Our Intent—Proud of our Grammar tradition we are a secondary school that establishes the educational foundation for YOUNG WOMEN to contribute confidently to their world with wisdom imagination and integrity.
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FOREWORD
Foreword

...we need good teachers now more than ever. It seems to me that, in an age of information, formation is still much more important than information. Formation in young people can only be achieved if we teach them discernment, wisdom and what is worth knowing in contrast with what is worth throwing away. Today's schools are not only competing with the private or high school down the road, they are told to be the world's best.  

Brisbane Girls Grammar School's intent to inspire young women to approach their lives with wisdom, imagination and integrity has guided many of our initiatives and programmes throughout the past year. Realising our ideas for improvement, like the establishment of the Differentiated Studies Faculty; campus developments, such as the inspired new pool project; and a thoughtful focus on the complexities of creating future literate generations within the emerging National Curriculum, has meant that the School has worked diligently and effectively towards its aspiration to be a leader in secondary education.

The opening reflection on teaching discernment by Tim Costello was written over a decade ago and yet its salient message still resonates in today's context. The careful and considered formation of young minds through creative and rich education programmes is central to ensuring young people enjoy the endeavour of learning and understand the importance of active engagement in the process. While schools were originally established to implant facts and concepts in young minds and thereby qualify them for formal certification, schools must also be about the act of learning. Teachers at Brisbane Girls Grammar know the importance of inspiring students to make the conscious decision to 'opt in' to learning — a personal choice — which will then provide real depth and breadth to their education.

The impressive educational activities of our students and staff are reflected in this Annual Review to the community — a publication which profiles the energy, optimism and effectiveness of the School's 2009 initiatives and achievements. The creativity and imagination in teaching and learning programmes, in spaces where teaching and learning takes place, and in the hearts and minds of teachers and students will, we trust, ultimately lead to qualities of discernment and wisdom in our young women.

DR AMANDA BELL
PRINCIPAL

REFERENCES:
The Board of Trustees of Brisbane Girls Grammar School is the School’s governing body. It is accountable to the School’s broad community of stakeholders for the good governance of the School. The School is a statutory body formed under the Grammar Schools Act 1975 and therefore the Board has direct accountability to the Minister for Education and Training in Queensland, as well as a responsibility to our past, present and future families. Under the Act, the Board is made up of seven trustees, appointed every four years (most recently in November 2006) by the Governor in Council, and comprising:

- three trustees elected from and by the Roll of Electors; and
- four ministerial nominees.

The Board elects its own chair and deputy chair from among its own number and they serve in those offices while they continue on the Board for the four-year term. A board secretary, employed by the School, provides support to the Board in carrying out its governance functions.

The present Board was installed in November 2006 with three new members and four continuing from the previous board. The seven trustees for the current four-year term expiring in November 2010 are:

- Ms Elizabeth Jameson, Chair, a past student, corporate/commercial lawyer and governance consultant, and company director
- Prof Mary Mahoney AO, Deputy Chair, a past parent of the School, and daughter of past Chair of Trustees, Dr Conrad Hirschfeld
- Mr Tony Young, Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, a past parent, accountant and partner of a prominent Australian accounting firm
- Ms Else Shepherd AM, a past student and parent, electrical engineer and company director
- Mr David Vann OAM, a past parent, business owner/operator and company director
- Prof John Hay AC, immediate past Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland
- Ms Sally Pitkin, current parent, corporate lawyer, consultant to a major Australian law firm and company director.

Further details of the trustees’ professional backgrounds and interests are available on the School’s web site. This demonstrates that the Board comprises a balance of diverse backgrounds and relevant experiences that are frequently called upon for the benefit of the continual improvement of the School’s operations, activities and performance.

GOVERNANCE PHILOSOPHY
The Board believes that it best serves the School’s present and future life by operating as a true ‘governing’ board (as distinct from a ‘management’ board or committee). This means that the day–to–day operations of the School are delegated to the Principal and, through her, to key members of staff. The Board, under its agreed charter, therefore takes a strong leading role in supporting the Principal, and monitoring her leadership of the School’s performance.

The Board discharges its role primarily through the conduct of its regular meetings at least ten times a year, and through the regular meetings of the Board’s Finance and Audit Committee, with additional meetings of the Board for specific purposes, such as strategy development, as necessary.

Just some of the key matters addressed in the Board’s charter are:

- the Board’s commitment to governing with a clear focus on the School’s principal priority, namely providing an excellent, balanced, liberal education to our girls which equips them to face, and to contribute positively to, the world in which they live
- the Board’s commitment to a governance philosophy which encourages open and robust discussion of issues within the boardroom for the good of the School
- an awareness of responsibility for the transparent and appropriate management of trustee conflicts of interest
- the Board’s key functions, which include our accountability to the School’s broad community of stakeholders, setting the strategic direction, ensuring appropriate risk and compliance controls are in place, and monitoring the financial management and the performance of the School generally, fundamentally through its strong relationship with the Principal.

