies more generally. This help allowed Dimitra to begin shifting her mindset and move past some of the negativity, resulting in a more optimistic outlook.

“Overall I found that a positive mindset, despite how



Dimitra and her father



Dimitra and her family today

cliché it might sound, definitely helped me cope with the stress I endured,” Dimitra tells me.

Once she understood the proper techniques to use to cope with her anxiety, Dimitra was able to better focus on her studies and academics. When asked how she maintained her focus to achieve such great results during the tumultuous year that it was, Dimitra revealed that her technique centered on goal-setting.

“ [If] I just kept going, everything would work out in the end.”

At the beginning of Year 12, Dimitra decided on an academic goal for her final year. She wrote this goal on a piece of paper and stuck it on the wall right next to her study desk. Throughout our lockdowns, Dimitra would do her best to complete at least three hours of independent study per day in order to avoid falling behind. This was obviously challenging over the Remote Learning Periods, so whenever she would feel bad about herself or lack motivation, she would remind herself of her goal.

“I would look at that piece of paper, and it would remind me that if I just kept going, everything would work out in the end,” Dimitra reflects.

And now, it seems like it truly did! Dimitra achieved wonderful results, although she was definitely surprised by them when she heard the news.

“I was ecstatic and proud that I achieved such a result considering the year we went through,” she tells me, “and it showed me that my hard work and dedication really did pay off ... But it was a genuine surprise!”

Her final piece of advice for current students? To talk to someone if you are struggling. For anything from serious problems to a new topic in class, you might be surprised how much support you actually have around you just waiting for you to ask.

“I only started to do this in my later years of High School, and really wish that I started earlier,” Dimitra reveals. “It really benefitted me.”

So, what’s next for Dimitra? It seems that in the foreseeable future, Dimitra sees herself starting a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Melbourne. While she’s not too sure what career she wants to get into just yet, we are all sure that Dimitra will end up doing something great.



Dimitra with some friends (Class of 2020) at AGS



Rohan Panjwani

ROHAN'S ARTISTIC LICENSE

We speak with the Class of 2020's Rohan Panjwani about his future Top Arts 2021 feature and his love of art and storytelling.

By Adelle Greenbury

Rohan's passion for art was first sparked when he was 10 years old. He had always loved doodling and drawing, but before this point, it had been more of a surface enjoyment. He saw it as a fun pastime and nothing more. On this day, when he was 10, he was drawing while visiting a relative at their house. As you can imagine, his doodles weren't particularly realistic. An older woman – who she was, exactly, has since escaped him – noticed his attempts, and took it upon herself to

teach him how to draw a more realistic face.

Things like proportion, perspective, depth; these had never crossed Rohan's mind. He had no concept of these more advanced techniques. And so, as he watched the woman sketch this face, taking in for the first time the individual style, finesse, and technique she employed, he gained a small understanding of the layers of things that went into making something beautiful.

“ I have learnt to appreciate the journey of creating an artwork as much as the final piece.”

Today, **Rohan Panjwani** is a member of our Class of 2020, an undergraduate student at RMIT studying industrial design, and an artistic leader, a featured artist in the 2021 Top Arts exhibition. When I ask what he loves the most about art, his answer is “everything.”

“Brainstorming ideas. Developing those ideas. The actual making process, and, of course, the result,” Rohan lists off. “I have learnt to appreciate the journey of creating an artwork as much as the final piece.”

Rohan grew up in a large family, with his parents, grandparents, and older sister all living under the same roof. He writes fondly of the time he spent living with his family in a small house in Macleod, and particularly of the walks he used to go on with his grandpa.

“On these walks he would share all sorts of different stories with me,” he writes, “which is where I think my love of storytelling stems from.”

After spending his Primary years at a different school, Rohan started at Alphington in Year 7. He writes enthusiastically about the opportunities that Alphington offered him, particularly the Gateways program, where he made cherished memories and was pushed out of his comfort zone.

“Getting the chance to travel has undoubtedly had an impact on my desire to create today,” he tells me.

