





# SU News

WINTER EDITION 2024

## BACKING THE BRAVE

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**“SINCE WE ARE SURROUNDED  
BY SUCH A GREAT CLOUD OF  
WITNESSES, LET US THROW OFF  
EVERYTHING THAT HINDERS AND THE  
SIN THAT SO EASILY ENTANGLES.  
LET US RUN WITH PERSEVERANCE  
THE RACE MARKED OUT FOR US,  
FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE  
PIONEER AND PERFECTER OF FAITH.”**

Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV





# A NEW CHAPTER

At the end of May, I will be finishing in my role as State Director for Scripture Union NSW. It's been an absolute joy to lead the SU movement in NSW over the past three years. As this chapter of ministry comes to an end, I want to express my deep gratitude for the staff team, the Board, and for our shared partnership in the Gospel.

As I write my last piece for SU News, I'm reminded of the encouragement in Hebrews 12:1-2 about the great cloud of witnesses.

Through the work of Scripture Union in NSW, there are many 'witnesses' past and present. And by the grace of God, there are many more witnesses to come, because of the unrelenting work of SU in making the Good News of Jesus known to children, young people, and families.

It's been a privilege to engage with the Global Scripture Union Movement and see the different ways that ministry happens across the world. I am thankful for many new friends, both locally and across the world, and for friendships that will continue into my next season of ministry.

I also stand in awe of the many volunteers who give up their time to run camps, go on missions, and facilitate lunchtime groups in public schools across NSW.

Through the unique SU model of empowering students to take the lead, the Gospel has been bearing fruit in the hearts of young people in schools for over 100 years – even in the face of opposition. This strategy not only allows the Gospel to penetrate through barriers, but is key in raising future Christian leaders.

**NOW MORE THAN EVER, SCRIPTURE UNION NSW NEEDS YOUR HELP TO STAND ALONGSIDE FELLOW WITNESSES, TO BACK THE BRAVE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEER, LEAD LUNCHTIME GROUPS, AND SHARE THEIR FAITH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS NSW.**

Please prayerfully consider financially supporting Scripture Union NSW, so that together we can continue supporting, empowering, and equipping young people to be witnesses for Jesus.

Yours in Christ,



**Ian Altman**  
NSW State Director



# EMPOWERING STUDENTS FOR VITAL LUNCHTIME MINISTRY

Katie Stringer, SRE and ISCF co-ordinator, is seeing lives changed by Jesus as she supports student-led Christian lunchtime groups in high schools in Sydney's diverse Inner West.

It's been seven years since Katie Stringer's minister tapped her on the shoulder and asked "Would you consider teaching high school scripture?" Now, Katie describes the joy of seeing young people come to know Jesus through SU schools ministry.

Katie supports student-led ISCF groups, and teaches SRE (special religious education) classes in several high schools in Sydney's Inner West.

"I think the goal for school ministry should always be a great SRE program AND a great lunchtime group. Lunchtime groups are really special. It's a space where you can get to know kids a bit more personally, even connect them into a youth group. It's different to SRE, it's more informal and it attracts different people."

## Persevering despite the challenges

School can be a challenging context for Christian students to keep shining bright for Jesus. In most schools they experience some pushback and they may even be tempted to give up on their faith. In lunchtime groups, Christian students can find friendship and encouragement.

In one Inner West school, students don't have permission to use a classroom or have volunteers come into the school. Nevertheless, two brave Year 9 students started a group that meets in the playground called 'Friends who read the Bible.'

**SU NSW HAS THE EXPERIENCE AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO CREATIVELY LEAD LUNCHTIME GROUPS THAT WILL HELP THEM SHARE THE GOSPEL IN DIVERSE CONTEXTS OR IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION.**

## Gospel hope for all

Any student can come along to this strategic Gospel ministry. Katie explains:

“We have some kids coming along who normally spend their lunchtimes on detention! So, sometimes there might be some bad language ... but we keep loving them without throwing them out or being offended. And I think even that is a witness. They’re almost shocked that you let them stay and ask questions. And after a few weeks you win their respect, and you see a shift in behaviour.”

Katie has also seen students who are Muslim or atheist come along to lunchtime groups, and even people whose parents haven’t allowed them to do Scripture classes but have given permission to attend lunchtime groups.

According to *Mission Australia’s Youth Survey Report 2023*, the top three things young people are worried about are mental health, climate change, and justice issues. “Worries about the future are eating these young people alive. I don’t know how they navigate through it without knowing Jesus.”

