

NOT ALL GIRLS WANT
TO BE BARBIE



Picture: Shai Blackadder

All people should embrace dreams

EDITORIAL

By APRIL EIPPER

AUSTRALIA is blessed to have many women in our community who inspire girls and are great role models for young women.

Each year on January 26 we come together as a nation to celebrate Australia Day. On this day we also celebrate people in our community who make significant contributions to our lives.

This year the top awards went to women. Australian of the Year Rosie Batty is an advocate for violence against women. Senior Australian of the Year Jackie French is an accomplished author. Young Australian of the Year Drisana Levitzke-Gray is a deafness advocate and Australia's Local Hero Juliette Wright is a social entrepreneur who works tirelessly to alleviate the effects of poverty.

All are great women and leaders in their fields, they all had a dream and continue to work hard and achieve great things.

Women are heading companies, political parties and universities in our country. Julia Gillard was our first female prime minister and hopefully not the last. Caroline McMillen, Deborah Terry and Jane De Hollander are all vice chancellors of Australia's

universities. They are powerful women and they all have leadership and executive decision-making roles.

Creators are also making the mind shift away from the traditional sad, lonely young women in fairy tales waiting for their prince charming to rescue them and provide a better life. Disney films have gradually embraced the change from traditional female characters requiring male protectors to independent young women who rely upon themselves.

Children authors are also making a change. A new author to hit the book shelves is Samantha Turnbull. Her debut series titled *The Anti-Princess Club* showcases young female protagonists having fun, adventures and enjoying each other's company without boys influencing them. Turnbull started the series after the birth of her daughter when she was bombarded with princess merchandise.

Women today do not have to give away dreams because of their gender. Girls are encouraged to chase any desire they wish. They are surrounded by inspirational women paving the way for girls and young women to follow.

If girls have the aspiration to follow their dreams, then they should be encouraged regardless of what field they are interested in.

No passive princess tales for today's girl

By APRIL EIPPER

SAMANTHA Turnbull is a published children's author, champion slam poet and multi-award winning ABC journalist. She is also a proud mother of two.

While on maternity leave Samantha started writing her first series of the *Anti-Princess Club* books that break the stereotypes of girls being boring and creating better role models for young girls.

The catalyst for Samantha's first novel sprang from when her daughter was born, as she was bombarded with tiaras and princess merchandise.

"That was when I realised I didn't want my daughter to be influenced by an old fashioned mentality," she said.

Samantha is passionate about empowering girls. "I think girls should be able to do what they want to do instead of being passive princesses waiting to be saved by a man in shining armour."

Samantha believes we are in a period of transition and that today's princesses are not so "boring". "Girls should be able to do whatever they want, they need to find their own way."

Some of the characters in the book series are maths whizzes and computer geeks and aren't obsessed with their appearance. They are girls that have fun and adventures together and don't fit into the stereotypical moulds.



Samantha Turnbull writes for a new generation of girls.

Picture: April Eipper

An ex-student of Merriwa Central School, Samantha has always been interested in writing. Samantha uses her personal experiences in her stories but the characters are not necessarily her or her friends.

Samantha has hinted that there is another four books in the series of the *Anti-Princess Club* and they will be published soon. There may also be other stories on the horizon for Samantha.

"I have some ideas for new

characters and storylines that are set in a small town similar to Merriwa," Samantah said.

Currently touring NSW schools, Samantha is spreading her love of writing to students of all ages. Talking about character design, language and even beat boxing students have been enthralled.

Year 7 student Joanne Hamson said "I hope our school library gets these books, I'm looking forward to reading them."

Schools stand united against prejudice

By SAMANTHA OWEN and TARNISHA WINSOR

TRANSGENDER and homosexual people in Australia are finding the courage to come out despite transphobia, homophobia and discrimination.

In NSW, 3 per cent of students recognise themselves as transgender, and alarmingly over 85 per cent of those transgender students are being treated unfairly, discriminated against or bullied on a daily basis because of their sexuality.

The Safe Schools Coali-

tion is a national program dedicated to ensuring that these students feel safe and supported at school. Merriwa Central School was the first school in NSW to become involved.

"The Safe Schools initiative is aimed at creating a network of schools across Australia where students feel safe and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity," said deputy principal Adam Johnston.

The *From Blues to Rain-*



Everyone can fight transphobia.

Picture: Kyle McLennan

bows report released by La Trobe University and UNE highlights that "students who did not feel supported by their teachers were

over four times more likely to leave school if they experienced discrimination than were those with teacher support".

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