Governance Statement

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CHAIR
MS ELIZABETH JAMESON BA, LLB (Hons I), LSDA, FAICD
Ms Jameson is a corporate/commercial lawyer by background and the founder and Principal of Board Matters, corporate governance consultants. Ms Jameson consults to the boards of both for-profit and non-profit organisations on a wide range of governance issues. In this work she combines twenty years of legal experience with more than fifteen years’ experience as a member of a large number of boards. This has included Qantm (Co-operative Multimedia Centre), Independent Schools Queensland and the University of the Sunshine Coast. It also includes present roles as chair of BDO Business Advisors (Qld) and FibreCycle Pty Ltd and as a director of Tarong Energy Ltd, RACQ Ltd and HeritageMAP Pty Ltd. She is also a core facilitator for the Australian Institute of Company Directors in their present roles as chair of BDO Business Advisors (Qld) and FibreCycle Pty Ltd and as a director of Tarong Energy Ltd, RACQ Ltd and HeritageMAP Pty Ltd. She is also a core facilitator for the Australian Institute of Company Directors in their selection of clients with a focus on significant family owned enterprises across a range of industries.

DEPUTY CHAIR
ADJUNCT PROFESSOR MARY MAHONEY AO, MBBS, GdipClinED, HonMD,QLD, FRACGP, MRACMA, FAIM, FAMA
Professor Mahoney is a General Practitioner and was Director of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Training Program for twenty-five years. She is a member of The University of Queensland Senate, and was The University of Queensland’s first woman Deputy Chancellor. Professor Mahoney has had extensive experience in governance issues and long involvement in national and state educational and advisory bodies and boards.

TREASURER
MR TONY YOUNG BBus, FCA, CPA, FTIA
Mr Young is a partner with BDO (Qld) Pty Ltd, one of the largest professional services firms in Queensland, specialising in providing expert business and accountancy advice. He has more than thirty years’ experience in providing taxation and commercial advice to a diverse selection of clients with a focus on significant family owned enterprises across a range of industries.

EMERITUS PROFESSOR JOHN A HAY AC, BA(Hons), MA, PhD, HonLittD, HonDLitt, HonLID, HonDU, FAH, FACE, FAIM, FQA
Professor Hay was Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland from 1996 to 2008. At The University of Queensland he developed major new initiatives in teaching and research. He currently chairs the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees, the Queensland Institute of Medical Research and the Council of the Order of Australia. He is a member of a number of state, national and international committees, including the National Library of Australia, and others ranging across many disciplines from the performing arts to science, technology, innovation, philanthropy, health, information systems, libraries, city planning and economic development.

MS SALLY PITKIN LLB, LLM, FAICD
Ms Pitkin is a professional company director holding non-executive directorships across a range of industries including financial services, technology commercialisation and leisure. She is a former corporate lawyer and partner of Clayton Utz. Ms Pitkin was the 1999 Australian Winner (Private Sector Category) in the Telstra Business Women’s Awards. In addition to her current directorships, she is also Queensland President of CEDA, a State Council member of the AIICD and a Member of the Queensland Competition Authority. Ms Pitkin is currently undertaking doctoral studies in the area of governance of independent schools.

SECRETARY TO THE BOARD
MS COLETTE PRETORIUS BCom(Hons), CA, CIA, CCSA
Before joining Brisbane Girls Grammar School as Business Manager in June 2008 Ms Pretorius was a director with one of the largest global professional services firms. Ms Pretorius has specialised in corporate governance, risk management, business process improvement, accounting and business continuity management. She has more than 14 years’ experience as a chartered accountant and has served both public and private sector companies as well as government owned commercial companies and departments.

MR DAVID VANN OAM
Mr Vann has had a lifetime career in manufacturing industries. He serves on the boards of the Uniting Church Foundation as Chairman, the Sir Henry Royce Foundation (based in Melbourne) as Chairman, is a past president of Queensland Chamber of Commerce and Industry and also past chairman of Queensland Apprenticeship Services Pty Ltd. He is currently Chairman of Vanguard Blinds and the Vann group of companies. He has recently been invited to become Chairman of an organisation entrusted with the task of the restoration of historic Studley Park House at Camden in NSW as a venue available for the use of community minded organisations.
The Challenge of Excellence

GENERAL REPORT

Across the globe, governments and education systems attempt to define what constitutes ‘excellence’ in schooling. In an environment where world economies both inter-lock and jostle for position, governments seek ways to ensure competitive advantage. Education is seen as the key to a more highly skilled workforce; the greater the quality of schooling, the stronger the nation. In part this concern is fuelled by economic imperatives and constraints which certainly gained a sharper focus with the Global Financial Crisis but is of perennial interest for bureaucracies in a quest for accountability and measureable outcomes in an area of high expenditure. In many Western countries, this has led to national, standardised testing regimes that are aimed not to reveal examples of quality practice but to identify basic efficiencies and deficiencies for purposeful intervention.

Unfortunately, any national testing has considerable limitations as Whitby (2009) remarks:

While educational bureaucracies struggle with accountability issues, the world and schools are being transformed by the digital revolution. Instant access to information and unprecedented personal connectivity raises both opportunities and dilemmas for those framing educational practice. The provision of appropriate and sophisticated technology is only the beginning of a response of an effective school to this digital challenge. Relevance, engagement and the significance of quality human interactions in the classroom — student-teacher, student-student — provide foci for what might constitute excellence in the school setting. Our School’s Aspiration: To be respected internationally as a leader in the education of young women and professional teaching practice clearly enunciates a commitment to excellence and identifies the development and maintenance of teacher quality as of prime importance.


