



ALUMNI

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



May 2024

Kia ora everyone,

Welcome to our first alumni newsletter for 2024. In this issue, you can read about our former students' successes in sporting, musical, business and other endeavours, alumni in the news, and Westlake events.

It's particularly pleasing to have had two class reunions recently.

Sometimes, these are prompted by the realisation that "it's been 20, 30 (or more) years since leaving school!" or by an old school friend coming to visit from overseas and a plan emerging to invite other former classmates along to catch up at the same time.

Over the years, we have had a number of class reunions, some off-site, with an optional tour of the school and some on-site.

We are always happy to hear from you to discuss your ideas and thoughts on alumni gatherings and assist you where we can.

alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz

Cathy Roughan, Alumni Co-Ordinator



Class of 1977 Reunion

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Our Supporters

Connect with Us

- **Facebook (including all Alumni Year groups)**
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Events & School News

Our Community

Class Reunions

Class of 1977 and Class of 1965

Former students of Westlake Girls have recently got together for two class reunions - the Class of 1977 (started at Westlake in 1973) and the Class of 1965 (started in 1961). It was great to meet some of our earlier Westlakers as they caught up and shared memories, with some former students coming over from Australia for both of these very enjoyable reunions.

There will be many other students out there we could not contact for these reunions and others in the future. You can keep in touch with your year group by joining your alumni year Facebook group (links are on the school website [here](#), or emailing alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz with your name, including your surname while at Westlake, as well as the years you attended.

The Class of 1977

Eighteen former students from the Class of 1977 met at the Takapuna Yachting Club after some enjoyed a tour of their old school. Thanks to organisers Robyn McWilliams and Pam Chomley (Coldham).

Find them on Facebook: [WGHS Class of 1977](#)



The Class of 1965

Twenty-two former students from the Class of 1965, named 'The Panama Hat Girls,' got together at The Bays Club in Browns Bay. Thanks to organisers Bev Weber (Thomas), Georgie Harvey (Williams), and Robin Cusdin (Bartlett) for their efforts. Special thanks to Robin, who arranged for the impressive cake, which reminded everyone of the Panama hats worn at Westlake Girls until 1972.

Find them on Facebook: [Westlake High School Founders \(WBHS and WGHS\)](#)

There is also a new Facebook group for the [WGHS Class of 1965 \(1961-1965\)](#).



The famous Westlake 'Panama Hat' - as a cake!

Upcoming Reunion

The Westlake High School Founders 1957-1961 are getting together again for a reunion luncheon. This will be held at The Bays Club in Browns Bay on **Wednesday 22 May**, at 12.00 pm.

For further details, go to the [Founders Facebook page](#) or contact the organiser Robin Reid at robinmreid777@gmail.com.