“In the Inner West region, Aboriginal students, students from Africa, Middle East and Asia are coming along. Some of these young people have never heard the Good News of Jesus. But no matter what their race, they face common challenges. They feel lonely, things aren’t going the way that they thought...”

That’s where lunchtime groups can make an incredible difference, as fellow students get opportunities to share Gospel hope, and their own stories of faith, in a relaxed, welcoming space. There’s games, food, time to ask questions and have deep conversations.

## Support that changes lives

Motivated by her love for Jesus, Katie says: “If you simply give your time and love them, they might just keep coming to hear more... then you get the privilege of witnessing God do his powerful work in their hearts.”

Katie seeks to build confidence in the students who lead and run these groups: “They’re teenagers and there’s lots of popular things to ‘hitch a wagon to’. But I just want to encourage them – to not shrink away from being the amazing Christians that they are.”

And Katie has seen young people’s lives changed. She recounts how at the end of 2022, she received a note

*Pictured below and opposite left: Katie Stringer sharing the Easter Story with 150+ students at Concord High School.*

*Far below: Shane leading the Homebush Boys Lunchtime Group with Newman and Bevley.*



from a student who became a Christian through a lunchtime group:

**“DEAR MRS. STRINGER, I HOPE YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS. THANK YOU FOR SHOWING ME THE BEAUTIFUL CHRISTIAN LIFE I LOVE.”**

**This year, we are asking you to back the brave so that more young people would receive the resources and support they need to continue bearing witness to the Gospel in their schools.**

**VISIT [SUNSW.ORG.AU/](https://sunsw.org.au) BACKTHEBRAVE TO FIND OUT MORE**

# AUTUMN CAMP HIGHLIGHTS

## GLENBAWN FISHING CAMP

“26 young people and 20 leaders got stuck into the book of Jonah while catching big fish at Glenbawn Fishing Camp in March. When asked what they learned about God on camp, one young person’s response was “I got a deeper understanding of God’s love.” – **Jasmine Ruigrok, Camp Leader**



## FISHING & DIVING CAMP

“Such a great experience for these kids, fishing off boats and the wharf. They saw a green turtle and Port Jackson sharks while snorkelling. Camp was lots of fun, and it was great to meet around God’s Word too!” – **Camp Leader**



## RUGBY LEAGUE CAMP

“With 68 boys attending, this was our biggest camp since starting six years ago. Brock Sperinck led sessions focused on ‘Knowing, Growing, and Showing Jesus,’ from 1 Peter. The whole camp was upheld in prayer. 21 fantastic leaders facilitated connections and activities, and the boys left energised, with new rugby skills, and a deeper understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.” – **Janelle Tongue, Camp Director**



## SUPAG CAMP

“We had 31 campers attend and a diverse team of 14 volunteers, ranging in age from 18 to 50 year-olds, married, parents, singles, students, teachers, farmers, and vets, from Anglican, Baptist, Presbyterian and independent evangelical churches. With different skills and passions, and a range of involvement and experience with SU NSW ministries, together, united in the gospel, these volunteers led a wonderful camp filled with fun, friends, fellowship and farming activities. The team members had different responsibilities and all faithfully served our King Jesus by modelling Christ and sharing the Good News with campers.” – **Kylie Letcher and Baden Bogdanovs, Camp Directors**





## GENTS CAMP

“GENTS Camp was an exhilarating four day experience, including interesting dress-ups, and engaging activities like flour-face challenges and Storming the Fort. Amidst the excitement, there was a strong sense of camaraderie as boys in Years 7-10 bonded over tribal games, songs, and delicious food, guided by supportive male mentors. An adventurous bush walk was a highlight for many, featuring bouldering, rock climbing, and cave exploration. Campers enjoyed the worship and prayer sessions, and learning about Jesus, our compassionate, loving, gracious God-Man who desires to be our personal Saviour.”

- **Daniel Pass, GENTS Camp Director**

## ZOOKEEPERS CAMP

“Such an awesome weekend! Fantastic team of volunteers, great speaker, and beautiful kids, with not a single behavioural problem all weekend! So much fun, and thanks Gracie for leading us in amazing worship.”