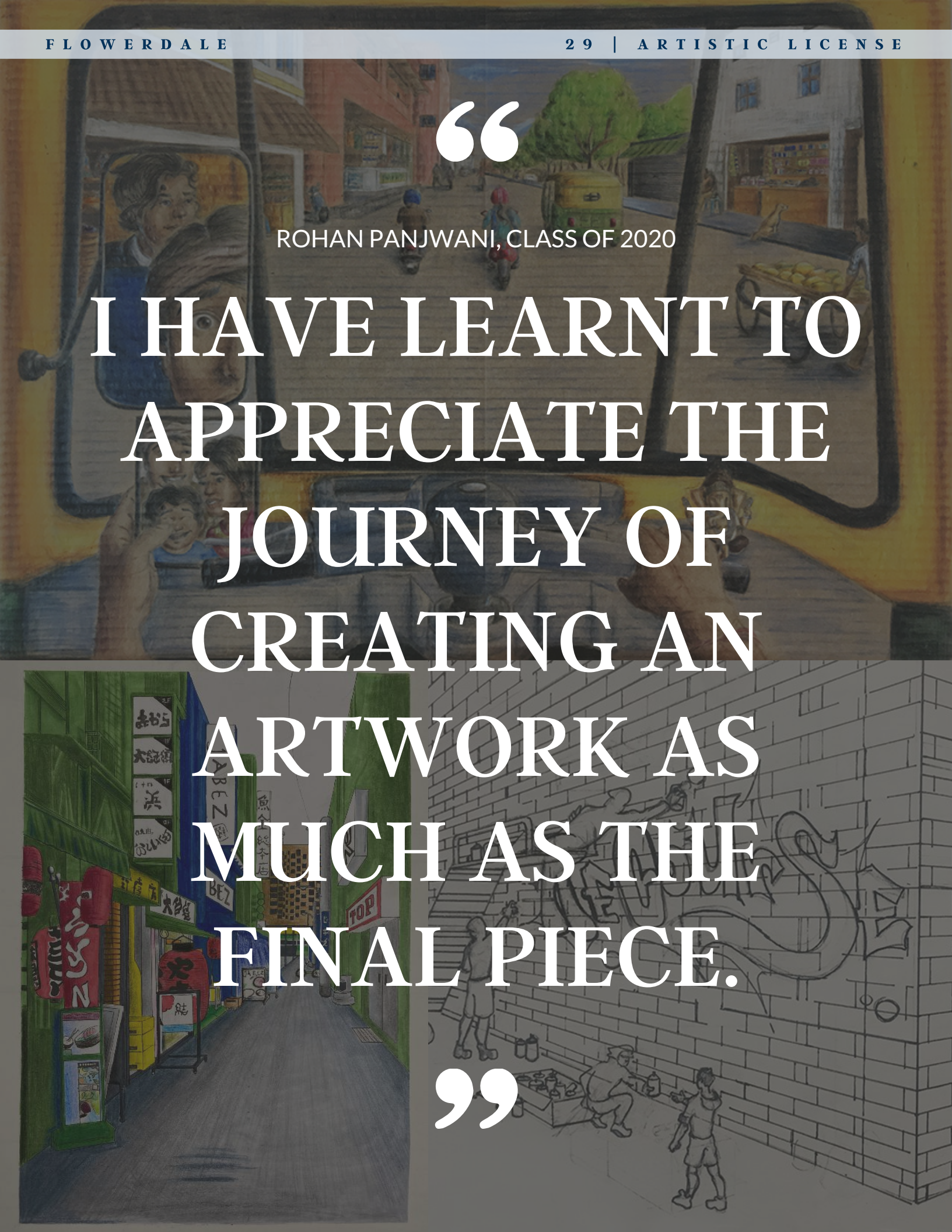
He was also fortunate enough to be able to travel in his

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ROHAN PANJWANI, CLASS OF 2020

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”



personal life. Turning his attention to India, which his family made a point to visit every four years, he adds:

"I grew fascinated with the nation's culture and unique way of life, which I attempted to translate into my final piece."

The artwork that was selected for the Top Arts exhibition was this very piece, Rohan's final artwork for VCE Studio Arts, entitled *Reunion*. Created with coloured pencil on cardboard, *Reunion* attempts to convey the theme of storytelling through a single visual still shot. The art certainly succeeds on this front; it comes across as a layered piece, dramatic, but vague enough

to be compelling. In *Reunion*, an auto-rickshaw driver is staring into the rear-view mirror at a person in the back seat while clutching a family photo.

“ I grew an unhealthy obsession with making perfect drawings.”

This passenger shares a mole above his eyebrow with the child in the photo, implying that the stranger and the driver's child are the same person. The driver's shocked expression, reflected back to us in the mirror, allows the viewer to come to the conclusion

that the passenger is his long-lost son, and that this is an unexpected family reunion.