Westlake News

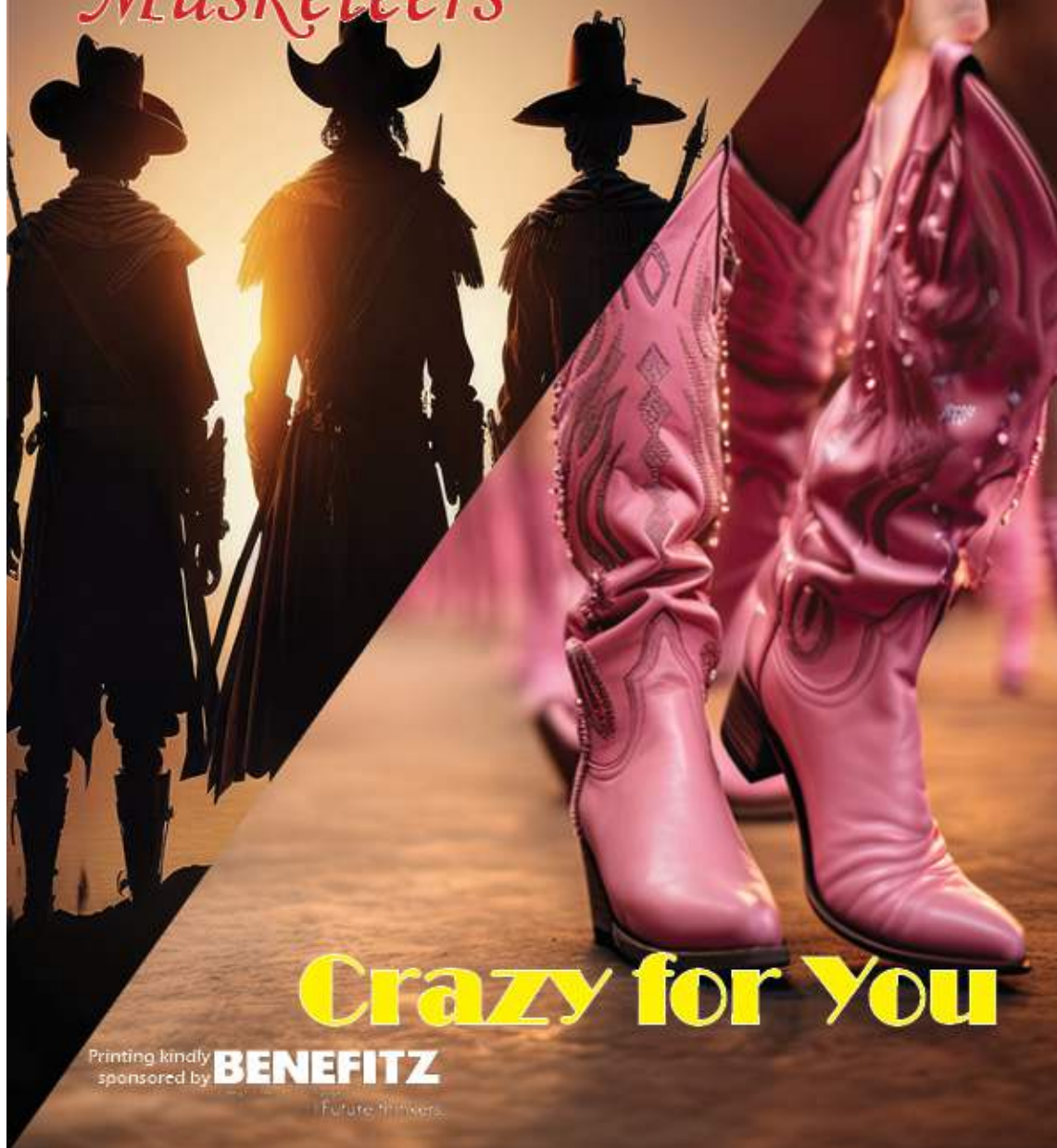
Performances in Westlake Boys High School Auditorium

The Three Musketeers

30th April - 11 May

7.30pm, plus Saturday 2.30pm

Tickets from iTicket.co.nz



Westlake Drama Talent on Show

The much-awaited Westlake drama productions are underway. The talented students from combined schools are again offering two shows: adventure and action in 'The Three Musketeers' by Alexandre Dumas and the wonderful music of the Gershwins in 'Crazy for You'. The season runs from Tuesday, 30 April, with a gala opening for Crazy for You, and closes on 11 May, with The Three Musketeers. Both shows are being performed in the Westlake Boys High School auditorium. Details and tickets are available from iTicket.



Music of the Lake

The 'Music of the Lake' Concert, featuring the premier music ensembles from both Westlake Girls and Westlake Boys High School is coming up in our Music calendar.

The concert will be on Thursday 30th May, 7:30 pm in the WGHS Events Centre. Our students have been working extremely hard this year and already have an amazing repertoire of choral, orchestral, and band music to share with you. Concession (\$10), Adults (\$15), Family pass (\$45). Door sales will also be available

Get tickets

There will be a massed choir work premiered from our composer in residence, David Hamilton, featuring two of our talented pianists, Tara Yoo and Shan Lu. Bring your friends and family and support our musicians while enjoying some amazing music!



Sailing Team Success

The Westlake Girls sailing team won their third consecutive Auckland Secondary Schools title in the Teams Racing Regatta held in March.

At the end of April, they defended their national title in New Plymouth and won back-to-back championships to become the New Zealand Secondary Schools Girls Team Racing Champions once again!

They are now preparing to defend their Interdominion trophy against the top schools in Australia from 7 to 11 October.