With high quality course material, excellent teaching and flexible organisation, it is possible to support each student to progress along a personalised pathway that reflects their specific goals, strengths and motivations, and harnesses other opportunities for learning. (p. 20)

Appreciating the many contemporary challenges for educators, Brisbane Girls Grammar School has enthusiastically supported the professional development of our teachers through various initiatives and strategies. These include:

• a generous professional development budget
• a rigorous professional review process that occurs every two years for each staff member
• encouragement of teachers to prepare learned papers for publication in professional journals
• support for attendance at selected national and international conferences
• assistance with fees to tertiary institutions
• provision of a Staff Research Scholarship and a Staff Fellowship
• provision of a supportive mentoring system for staff new to the School or profession
• support for teacher involvement in Queensland Studies Authority panels and committees
• the initiation of the Centre for Professional Practice (CPP).

The CPP is overseen by Dr Kay Kimber and Dean of School, Mr Alan Dale. This concept has provided a wealth of professional exchange and learning not only for our own staff but also for pre-service teachers from various tertiary institutions. Some of the activities authored by this Centre include:

• the Learning Innovation Groups — a BGGS–QUT partnership which has occurred each year from 2005 to 2009 and will continue in 2010
• the Mentoring Project — a joint venture with Griffith University
• a Mentorship Special Interest Group
• the Creative Leadership Group, in association with Assoc Prof L Ehrich, QUT
• three series of afternoon in-service ‘professional conversations’: Provocations, Pathways and Passions.

Significantly, a number of our teachers have received international and national accolades for their contributions to education.

• Mr Alan Allinson is President of the International Young Physicists’ Tournament (2008–2012) — an organisation of thirty-eight member countries
• Ms Lorraine Thornquist, Director of International Studies, was awarded The Order of Academic Palms, rank of Chevalier of the Academic Laurels by the French government
• Dr Amanda Bell, Principal, was a delegate at the Harvard Business School’s Women’s Leadership forum, was admitted as a Fellow
Dr Amanda Bell, Principal, at the beginning of 2009 framed a major theme for the year — Challenge and Imagination — and teachers have responded intelligently (and imaginatively) in their work practices. The variety of professional learning opportunities certainly challenged teachers to evaluate their skills and responsibilities in a holistic way.

There is greater familiarity with new technologies, a widening scope of learning resources, more attention to personalisation and differentiation in classes, encouragement of collaborative and participatory activities and the design of many authentic learning opportunities. Teaching innovations and creative initiatives have been shared joyfully with colleagues and have enriched all facets of the curriculum.

As Sir Ken Robinson (2009), an influential leader in creativity, innovation and human capacity writes:

The most important method of improving education is to invest in the improvement of teaching and the status of great teachers. There isn’t a great school anywhere that doesn’t have great teachers working in it. But there are plenty of poor schools with shelves of curriculum standards and reams of standardized tests. (p. 238)

Not surprisingly, the results of the 2009 Year 12 cohort reflect excellent teaching as well as prodigious effort by our students.

Our school is a vibrant learning community with students and teachers encouraged to explore, invent, question and create. This is not the result of serendipitous accident but the outcome of visionary leadership, dedicated teachers and engaged and talented students.

MISS FELICITY WILLIAMS
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

REFERENCES:

MISS FELICITY WILLIAMS
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In 2009, as the School approached the final year of the first decade of the twenty-first century and its 135th year, it became evident that while many aspects of ‘pastoral care’ had remained steadfast from the beginning, other meanings for that term had emerged. Quite remarkable shifts have embedded themselves in ‘the way we do things around here’ at the end of this first decade of the new century.

In the context of national debate regarding politically driven educational ‘reform’ in schools, these cynical words by James Valentine (2009) in The Australian provide an insight into how our schools might be viewed historically in terms of the expectations placed upon them:

I don’t expect much from a school. I simply expect the school to know where my child is every second of the day. I expect the school to proof my child against the evils of drug taking, tattooing, hair dying and excessive texting. Although my value system is at best vague and expedient, I expect the school to provide clear moral and ethical consistency at all times. The school should make my child enjoy sport. I deplore the decline in civility in ‘the way we do things around here’ at the end of this first decade of the new century.

Astonishing to relate, Brisbane Girls Grammar School has in place structures and programmes that do indeed respond to these very expectations while remaining true to its historical charter — whose intent was to establish an educational foundation for young women to contribute confidently to their world with wisdom, imagination and integrity. Nevertheless, it was inevitable, in this context, that the term ‘pastoral care’ should be examined and it was helpful to consider what has happened to staffing, parents and students. Plus, importantly, to consider what has been delivered under its auspices. Pastoral care has been described as a ‘shorthand way of describing the structures, provision and underlying values towards those in our charge in schools and other educational institutions’ (Calvert, 2009, p. 268). ‘Care’ has always been a reassuringly, saleably positive banner — despite the fact that there is no settled understanding of what it means, in practice, in the school environment. The meaning of pastoral care — while still retaining its currency in education as the umbrella term for a range of good intentions, attitudes, structures and programmes — is even more problematic today because it has become increasingly multifaceted, conceptually. According to Best (1995, p. 268) the term is a British phenomenon and appeared on our shores as a result of our colonial inheritance. Obviously, it suggests ecclesiastical roots, yet over time more and more of the things that were deemed to be about ‘caring’ were placed under this heading and had very little, if anything, to do with institutional Christianity.

