



St Hilda's
ANGLICAN SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Principal's Speech Night Report 2008

Archbishop and Mrs Herft, Guest Speaker Gemma Beadsworth, Ms Farley and members of Council, invited friends, parents, staff and students; this evening we celebrate the School's 112th year and I am pleased to offer you some insights into just how much we have to celebrate in 2008.

For 112 years, St Hilda's and the Girls' High School before it, have provided young women with the opportunity to be educated, enthused and empowered; to make the very best of their God-given talents and to use them to make a difference in the world. In 2008, dedicated and skilled educators have continued to shape St Hilda's innovative, challenging and differentiated JK-12 curriculum so that every student can experience success. In response, we expect our students to become resilient, independent learners who strive for personal excellence and the common good.

Before we can influence others, we need to challenge ourselves. We need to be restless with where we are as individuals. I am constantly proud of the way St Hilda's students set challenges for themselves. They enter tough Mathematics competitions, they sit international Science exams and undertake research projects, they write lyrically and at times confrontingly, they perform professional concerto moments, compose music for their own bands, produce works of art which push conventional forms and make us reflect, they train hard in a range of sports.

St Hilda's provides both the opportunities and the nurturing environment which supports their endeavours.

Let me illustrate my point with an example from the Junior School. Sustainability was one curriculum focus this year. Students from Pre-primary to Year 6 used knowledge acquired through Science, and Society and Environment to pose questions about the relative sustainability of different communities. This led to research into climate change and other environmental issues. With the support of an old scholar who founded Millennium Kids, all Junior School students became involved in this world-wide organisation in which young people work together to make a difference. Audits of the School and home environments followed, ideas for change were shared and sustainability projects initiated. Later, some students participated in the WA Youth Environment Conference to share their knowledge and problem-solving skills on a wider stage.

With such a rich academic programme throughout the School, it is not surprising that graduating students achieve excellent results. The 2007 Leavers were no exception. Of those who sat the Tertiary Entrance Examination, 99% were eligible for university entrance. In addition, 5 of the 7 students who completed the Wholly School Assessed programme were eligible for university preparation courses. 16% of St Hilda's students were in the top 1% in the State. 57% in the top 10% and a remarkable 66% in the top 33%. St Hilda's students gained 3 General Exhibitions and 21 Certificates of Distinction. All INSTEP students completed their Structured Work Based Learning and several also gained a Certificate II in Hospitality. I emphasize the achievements of St Hilda's graduates because they reflect the hard work and determination of students, the support of their families and the exceptional commitment and professionalism of our teachers. Please join me in acknowledging the combined efforts of students, families and teachers in continuing St Hilda's culture of personal excellence.

Three members of staff who have served our students with great dedication for a combined total of 18 years leave us tonight.

Karl Guest came from darkest London in 2004 as Head of Religious and Philosophical Studies. He returns to gray days, that other football and ploughman's lunches to be a Boarding Master at Hampshire Collegiate School. During his time with us, in addition to rekindling a love of philosophy in our students, Karl embraced surfing and other spectacularly Aussie past times.

Sue Donaldson is an upper primary teacher whose 120% commitment to her students is legendary. During her 6 years at St Hilda's she has initiated many exciting projects. Her classroom is a creative wonderland where students are fired up by the power of learning. Students from Sue's classes always have an impressive understanding of their own learning styles and are extremely resilient learners. We wish Sue well as she steps back for some well deserved R & R.

Dan Mornement came to St Hilda's from the UK 7 years ago. Since then, Dan has made a huge contribution in the Junior School. His mathematical expertise, gentleness and great eye for detail will be missed. This year, Dan has had a Year 6 class and has done some impressive work developing leadership skills with his students. We appreciate that a promotional position at St Marks Anglican Community School much closer to home is a powerful reason for leaving us.

Please acknowledge the contribution of the members of staff who leave us tonight.