- **Jo Faletoese, SU NSW South Coast Regional Coordinator**

## RIDE LIKE A GIRL CAMP

“We had lots of returning riders, including many accompanied by their younger sisters. A little rain couldn't dampen the campers' enthusiasm, who learnt what it means to be a maturing Christian from the story of Joseph, focusing on forgiveness, and what it means to be a maturing horse, from a foal to being ridden. The girls enjoyed a farm ride, jumping, dressage, western trail, groundwork and sporting, as well as various horseless activities”

- **Julia Anderson, Camp Director**

## CAMP CONQUEROR

“Fantastic weather. So much adventure. Loving God's Word. Praise God! Best location for devotions, and all campers and leaders returned safely.” - **Camp Leader**

SEE OUR UPCOMING CAMPS:  
[SUNSW.ORG.AU/CAMPS](http://SUNSW.ORG.AU/CAMPS)





# ICE CREAMS, BUBBLE WANDS AND PERSEVERANCE

Sharon Osbourne teaches SRE and runs Kempsey Bible Club every January. She also wants to start SUPA clubs in local schools, so that more primary-aged kids can encounter God's love.

Sharon Osbourne has been teaching SRE in the Kempsey area for over 23 years, challenging work that isn't getting easier. She says, "It's a tough environment, not just for the teachers, but for the Christian students as well."

As well as teaching SRE, Sharon coordinates Kempsey Bible Club (KBC), which happens in the January school holidays. She's been helping with KBC for a long time:

"You get a chance to share God's love with the kids, and the community loves it because the kids behave during that week. There's even less crime because

they're coming along, and being loved and learning about Jesus, and what God's done for them."

During COVID the KBC team had to get creative, as Sharon explains:

"It was very disappointing when COVID shut the door to holding KBC. The kids looked forward to it each year, so I was adamant that I still wanted to reach out to these kids somehow. With the help of the community we made 200 packages, filled to the brim with food donations, bubble wands, and a DVD with all the songs we usually sang at the club. Together we door knocked and hand delivered them all.

And then the following year restrictions again prevented us from running it. I had this idea of hiring a soft serve ice cream truck to deliver free ice creams to these kids who would miss out again. So, with a certain value of ice cream in mind, we paid the





Sharon dreams of setting up SUPA Clubs in five schools in her area, to encourage Christian students and share God's love at lunchtime. These clubs give primary students a chance to learn more about Christianity through fun and engaging activities including games, craft, music and Bible studies or talks.

### The need to persevere

Sharon has found it difficult to overcome the many barriers to getting lunchtime groups up and running. Phone messages get lost and the new 'opt-in' system poses various paperwork challenges.

**SHE'S NOT GIVING UP THOUGH: "YOU NEED TO PERSEVERE! BECAUSE IF YOU DON'T, THERE ARE KIDS WHO MISS OUT ON HEARING THE MOST WONDERFUL NEWS. SO EVEN IF THERE'S ONLY A FEW WHO STILL WANT TO HEAR, I'LL TURN UP!"**

**We're so thankful for people like Sharon and their passion to see young people know Jesus. Please pray for open doors for SUPA clubs in local schools, and for Sharon to persevere in faith.**



*Pictured opposite: Olivia and Jasmine Ruigrok with the KBC soft serve ice cream truck.  
Top left: Sharon Osbourne, Kempsey Bible Club director.  
Above: KBC volunteers.*

Mr Whippy van driver and went to three different spots where a lot of the kids lived. It was amazing.

We arrived at the first venue and no kids came out. I thought 'my goodness, what have I done?' And then all of a sudden there were kids everywhere. Apparently, one of the mums in the house saw us, realised what was happening, and she messaged everyone she knew!

When the kids learned that we were moving to a new location, they ran after us. By the third location, some of the kids had eaten numerous ice creams!

I soon realised we'd need more, and was willing to pay for the extras out of my own pocket, as I didn't want anyone to miss out. I asked the driver, 'how much do I owe you for the extra ones?' He said, 'You don't owe me anything.' He was so inspired by the whole thing that he personally donated the extras."

### **PRAISE GOD THAT IN THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS, KBC HAS BEEN ABLE TO RUN IN-PERSON AGAIN WITH LOTS OF KIDS ATTENDING.**

It's Sharon's hope and prayer that KBC would have a lasting impact, as she explains: "Over the years, I've encountered kids from the community who still fondly remember me and never fail to greet me. My hope is that as they recall our interactions, they'll also recall the message of Jesus."

### **Dreaming of more**

But KBC is just one week a year. And while she volunteers each week at a local high school, Sharon's real passion is sharing about Jesus with primary-aged kids. She explains, "It's just the way the kids respond and their questions, curiosity, interest and enthusiasm. It's a beautiful time of life to capture that curiosity."

# BACKING THE BRAVE IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Meet some of our amazing Year 12 Leaders from Burwood Girls High School, bravely stepping up to lead their school lunchtime group.