By 1989, the following comprehensive and frequently cited definition from the United Kingdom encapsulated the fact that ‘pastoral care’ had come to embrace two separate strands — the generically welfarist and the academic:

Pastoral care is concerned with promoting pupils’ personal and social development and fostering positive attitudes: through the quality of teaching and learning; through the nature of relationships amongst pupils, teachers and adults other than teachers; through arrangements for monitoring pupils’ overall progress, academic, personal and social; through specific pastoral structures and support systems; and through extra-curricular activities and the school ethos. Pastoral care, accordingly, should help a school to achieve success. In such a context it offers support for the learning, behaviour and welfare of all pupils, and addresses the particular difficulties some individual pupils may be experiencing. (Department of Education and Science, 1989, p. 3)

Interestingly, this summary perfectly described what was occurring at Brisbane Girls Grammar School and it is worth noting that in 1991 the provision of pastoral care in structure and philosophy underwent a significant change. Mrs J Hancock in the School’s Annual Report states that the strengthening of the House system ‘has been an evolutionary process spanning the past ten years. Staff appointed to the positions of Heads of House have worked together to develop a program which reinforces the spirit of community within the School’ (Hancock, 1991, p. 10). It was, in essence, a marriage
of Interhouse activities and pastoral care, the primary purpose being to support individual students in their academic and co-curricular pursuits. The underlying philosophy was that a responsible school should aim to create integrated opportunities for the health and holistic development of its students within the broad spectrum of academic and co-curricular programmes. As a secondary point, it was deemed more appropriate that parents should have a clearer familiarity with the key personnel charged with monitoring the development of their daughters. While the obvious structure for provision of pastoral care has remained largely unchanged — excepting renovations to manage a larger enrolment — the same modus operandi has adapted to and absorbed a number of cultural and pedagogical shifts in more recent years.

The appointment of a Dean of Curriculum in 2003, a co-curriculum middle management position in 2006, and the creation of the Differentiated Studies Faculty (2009) are responses precisely to the challenges of the various strands of ‘pastoral care’ or ‘academic care’ as outlined in the definition above. Yapp (2009) states: ‘Learning has always been and will always be a personalised experience. Technology is making personalisation achievable at scale’ (p. 85). Accordingly, the Differentiated Studies Faculty believes that adjusting the curriculum, instructional methods and assessment practice for each student where necessary, in order to create maximum opportunity for learning, is our responsibility as twenty-first century educators in possession of the requisite knowledge, skills and resources to create powerful learning opportunities.

The ongoing enmeshment of ‘care’ with other facets of school life was not actuated exclusively, or even substantially, by the educative potency of the idea but by the size of schools and the need for a system of management and control. The role of the pastoral carer, whether it was a Head of House or Level Supervisor, was to some extent that of disciplinarian. This role came to be exercised within the realm of middle management, thus making it part of the traditional hierarchy. Now, the role of disciplinarian and manager often sits somewhat uneasily with the role of ‘carer.’ Best (1994), in his examination of comparative international perspectives in pastoral care, notes the displacement that occurs when pastoral problems are off-loaded from the teacher to middle management. Institutional procedures intended to compensate for pastoral crises or breakdowns in interpersonal matters tend to have depersonalising consequences. At Brisbane Girls Grammar School, decades after the introduction of this structure, such tensions are still felt. We would agree with Williamson (1980, p. 271) who describes as ‘pastoralisation’ the situation where insufficient care is taken to manage situations humanely rather than bureaucratically. The pastoral system cannot become a mechanism for covering up the shortcomings of the school, the curriculum, classroom management, parental decision-making or student understanding. The underlying reasons for the recurrence of problems must always be addressed.

In 2007, it was clearly appreciated in this School that ‘pastoral care’ had evolved far beyond what it had been and so it was decided that the term ‘Pastoral Care’ would be replaced with ‘Student Care’. This was thought to better encompass what was actually entailed. While this change became a reality on public documents, it did not change praxis or even timetables. ‘Pastoral Care’ or ‘PC’ still held firm. However, it did reflect changes which had already been absorbed. ‘Pastoral Care’ had moved away from being purely a reactive, control and management mechanism to one where a more proactive approach was increasingly being implemented. Indeed, the inception of the House structure coincided with the advent of a pastoral care meant to respond to individual and group needs; the emphasis shifted to identifying students at risk and providing appropriate individual support and counselling. More and more, trained counsellors were employed in schools and professional development sought to aid teachers in the ‘helping’ function and its orientation to the ‘whole pupil’ (Grimshaw & Pratt, 1986, p. 6). House Group Teachers were expected not merely to administer but to dispense care and apply a holistic knowledge of each individual student. This approach remains; however, the limitations are more clearly understood and perhaps, to some extent, accepted. Presuming a high level of skill and commitment for this task from 45 House Group Teachers from varying academic disciplines borders on, or is, outright unrealistic. Even so, it has been argued that this very unevenness of approach to care is a good opportunity for our students to learn about themselves and adapt in relation to disparate others.