St Hilda's has an expectation that one's talents and gifts are to be used in the service of others. During 2008 we have continued to expand our service learning programmes. Students have worked as volunteers for Rotary, YMCA and Anglicare. They have participated in the Relay for Life for cancer patients, built a website for the Swanbourne Parish Church as it tries to reestablish its community

after a devastating fire, and conducted ICT classes for seniors. The student body has raised funds and donated items for Anglicare, Princess Margaret Hospital, the Australian Board of Mission, the Rotary Australia Bali Eye Project, Parkerville Children's Home and several overseas schools and hospitals.

Individual students have volunteered in a number of places with Lara Clegg in Year 11 being named Young Volunteer of the Year by the Town of Mosman Park for her work in respite care with mentally and physically disabled children. St Hilda's students participate in the Pilgrimages of Hope to Fiji, Nepal and India; life-changing experiences which call upon all their physical and emotional strength.

Developing a nurturing, challenging environment for students is a community effort. The many individuals and groups who comprise the St Hilda's family dedicate their talents and time unstintingly. The School Council is responsible for strategic direction. This year we have again been fortunate to have highly professional and visionary members of Council led by Karen Farley, old scholar, lawyer and current parent. I thank them for their work. I would also like to add a personal acknowledgement to Dr Elizabeth Constable who resigned after 9 years on Council, 5 as Chair, following her appointment as State Minister for Education. Liz guided the Council as it revised its role and structure to meet the challenges of the 21st century. She saw clearly how the roles of Council and Principal connected and was an inspirational personal support for me. St Hilda's is the richer for her contribution.

I acknowledge the work of the Parents and Friends Association and its many sub-groups. Class Parents, the Auxiliary, MASH, DASH, FOLASH, SupPORT and the Old Scholars all contribute time and talents. In an age when volunteerism is decreasing, St Hilda's is blessed with vast numbers of parents and former students who make time in their busy lives to support the School. In particular, I mention Sami Tadros who has tirelessly led the P&F for 5 years. I also thank Mandy McFarland and her team in the Development Office for the enormous work they do harnessing and supporting the volunteers of the St Hilda's family.

No Speech Night address by the Principal would be complete without reference to the external political and economic environment.

A Federal Labour Government brought with it a new education revolution. Gone for the moment was previous Labour language about the politics of envy and hit lists of schools. With regard to federal government grants, independent schools like St Hilda's will continue to be funded by the Socio-Economic Status (SES) model until 2012. That's good.

Now that the funding legislation in the form of the Schools' Assistance Bill is public, we realize there is some devil in the detail – or rather the lack of it.

Two conditions attached to the Bill, which was passed on 4 December on its second reading in the Senate, remain of concern:

1. Implementation of the national curriculum is mandatory. The concern is that to date, details of the curriculum are scant. Yesterday's clarification that pedagogy will not be prescribed, is of little comfort. In addition, the proposed 2011 implementation date is problematic. Many educators share my reservations about agreeing to such a sweeping change before plans are finalised.
2. Non-government schools will be asked to provide all income sources for publication even though this information is not necessary to establish a school's SES. Yesterday's amendment precluding the publication of the names of individual donors, misses the point. It is my belief that financial data currently provided to governments fully satisfies public accountability and transparency requirements. The concern is that such information could be used to reignite the politics of envy which characterised the 2002 election.

The current global economic situation has made our annual budgeting process more difficult. St Hilda's is well-managed and financially strong. To date we have seen no decrease in student numbers but how this develops for 2010, 2011 and beyond is impossible to anticipate. We have therefore prepared a very conservative budget for 2009 whilst keeping quality teaching and learning as the priority.

A great deal has been accomplished in 2008. It has been a team effort and I would like to add a special thank you to senior staff Dr Pam Garnett, Michelle Houwen, Julie QuanSing-Rowlands and Diana Stanley. Each brings enormous expertise, wisdom and the necessary humour to our frequent deliberations. St Hilda's is well served by their outstanding contributions.

To our 2008 Leavers, you move on from St Hilda's with our admiration and our very best wishes for the future. You have responded enthusiastically to the opportunities offered to you, you have persevered when things have not been easy, you have worked well together as the leaders of the School in 2008. Thank you. You are indeed compassionate, articulate young women who will make a difference wherever you choose to live and work. We look forward to following your stories.

I wish the St Hilda's community a holy Christmas and a full-filling New Year.