Alumni Updates

The Arts

Denise Norton, Singer and Stage Performer



Denise Norton, Class of 1978 has risen to be one of New Zealand's most successful international stage performers, whose versatility spans classics to jazz. After a long career overseas, she returned to her NZ roots ten years ago and lives in Coromandel.

Denise pursued dance, drama, and music from a young age. At 13, in her first year at Westlake, she became a private pupil of Dame Sister Mary Leo. In 1976, she received a scholarship for the highest score in Vocal Examinations across Australia and New Zealand.

This led to extensive singing training and many singing and acting roles.

At Westlake, she studied mainly science subjects and was also a keen athlete. She mostly pursued her musical interests outside school. In an amusing memory, she recalls being asked to sing at assembly as a form of 'punishment' for a minor rule transgression!

Denise began pharmaceutical studies at the University of Auckland but soon left to join the stage production of *Evita* and, after completing the NZ, Australian and Hawaiian tours, arrived in London in 1984.

She has spent most of her international career giving concerts and recitals in Europe, particularly Germany.

Some career highlights:

- Original cast member of 'Cats,' in Hamburg.
- Two solo CD albums.

- Performing in a prestigious show, 'The Best of Andrew Lloyd Weber' for a European tour.
- Performing in Vienna's largest theatre in 'Beauty and the Beast'.
- A year performing in New York jazz clubs.
- Seen by millions in a televised Ice Gala featuring Ice skating Olympic champions, singing 'You Must Love Me'.
- Performing in the 'Classical Jazz Cabaret' concert series to celebrate Auckland becoming a UNESCO World Heritage City in 2017.

Denise is happy to be living back in New Zealand. She enjoys many musical pursuits and enjoys a more relaxed pace of life. You can hear Denise sing on YouTube [here](#). She has an upcoming concert (Denise Norton Legends Concert) at the Pah Homestead on 19 May. Book [here](#).

Te Ohore Williams Classical Soprano Singer



Te Ohore Williams, Class of 2016 has a busy and varied schedule in the coming months. She has recently had the honour of performing the anthems for the ANZAC Day Dawn Commemorations at the Auckland War Memorial, which is the third year she has done this.

She is in the chorus for the New Zealand Opera's production of Le Comte Ory in May and has two school tours later this year.

One is a show in te reo Māori for Te Pou Theatre called 'Te Hokinga mai a Hoiho', which will tour primary schools from Ahipara to Hamilton in August. The other is for NZO called 'Te Hui Paroro', a bilingual reo Māori and English show incorporating opera and puppetry in Term 4.

Te Ohore has a Master's Degree in Classical Performance from the University of Auckland and is currently studying for a Bachelor of Laws. She has been a university mentor for Māori and Pasifika students and has been a member of the Freemasons NZ Opera Chorus since 2019.

Earlier this year, she trained as a learning facilitator with the Learning and Outreach team at Auckland Art Gallery - Toi o Tāmaki. She performed in ‘Hyperspace’, a joint production by the Auckland Theatre Company and Te Pou Theatre.

Photo credits: Andi Crown Photography.



Her musical highlights from last year include providing a singer masterclass at the NZ Opera Open Day and performing in (m)Orpheus, a Greek tragedy revived with Māori and Pacific twists that was performed in Auckland and Wellington. The previous year, she was honoured to have a solo performance singing Arirang (a Korean folksong) and Pōkarekare Ana in Korean at a special concert to mark 60 years of NZ-Korean diplomatic relations and friendship. At WGHS, Te Ohore was Deputy Head Prefect in 2016 and was involved in Westlake premier choirs throughout her years here.

This was the start of her singing journey. She sang in the New Zealand Secondary Schools Choir, New Zealand Youth Choir, and then in the Voices NZ pool. This encouraged her solo singing and performing.

She was featured in the NZ Herald’s ‘My Secret Auckland’ series in January 2024. See [here](#).

Sport

**Julie Carrel (Still) Badminton Oceania Secretary General
Former NZ Badminton Champion**



Julie Carrel (Still), Class of 1982

has accepted the appointment as Deputy Referee for badminton at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games. This is her first Olympic appointment, following a long and successful career as an administrator and technical official in New Zealand and internationally.