The delivery of age appropriate material has been successfully implemented through a year level approach which became timetabled for all year levels in 2005. Specialist teachers have created a series of assemblies which, while not constituting a pastoral curriculum, do in fact...
succeed in addressing the specific needs of each year group. The historical heritage which emphasises the responsibility of schools as civilising agents — to build character, develop morals and articulate and explore value systems — is communicated to the students in many ways but there is a specific planned approach in these assemblies which complements and supports the ideas communicated to the students in their House meetings.

Though the strong proactive approach at Brisbane Girls Grammar School to Student Care reflects national and international trends, some approaches are uniquely our own. Safety and proper management of risk seem to dominate community concern in relation to young people, particularly in this last decade. The Health Studies Department (formerly the Physical Education and Health Faculty and renamed in 2007 to reflect its recalibrated focus) delivers programmes which are directed at teaching our students to make good decisions about such things as safe sex, drug use, personal safety and healthy living. The Outdoor Education Programme is designed to develop independence, team work, resilience and the capacity to make good judgements in relation to risk. Our Service Programme provides rich opportunities for students to feel that they can contribute to the community. The whole spectrum of the Co-curricular Programme provides each student with opportunities for involvement and personal growth. So the ‘pastoral or student care curriculum’ involves all areas of school life and occurs both inside and outside timetabled provision.

The 2009 review of the history of pastoral/student care, in national and international contexts, was very timely. We can now discern a full circle phenomenon whereby pastoral and academic care is increasingly interwoven and symbiotic. Moreover, it has become increasingly evident that when there was a divide it was an artificial one. In this new century — where ideas must transcend all the old boundaries and technology reveals more and more about the human brain — good pastoral care in schools is academic in context; good academic care is personal and focused on the uniqueness of students, not discharged pursuant to administrative formulae. Academic care involves promoting well-being through academic structures and processes which are sympathetic to adolescent needs. It is linked to pastoral care in its attention to positive learning and developmental outcomes, including knowledge of self, self efficacy, healthy risk-taking, negotiation and empowerment. It is based on the idea of resilience in learning and the belief that learning is not something a few people are gifted with but something everyone should work at of their own volition.

MRS MARISE MCCONAGHY DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

REFERENCES:

The Evolution of Care
The year 2009 will always be marked in history by money woes, crashing financial markets and increased unemployment. With the start of 2010 the world economy is slowly starting to come out of two years of economic turmoil. In contrast for Brisbane Girls Grammar School 2009 was a sound financial year thanks to the Board of Trustees closely monitoring the impact of the economic crisis on the School as well as many previous years of prudent financial management. The timeliness of receipts of tuition fee income remained consistent with previous years, and although returns on investments decreased slightly owing to lower interest rates, this was balanced out with lower interest charges on capital loans. In addition we need to thank our students, parents, support groups and the broader community for their generous support to our building, library and endowment funds in 2009, and general donations were on par with previous years.

The School also embarked on the ambitious project of completing a new swimming pool complex that complemented the award-winning Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre — within budget and completed two months ahead of the project manager’s schedule.

The School has maintained a conservative monetary policy ensuring that sufficient reserves are available to fund future growth and development.

**KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND FOCUS AREAS FOR 2009**

The School’s financial resources were utilised as an enabler to achieve our Aspiration ‘to be respected internationally as a leader in the education of young women and professional teaching practice’. To follow is a brief summary of the financial results within each of the key financial categories.

**SOURCES OF FUNDING**

As can be seen in Graph A, the key sources of income for the School are:

- State and Commonwealth Government funding — 22 per cent
- Tuition fee income — 67 per cent

Both these income categories have a key reliance on enrolment numbers. The School was in the fortunate position of again enjoying a full enrolment in 2009 and strong enrolment lists for the future.

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND COST STRUCTURES TO FUND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

The sources of funding were deployed to ensure the School was adequately resourced to provide our students with the finest, purposeful and creative learning environment. The School’s operating expenses have been illustrated in Graph B. The core operating expenses have been highlighted:

![Graph A: Sources of Funding 2009](image)

![Graph B: Major Activities/Costs 2009](image)
achieved in the education sector demonstrating the strong level of staff trust and positive working relationships inherent in the School.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)
The role of technology in schools is receiving significant focus in the media, on political agendas and within school management committees. This amplified focus is a result of the increased availability of mobile technologies as well as the political agenda of providing each Year 9 to 12 student with a computer. As a result, many schools are embarking on ambitious projects of transforming their computing environments from a static, desktop-based model to a mobile, wireless, student-focused model. As noted in a recent report on technology by our Director of Mathematics, Mr Greg Bland, ‘Our primary motivation is to provide a technology-rich environment which will best support the creative learning of our students’. In line with the aim to provide a technology-rich environment, the School approved a new ICT strategy in 2009. In contrast with many other schools our strategy will be funded internally and we will not be charging our families a technology levy. The School’s intention is to move to the 1:1 student computer ratio by 2011, providing four different types of computers to students. These will consist of a mixture of desktops, laptops, net books and tablets — all available on the campus. A large portion of our site has now been fitted out with wireless technology making mobile technologies more widely accessible. The following key technology projects were also completed in 2009:
- photocopier upgrade
- server virtualisation
- email system upgrade
- server operating system upgrade
- SharePoint implementation
- Moodle Learning Management System implementation
- additional network storage implementation
- staff tablet PC trial
- wireless network expansion
- TASS process improvement.