Despite how compelling the final piece ended up being, Rohan's artistic journey was not as straightforward as some may assume. While Rohan's passion for art may have been sparked by the detail and technique used by the lady all those years ago, the event may have also triggered perfectionistic habits that Rohan has struggled with throughout his schooling years.

"I grew an unhealthy obsession with making perfect drawings," Rohan tells me, "overly criticising every sketch, rarely ever finishing



Rohan Panjwani, *Reunion*, 2020

an artwork.”

Rohan reflects, humbly, that he doubts he could have created his final piece without the continual support, constructive criticism, and guidance that he received from his Art teachers, **Mr Grigoriadis** and **Ms Kimonides**. In fact, it was their encouragement, as well as the pressure of VCE and achieving a good ATAR, that allowed Rohan to finally overcome his perfectionism and finish his artworks.

“ I was finally able to produce finished works and ignore my inner critic, letting my flaws become part of the creative process.”

The pressure that he felt to stay up-to-date with his VCE workload, study for exams, and complete his art pieces nearly crippled him at first, with his perfectionistic tendencies forcing him to delay the completion of his work. At one point, he doubted that he could even finish. But rather than allowing himself to give up, Rohan persisted through the difficulty and accepted that he would be happy with whatever result he achieved.

This moment of realisation allowed him to enjoy the process, and working on his artwork ended up feeling like a therapeutic escape from the other VCE stresses.

“I was finally able to produce finished works and ignore my inner critic, letting my flaws become part of the creative process,” he reveals.

When Reunion was initially shortlisted for the 2021 Top Arts exhibition, Rohan was shocked, describing the honour as “unexpected”. Then, later, when it was announced that the piece was officially selected, Rohan reveals that we could “only imagine” how it made him feel.

“The fact that I am going to be a part of an exhibition that I have been admiring for years makes me feel extremely humbled and grateful,” he admits. “I truly did not expect it.”

When writing about Rohan and reflecting on his own words, it is impossible to miss that the theme he chose for his final artwork does

an exemplary job of representing his personal skillset. Rohan is a great storyteller, his talent peeking through even in the short answers he wrote for a few borderline-bland interview questions sent across to his email address.

Being able to say so much with so little is a commendable skill, and is definitely part of the reason Reunion is as gripping as it is. I can say with certainty that we here at Alphington are just as excited to see what Rohan’s future holds as he is.



Rohan Panjwani, *Untitled*, 2020



Alphington Grammar School
Oscar Fowler, Year 7 Science Class



2021 ALUMNI REUNION



2021 ALUMNI REUNION

On Saturday the 13th of March we hosted over 50 past students and staff at our Alumni reunion. This reunion was the first step towards our goal of reaching out and reconnecting with our diverse and successful Alumni community.

It was wonderful to have past students and staff come to visit the school and take a private tour of the facilities. Past School Captains, including **Mercury Yi** (who flew in from Sydney for the day) and **Stephanie Houdalakis**, as well as past scholars now in employment across many fields of endeavor were also able to join us. Watching past students and staff share stories and reminisce was a wonderful way to spend the day.

Our school has undergone many changes in the past decades, and many of our guests were full of praise for the way it all looks and the many new opportunities that exist for our students. We hope to be able to host many more events and continue to expand our alumni network.



ALUMNI COMMUNITY

Are you a graduate of Alphington Grammar School? If so, do you know that you could have a valuable and expansive community of AGS alumni at your fingertips?

The Alphington Grammarian group recently established on LinkedIn aims to help all our alumni reconnect and shape the future of our school. The group can also and provide you with valuable professional networking resources. Our alumni are talented, successful individuals spread across all walks of life that all have one thing in common: the time spent making memories together at Alphington Grammar. Get access to this community today by searching for our LinkedIn Group, Alphington Grammarians.

To ensure we have your correct details, scan the QR code on the next page and the back cover. This will make sure you receive invitations, information about future events and news, as well as Flowerdale! Alternatively, visit the form manually at: <https://tinyurl.com/AGSalumni>



Engagement, wedding, birth and vale notices are welcome for publication in future editions. We would love to hear from you and honour these milestones within our community.

Please send any notices and photographs to our Alphington Grammarian alumni committee at:

alumni@ags.vic.edu.au



or visit <https://tinyurl.com/AGSalumni>

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