Julie was a top New Zealand badminton player in the 1990s. She played in the 1990 Auckland Commonwealth Games in singles and doubles. She won her first national title shortly after the Games. Julie represented New Zealand internationally from 1986 to 1996, gaining 26 caps.

At Westlake, Julie was part of a winning badminton team that dominated the North Shore competition for over ten years from 1978 and won the New Zealand competition in 1981.

Julie represented North Shore/North Harbour from 1976 until she stopped playing in 2008. During this time, she won 22 national titles (Juniors, Open and Masters). She completed a BPhed in PE and Commerce at the University of Otago and moved into sports administration. Subsequently, she had roles at the University of Auckland, North Harbour, and NZ Badminton Associations and with her own sports event company.

Julie has delivered regional, national and international badminton events in New Zealand for many years. Highlights include the Badminton World Federation (BWF) World Junior Championship in 2007, the World Masters Games in 2017 and the New Zealand Badminton Open from 2005 – 2018, which saw many high-profile players come to New Zealand. In her role at Badminton Oceania, Julie is still very involved in organising events throughout the region.

Julie qualified as a Badminton World Federation (BWF) Referee in 2014. She has officiated at many prominent events around the world, including the All England Championships, the French Open, the India Open, the Hong Kong Open, the Sudirman Cup finals in China, the World Junior Championships in Russia, and recently the Japan Para Badminton International. Julie was also the Badminton Technical Delegate at the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Her wealth of experience is much valued, and she shares her knowledge with others through workshops and mentoring. She was awarded lifetime membership at Badminton NZ's AGM on 13 April.

You can read more about Julie Carrel [here](#).

Angela Mitchell - Finalist In International Optician of the Year



Angela Mitchell (Duske)
Class of 1989

Angela Mitchell was a finalist in the International Opticians Association International Optician of the Year awards for 2023, one of just five nominees in the global competition. This is a wonderful achievement, recognising her successful career as a Dispensing Optician and President of the NZ Association of Dispensing Opticians in 2023.

Angela began her career in optics as a university student, completing a BS in Psychology and Physiology at the University of Auckland. She then undertook her training and has now had over 30 years as a dispensing optician in corporate and independent practices and with a major lens manufacturer.

Angela is a partner in the independent practice Orewa Optics in Auckland.
(www.orewaoptics.co.nz)

She remains highly active in an education role in the national association and is an assessor for the Optometrists and Dispensing Optician Board of NZ.

At Westlake, Angela played in the 1st XI Hockey team from 3rd Form (Y9) and was Deputy Head Girl. “I remember my Westlake days very fondly; so many great memories (7th Form Common Room and hockey trips). I had great teachers who inspired me, such as Mrs Parcell, and I am still great friends with many of my classmates. It’s great to catch up with any who come in-store for new glasses.”



Annabelle Fitzgerald, Fashion Designer

**Annabelle Fitzgerald
Class of 2010**

Annabelle Fitzgerald has moved to London this year to work as a product developer for renowned award-winning NZ-born fashion designer Emilia Wickstead.

She has eight years of experience working in the New Zealand fashion industry, including with Trelise Cooper and Caroline Sills. Her most recent role was as Production and Sampling Coordinator at Trelise Cooper.

At Westlake, Annabelle excelled in Fabric Technology, gaining a Scholarship award. She also applied her creative talent to Sculpture. Music was also very important to her at Westlake, and she was a member of both the concert band and the symphony orchestra.

Annabelle graduated with a Master's in Design (Distinction) at Massey University (Wellington) in 2016. During her studies, her talent was recognised with a travel grant, a high achiever's award, a Wool Fresh scholarship, and Massey Creative Arts and Master's scholarships.

She is interested in designing with wool and spent a semester studying knitwear design at Nottingham Trent University during her degree. She also worked with AgResearch during her Master's project, collaborating with scientists there to develop a woollen textile that absorbs odour. The innovative textile was incorporated into the design of a luxury sports bag that won a Red Dot Design award in 2017.

Annabelle hopes to spend the next two to three years living and working in London, making the most of the recent extension to the Youth Mobility Scheme Visa. For Annabelle, securing a position at a luxury brand like Emilia Wickstead is a significant accomplishment, and she is thrilled to explore the fashion industry and the artistry behind high-end tailored clothing further.