Tuition Costs
This cost funds the day-to-day student activities within and outside of the classroom and includes approved activities such as camps, co-curricular activities, excursions and visiting speakers.

Repairs and Maintenance
The School is very proud of its excellently maintained campus and has a rotational maintenance programme in place. The key projects performed in 2009 included:
- Main Building: new guttering and repainting
- East Wing: new guttering
- S Block classrooms: fit out of new classroom space
- ICT office: upgrade and reallocation
- Counsellor offices: upgrade and reallocation
- Main car park: repair
- Science car park: resurface
- Upper tennis courts: resurface.
- Equipment: Upgrade and replacement of wireless data projectors in classrooms.

Capital Expenses
The School has always ensured that capital developments are completed in a manner that is testament to our pursuit of excellence. This has been clearly indicated with the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre (CLC) completed in 2007. In 2009 the new swimming pool complex was completed. The custom-designed heated pool is suspended above an all-weather multi-purpose area below. A new four-wheel drive vehicle was also purchased in 2009 for the Memorial Outdoor Education Centre, Marrapatta, incorporating all the safety features needed by the Centre.

Balancing of Funding versus Cost Structures to Fund Educational Outcomes
There has been pressure on the funding of educational outcomes over the past six years. This has lead to above CPI tuition fee increases in a majority of independent schools. The key reasons for these increases is a lower percentage increase in Government Recurring Grant support compared to increases in costing structures supporting educational outcomes. The key categories of costs with high increases can clearly be seen in Graph C. This graph indicates the percentage increase in major cost categories since 2004 to 2009, compared to the increases in Government Recurring Grant support for the same period. The increases in costs within the graph can be explained as follows:

Employee benefit cost increases have been driven by wage negotiations nationally as well as the competition for talent.
ICT cost increases as a result of increased technology requirements including the move to a 1:1 student–computer ratio as per the current Federal Government’s political agenda.

The increases in capital and finance costs are a result of an intensive capital investment programme providing leading learning environments for our students. Donations have on average been 8 per cent of annual capital expenses with minimal capital grants available through government. This has resulted in the balance of capital expenses being funded by reserves and loan facilities, thereby also increasing finance costs.

As can be seen from the graph, government funding has not increased in line with increases in resource requirements.

**GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE**
The School would like to acknowledge the contributions made by the State and Commonwealth Governments in the form of grant allocations. The grants received and approved in 2009 included:
- Recurrent State and Commonwealth Government Grants
- Literacy, numeracy and special learning grants, including an ESL grant
- Funding from the Queensland Government for VET Co-ordination and Career Enhancement
- Queensland State Endowment grant provided to Grammar Schools in Queensland
- ICT Infrastructure Capital Assistance of $25,000 used to fund a portion of the wireless extension
- Commonwealth Building the Education Revolution School Pride Grant ($200,000) used to fund part of the green terrace of the new pool as well as painting of the historic Main Building
- 2009 Queensland State Government School Community Development Programme ($30,000) partly funding the retractable shade cover over the new swimming pool
- The School has also signed an agreement with the Commonwealth Government for ICT on cost funding amounting to $382,192 to be utilised to assist with additional information technology on costs in reaching a student computer ratio of 1:1. This funding will run from 2009–2013.

**PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS**
The School would also like to thank all the School support groups, but especially the P&F Association, for their kind donations and support during the year.

**RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE**
The School has a well-developed risk management and compliance programme. Effective risk management is a key factor in sustainably safeguarding the School’s assets, student and staff wellbeing, as well as its reputation.

The management of risks at the School is an integral part of the day-to-day operations. The elements of risk management underpinning the organisation’s operations include:
- a Risk Management Framework approved by the Board of Trustees
- a fortnightly review of key risks by Senior Management
- an annual update of risk registers
- an annual self assessment of compliance with key controls in place to manage risks
- a rotational external compliance review for high rated risks.

As we enter a new academic year, we are committed to sustain the School’s ambitious Strategic Design. Given the scope of our activities and aspirations, we need to invest our resources wisely, administer our projects efficiently and encourage the ongoing engagement and support of our students, parents, support groups, staff and broader community.
Philanthropic Programmes

The real commitment of the individuals who comprise the community of Brisbane Girls Grammar School has been revealed—in part—through the success of the recent fundraising appeal, which enabled the School to complete the new swimming pool and environs, with a cost of $6.85m.

More than two hundred individuals and families chose to assist in the realisation of this, the third of the School’s distinctive Masterplan projects. More than $1,110,000 was raised in 2009. The School also received bequest monies which have been applied to ensuring that facilities and infrastructure continue to be of the highest quality.

It is therefore with sincere appreciation that the School acknowledges the contributions of its benefactors — parents, past students, staff and friends—whose dynamic partnership continues to benefit current and future Grammar girls.
A strong culture of engagement in learning and a balanced, liberal education have been credited with producing the School’s consistently excellent academic results. **Year 9 students topped the state** in the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN).