## What do you like about your ISCF lunchtime group?

Ellia: One thing I really love about the lunchtime group are the mentors. We have Sophia and Sam, and they provide a really encouraging and positive environment for us. We also get yummy snacks and freebies.

Atleti: That fellowship aspect is something that I really love – connecting with girls from other years. We’ve never really found much value in doing this until our senior years, but it’s been great to spend time with some of the younger girls and get to know them better.

## What’s it like being a Christian at your school?

Ellia: Being a Christian at school can be really challenging, especially when you’re surrounded by people from other religions or non-religious backgrounds. So, coming to lunchtime group, and

being able to collaborate and share my thoughts with other Christians is really rewarding.

Atleti: I definitely agree – it can be a challenge, but I think having that ‘sisterhood’ at lunchtime is really comforting.

## What’s your role in the ISCF group at your school?

Atleti: We kind of gave ourselves our roles! We’re the ‘annoying ones’ who go around to the juniors, talk to them about what the lunchtime group is, and encourage them to come along, regardless of whether they are Christian or not. I think it’s really good for the girls and insightful – to question their own beliefs and get to know who Jesus is – and how he can be ‘more’ in their lives, and also how to apply the teachings of the Bible to glorify God.

Ellia: Being in Year 12, we’re the oldest in the school, so we have a responsibility to share our passion and spread the word to younger girls, to inspire them to keep coming just as we have been. So it’s just good to keep spreading the word so that the group continues.

## What's your dream for your group?

Aileti: I want it to be more about quality rather than quantity. I want the girls to continuously come, even after we leave, and they will if it's quality. I really want them to understand how Jesus can transform their lives, and what a life with Jesus is like.

**"I JUST HOPE THAT WE'VE BEEN GOOD ENOUGH ROLE MODELS FOR THEM TO SEE WHAT HE'S BEEN DOING IN OUR LIVES, AND IN TURN, THEY WILL TRUST HIM, SO THAT THEY WILL 'LET HIM TAKE THE WHEEL'."**

Ellia: I think it's all about growth, spreading the Gospel, spreading the word. Letting people know about Christ, even if they might not accept Him, it's just good to spread it to the world.

## What's the bravest thing you've done to stand up for Jesus at school?

Ellia: It can take bravery to stand up and say you're a Christian at school. The bravest thing I've done is step-out and ask people to come to church.

Ailetti: I do 'Studies of Religion' and I'm the only Christian in the class. I've had to be brave and share about my faith, and at times, stand my ground and say what the Bible actually says because things are often put out of context. I have also shared about the Jesus I know personally – not just the person we're learning about in a text book.

## How can we support you?

Aileti: You can support us through your prayers – that we might continue to be open with others around the school as well as outside of school. That our group would continue growing, and that the girls feel welcome enough to come into our space.

Ellia: We've got God to guide us. Just knowing He's there, on our side to guide us in everything we do, having that assurance is amazing.

*Pictured opposite: Aileti (left) and Ellia (right).*



WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH AILETI AND ELLIA.



# LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE 2024

## 8-12 JULY

Leadership Conference is an epic, five-day conference geared to deliver a range of training and leadership skills for emerging and established student leaders in Years 9-12. It's an opportunity for young people to be challenged and get creative in how they lead in their school, church, community and beyond!

The programs include:

- Compulsory fun
- Practical workshops
- Tough questions
- Leadership training
- Great food
- Bible quiet times
- Campfire night
- Dress-ups, surprises and more

### BLUE MOUNTAINS

#### 'Set your mind ABOVE'

Speaker: David Krebs, sharing from Colossians

**Book now:** [suns.org.au/events/leadership-conference-blue-mountains](https://suns.org.au/events/leadership-conference-blue-mountains)

### TAMWORTH

#### 'Follow the Leader'

Guest speaker: Sylvia Collinson

**Book now:** [suns.org.au/events/leadership-conference-tamworth](https://suns.org.au/events/leadership-conference-tamworth)

**"AMONG YOU IT WILL BE DIFFERENT. WHOEVER WANTS TO BE A LEADER AMONG YOU MUST BE YOUR SERVANT."**

Matthew 20:26 NLT



# BACK THE BRAVE

GIVE A TAX DEDUCTIBLE GIFT THIS FINANCIAL YEAR TO SUPPORT SUPA CLUBS AND ISCF GROUPS IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

[sunsw.org.au/backthebrave](https://sunsw.org.au/backthebrave)


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*Schoolies is open to NSW school students completing their HSC in 2024.*