Serena Su Real Estate Award Australasia



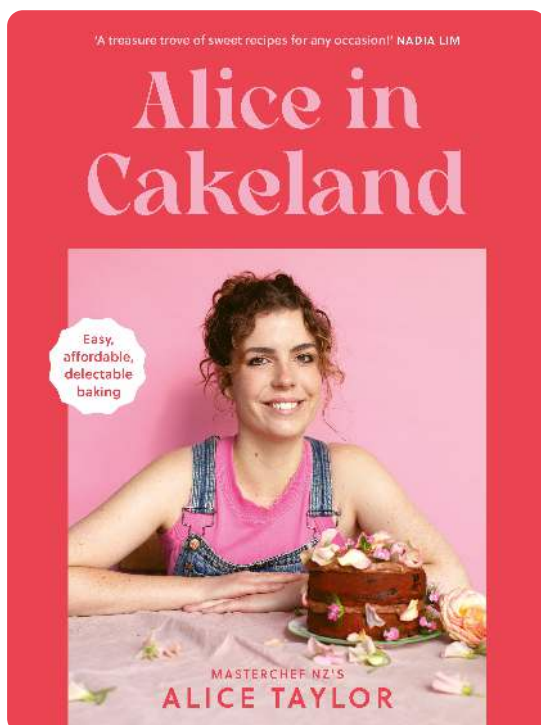
Serena Su, Class of 1999

Congratulations to Serena Su on being recognised as the Agent Achiever of the Year (Metro) in the 2024 Australasian Real Estate Results Awards. Serena has regularly won awards for her work in the inner-city area of Docklands, Melbourne, where she has lived since moving to Melbourne in 2012.

Serena was at Westlake for her senior years and was particularly interested in Art and Economics. She completed a BA in Fashion at AUT in 2004 and gradually built a successful career as a womenswear and babywear designer in New Zealand and Melbourne.

She then took on a new challenge and joined Lucas Real Estate in Melbourne in 2016 as a Client Service Manager and then progressed to Sales Executive in 2019.

Alice Taylor, Cookbook



Congratulations to **Alice Taylor**, Class of 2017, star of MasterChef NZ 2022, on the publication of her first cookbook.

Her book, titled 'Alice in Cakeland', is a collection of delicious recipes for cakes, desserts and biscuits, all inspired by her culinary journey and designed to be easy to make, affordable and adaptable.

[Buy Now!](#)

Alice currently works as a pastry chef at Paris Butter in Auckland after working at award-winning restaurants Baduzzi (Auckland) and Amisfield (Lake Hayes).

A full profile of Alice was in our August 2023 Alumni Newsletter (see [here](#)).

Medical

Georgia Scott, Family Medical Health Practitioner, Brisbane



Georgia Scott (2014) is a neuro-divergent family resource practitioner on the outskirts of Brisbane. Her role involves mentoring, counselling, and advocating for young people. She uses the challenges she faced during high school and university to guide her work, particularly with those in the neurodiverse community.

At Westlake, she gained NCEA Level 3, crediting her involvement in choirs and orchestras for helping her persevere through her high school years.

She completed a BA in Psychology and Anthropology over eight years through distance learning at Massey University while working in various jobs, including merchandising, piano and singing tutoring for children with disabilities, and gymnastics coaching.

This year, she is undertaking postgraduate studies in Psychology at Massey University.

Her neuro-divergent diagnosis, long-suspected, came just last year, giving more clarity into the academic, social and emotional struggles she has encountered. She believes that lived experience should play a far more significant role in community services and health systems.

Georgia is passionate about supporting others and frequently gives workplace and school presentations on neuro-affirming practice.

She has a recent blog post on the E Mental Health in Practice (eMHPrac) website about lived experience as an (autistic) AuDHD neuro-divergent practitioner. She is happy to share this. See [here](#).

Financial

Linda Van, Portfolio Manager, NZ Super



Linda Van (Class of 2003) holds a leadership position as a portfolio manager in the NZ Equities team at the New Zealand Superannuation Fund (NZSF). This team manages more than NZ \$1.2 billion of investments, predominantly in the NZX50. Linda's sector coverage includes healthcare, aged care, and agriculture. She has been working for the NZSF for ten years.