Director of Mathematics, Mr Greg Bland, was honoured with an Australian Award for **Teaching Excellence**, as well as being a finalist in the Queensland College of Teachers’ Excellence Awards.

Year 12 Student Zoe Walker, was presented with an **Educational Award from the Australian Defence Force Academy** in recognition of outstanding achievement in both sporting and academic pursuits during the recruitment process for entry to ADFA.

Brisbane Girls Grammar School was acknowledged for the fourth consecutive year as a national **Employer of Choice for Women** for its flexible, inclusive and progressive staff policies.

Director of the International Studies Faculty, Ms Lorraine Thornquist, was awarded the highly prestigious **Order of Academic Palms**—one of the world’s oldest civil honours—in recognition of her significant international contribution to the expansion of French culture through the Affiliate Schools Programme.

Service Captain, Jessica Peterson, was honoured with an **Order of Australia Association Citizenship Award** for her contribution to school and community.

Awards and Recognition

Year 12 student Jaime Smith was selected as the School’s representative for the **Pierre de Coubertin Award** which recognises high school sporting achievers whose endeavours both on and off the sporting field exemplify the philosophies of the modern Olympics.

Eighteen viola students participated in the **inaugural Edmee Gainsford Viola Prize**. The competition was won by Year 12 student Ellen Harrison.

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Debating Captain Lucy Wark was selected to captain the Australian Schools’ Debating team which will compete at the **World Championships** in Qatar in 2010.

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Each year the School recognises three staff members who have made a significant contribution to the School: **Award for Excellence in Education** — Dr Kay Kimber, Director of the Centre for Professional Practice; **Award for Outstanding Contribution to the School** — Mrs Carolyn Hann, Health Care Co-ordinator; **Award for Professional Practice by a Recent Graduate in Teaching** — Mrs Catherine Clemot, Science Teacher.

Mrs Pauline Harvey Short, alumna of 1971 and staff member for thirty-two years, was awarded the 2010 **Brisbane Girls Grammar School Staff Fellowship**.

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Opportunity and Participation

Overwhelming talent, healthy competition and a nurturing musical environment led eleven remarkable Girls Grammar students to achieve prestigious and highly sought after AMusA or LMusA music diplomas.

The School instigated a Faculty of Differentiated Studies to enhance individual learning opportunities and to aim for optimal access, participation and achievement for each student.

Senior students were offered the opportunity to focus on the craft of writing under the guidance of renowned author, James Moloney, during the two-day writer-in-residence programme.

Selected students in Years 8-10 attended a four-day writers’ retreat at Marrapatta.

Twenty visual arts students and two teachers headed to the West McDonnell Ranges in Central Australia to create art on location. This Art Study Tour was the first of its kind for the School and the results were shared with the School community through a stunning exhibition.

The co-curriculum was augmented by the introduction of an e-Sports programme. e-Sports provides an ideal avenue to improve physical skills such as dexterity, hand-eye co-ordination and fine motor skills, while responding to the all-pervasive digital world.

In an Australian first two Grammar girls spent a week studying at the world-renowned Seattle Biomedical Research Institute.

Innovative Design was introduced into the Year 9 Curriculum with the aim of involving the students in a proactive investigation of the Built Environment through the use of technology.

Nine Year 11 Economics students participated in the international Ecoman Programme.

A leader in technology and innovation Brisbane Girls Grammar School’s sophisticated electronic learning environment, combined with a flexible curriculum and a focus on independent learning, allowed students to continue with their studies when H1N1 closed the School in June.
Challenge and Imagination

The Queensland Government designated 2009 the Year of Creativity, which complemented staff and students choosing the theme of **Challenge and Imagination** to inspire thoughtful ways of addressing their teaching and learning.

An amazing online exhibition curated by students won the **inaugural Australia Council's Venice Biennale Schools Exhibition**.

A team of thirty-two Year 9 and 10 students won the state final of the **Science Engineering Challenge** held at The University of Queensland.

Two Grammar girls were selected in the Australian team for the **International Young Physicists’ Tournament** and competed in Tianjin, China.

Brisbane’s Powerhouse Visy Theatre was the venue for the **Senior Drama production – Antigone**. Professional costume and set designer, Keiran Swann worked with the students to create the post-apocalyptic wasteland that was the foundation for the set and costuming.

Head Girl, Brittany Brusasco, gave the opening address to the **Centre for Educational Leadership and Innovation Forum** at the State Library of Queensland. She reflected on the meaning of creativity in the twenty-first century and life as a first-generation digital citizen.

The Centre for Professional Practice and the School’s ICT teaching initiatives were showcased by Independent Schools Queensland as examples of innovative leadership in education.

Astronomy has been incorporated into the Outdoor Education programme at Marrapatta and provides students with **first-hand experiences of night-sky observation**.

The School won an overwhelming **twenty-seven Queensland Girls’ Secondary School Sporting Association (QGSSSA) premierships** and the cross-country team won its sixteenth successive championship.
Community and Collaboration

Students’ fundraising efforts reached a collective total of $69,960.00 for a variety of charities.

