



Finding a home

AWAY FROM HOME

Abbey Bailey comes from Cootamundra in New South Wales, halfway between Melbourne and Sydney. Her family's homestead is located 15 kms out of town and it's another two kilometres from the farm gate to the front door.



Set in a valley and surrounded by hills, Abbey's life at home is vastly different from her life at MLC – but it was *her* decision to move away for school and one she embraced wholeheartedly.

"I was ready to leave and I wanted change," says Abbey. "It's a huge thing in my town to go off to boarding school. Our year level went from 40 to 19 students; it's a small town and I see boarding as a way of broadening my horizons."

For Abbey's parents, choosing MLC made sense for many reasons. Their eldest daughter was already living in Melbourne, attending the University of Melbourne, and their son was at boarding school in Bathurst, New South Wales.

And while they attended many open days, Abbey's mother, Cindy-Lou recalls being impressed that the boarding staff at MLC were very down-to-earth. As an educator, she decided to return on a school day for a second visit.

"What I found was a sense of calm. I could see that the interactions between teachers and students were positive and I was gobsmacked by the facilities," says Cindy-Lou. "I thought the menu and variety of food options was fantastic too."

Head of Boarding, Jane Shone says they're lucky to have an empathetic caterer who's also a mum. "When she can, Ida changes the menu to suit the weather and will prepare a treat if only a few girls are home on the weekend."

Being able to share and enjoy meals is particularly important when living away from home. It's one of the reasons Jane was eager to install a new communal kitchen.

"The girls often have bake sales and things they need to bring to school, and while there was a little kitchen it was tucked away. I thought it was important to bring it into the heart of the house."

Clockwise from opposite page: Abbey with her parents Cindy-Lou and Warren, exploring Glenferrie Rd with fellow boarders Miette and Eliza, at home in Cootamundra, relaxing in the Boarding House.



"I want the new communal kitchen to feel just like home – someone might be cooking, someone might be reading the paper, someone might be doing their homework and some girls might be chatting."

Today, Abbey lives with fellow students from China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, America, and other parts of Australia.

For Cindy-Lou, this was particularly important: "We love that MLC has girls from all ages, abilities and cultures."

"Last year at MLC Marshmead, Abbey's housemates made dumplings and souvlaki for dinner – "the best I've ever had!" was her feedback!"

"I got lucky with my house at Marshmead because everyone could cook," says Abbey with a smile. "I loved living with a group of girls in such a close environment. It was a new experience for some students, but I found it easier because I'd been a boarder. It was amazing fun!"