Linda found her love for mathematics at Westlake Girls and enjoyed accounting and economics classes at school. She also played in the Westlake Symphony Orchestra and was a keen badminton player.

Since graduating from the University of Auckland with a BCom (Hons) and BSc in Finance, Statistics and Psychology, she has worked in various financial roles, including as a senior analyst at Ernst and Young.

In all her roles, she has worked to break barriers to improve and encourage diversity and representation in investment management. She is always keen to support the new generation by sharing her experience. She has been involved in the Women Mentoring Programme at the University of Auckland. She has supported university students as a mentor in a global research challenge, judged local Research Challenges for the Chartered Financial Analysts (CFA), and taken on an intern from Tuputoa, an organisation that supports Māori and Pacific students to become leaders.

She is looking forward to serving on the Board of Trustees of SavY, a charity that promotes financial literacy among high school students.

Simran Kaur, Young New Zealander of the Year, Financial Columnist, Podcaster and Author



Simran Kaur, Class of 2014 Simran's stock market podcast and book, 'Girls that Invest', has become a global phenomenon. Simran's inclusion in the 'Forbes 30 Under 30 Asia Honors list for 2023' was a testament to her success.

Simran was featured in the Westlake Girls Alumni 'Winter' newsletter of August 2023. See [here](#).

Her incredible journey continues. Since her New Zealand award in March, she has been recognised as the University of Auckland's Young Alumna of the Year and become a Cartier Women's Initiative Fellow in an international programme that recognises and supports the remarkable achievements of impact entrepreneurs.

These international accolades further underscore her remarkable achievements and the global recognition of her impact. Read more [here](#).

On YouTube

Simran as an [award finalist](#)

Simran [at the awards](#).



We warmly congratulate Simran for being named the Kiwibank University of Canterbury Young New Zealander of the Year. This huge honour recognises her impact in helping millions of women worldwide to access financial knowledge.

International Opportunities

Natalie Goren, BizVenture Japan



Natalie Goren, Class of 2023.

Congratulations to recent Westlake graduate Natalie Goren on being accepted onto the BizVenture Japan programme 2024. This enabled her to spend eight days in Tokyo, Japan, in February before beginning her LLB/BCom studies at the University of Auckland this year.

Natalie Goren (left)

The programme was hosted by the North Asia Centre of Excellence. It exposed the students to New Zealand and Japanese businesses in Tokyo and immersed them in daily and business Japanese language and culture.

Natalie is passionate about business studies, particularly economics. In 2023, she won the Young Enterpriser of the Year award for Westlake.

In her words:

"My experience with Biz Venture Japan has definitely impacted me, not just by enhancing my understanding but also by nurturing valuable relationships and expanding my perspective.

From visiting markets to taking sushi-making classes, taiko drums, food tours, tea ceremonies, seeing a supermarket trade show, glass etching, and visiting the Tokyo Tower, it has been a rewarding journey that I will forever hold dear. I am so thankful for this opportunity and all the hard work that happened behind the scenes to make this trip possible."

Our Wonderful Supporters

Thank you so much to the following organisations for your amazing ongoing support in enabling academic, creative and sporting achievements. If you are interested in partnering with Westlake Girls High School, please get in touch with our Community Relationship Manager, [Dean Flyger](#).

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Singing to inspire
Tūi-Tūi-Tuitūiā



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 **PRECISE HOMES**

Connect With Us

Facebook

Please like our [Westlake Girls Alumni and Friends](#) Facebook page.

We'll keep you informed of Westlake events you may be interested in, any alumni reunions, and alumni news. There are private Facebook groups for all of our alumni years and some musical and instrumental groups. The links are on the alumni page of our school [website](#).

LinkedIn

Our [LinkedIn](#) group has 3,500 alumni and has a helpful tool for finding Westlake alumni in particular fields or locations.

Email Us

The contact address for any queries about Westlake or alumni is

alumni@westlakegirls.school.nz



We love hearing stories about what former students are doing; please get in touch if you have news to share!

Westlake Girls High School

2 Wairau Road, Takapuna, 0627, Auckland

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