School Psychologist, Mrs Jody Forbes, presented the concept of positive psychology and “teaching happiness” to the School community through a series of workshops with staff, students and parents.

This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Christmas Creek bus accident an event that had a profound and lasting effect on all involved.

The School’s Centre for Professional Practice, believed to be the only school-based model for teacher education operating in Queensland, continued to provide on-site professional learning programmes led by staff or university partners, including the new initiative: The Creative Leadership Group.

The Old Girls’ Association celebrated its 110th anniversary. Since 1889 the Association has maintained a connection between past students and the School, promoted fellowship, fundraised and contributed to the School’s artworks and building programmes.

The thirteenth Gala Concert “Villains” provided a challenging programme for over three-hundred performers and succeed in captivated the audience’s imagination through their musicality.

The School hosted an exclusive concert featuring world renowned Selby and Friends ensemble TRIOZ. The group also conducted master classes for music students.

The ever-popular Philosophy Café featured presentations by Dr Abigail Makim — Sustainable living in modern cities, Paulien Barkmeyer — Where do I belong? Issues of gender, race and identity, Natalie Isaacs — Taking action on climate change and Keith Treschman — Kepler, the real revolutionary.

2009 marked the fifth year of Opera Queensland’s Moving Opera programme at the School. Sixteen participants from Years 8 to 11 worked for four days under the guidance of Opera Queensland artists culminating in a challenging performance of works.
One of the most challenging aspects of teaching is devising ways in which to address the diversity that exists within a student population. This is exacerbated by the organisation of a school into discrete faculties, delineated year levels and separate classes.

However, simply because a concept is difficult does not mean it should not only be faced but also celebrated. Differentiation is a process of teaching and learning where students of different abilities and learning styles are catered for within the same classroom. To address individual needs, teachers recognise each student’s background knowledge, readiness, interests and learning preferences. Each student’s growth and success may be maximised through teaching structures and practices, and even modifying curriculum, where possible. Relevance, flexibility and responsiveness are the hallmarks of successful learning experiences. In other words, the intent of differentiated instruction is to meet each student “where she is” with every student valued as exceptional.

The Faculty of Differentiated Studies is unique within the School in that it does not have responsibility for a particular suite of subjects. Rather than focusing on the development of subject-related content and skills, the teachers in this faculty collaborate with staff and students to capitalise on the vast range of learning opportunities possible. A team of staff members from a variety of subject backgrounds with additional specialist qualifications work in partnership with colleagues. They develop units of work utilising a framework for differentiated instruction to ensure each student achieves at her optimal level. They encourage faculties to provide programmes that guarantee the most capable students are given opportunities to excel. They facilitate conversations across faculties to encourage cohesive skill development and the identification of content connections. They work towards increasing classroom capacity through the ongoing development of the School’s virtual learning environment thus enabling staff and students greater choice and flexibility in terms of classroom activities and contexts.

The combination of creative, innovative and experienced classroom teachers, strong technical support and a resource-rich environment can only foster enrichment, consolidation, experimentation and innovation. Teachers realise that differentiating the curriculum, instructional methods and assessment practice for each student is their responsibility and challenge, but their greatest joy is watching students taking responsibility for their own learning and achieving their potential.

DR ANN FARLEY   DIRECTOR
Pool Project

AN OASIS WITHIN THE CAMPUS, THE MUCH ANTICIPATED NEW SWIMMING POOL OPENED IN OCTOBER.

The innovative concept incorporates a custom-designed pool suspended above the historic running track, effectively allowing the School to retain the use of this valuable space as a covered, all-weather multi-purpose area, while simultaneously gaining a 25m x 16m heated pool for life saving, swimming, water polo and a range of aquatic activities.

In addition the new pool has enhanced connectivity between the existing levels of the campus and particularly the east-west orientation established by The Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre. The School’s physical environment was increased and a central corridor of green space was created as a result of the demolition of the old buildings.

The design achieved several Masterplan objectives: maximising campus space for teaching and learning; creating equitable access; expanding all-important green space; and enhancing the School’s already excellent facilities.

The same partnership that successfully delivered the award-winning Creative Learning Centre on time and on budget — m3architecture and Bovis Lend Lease — were responsible for completing the pool project with minimal impact on the daily functioning of the School and without interruption to teaching and learning activities of staff and students.
In our bid to explore and give to others, we learn and understand more about ourselves. What begins as an adventure in giving and curiosity, ends as an exercise in receiving and understanding.

Mr Jim Seaha, Director of Post Secondary Planning and Antipodeans Abroad Co-ordinator

‘Challenge’ is synonymous with the School motto, Nil Sine Labore. Just as work and effort are necessary for achieving targeted goals, stepping outside personal comfort zones, risk-taking and perseverance are tied to accepting a challenge.

Dr Kay Kimber, Director Centre for Professional Practice

We need to increasingly engage young people in activities that combine wide ranging skills, competencies and dispositions integrating ideas from across different disciplines and encouraging new connections and applying creativity via their imagination in new ways.

Ms Jacqueline Colwill, Director Creative Arts Faculty

Learning flourishes when students are motivated. Students are motivated when they believe they have power over their learning—when they know they can learn. This allows them to progress in a thoughtful and creative way.

Ms Samantha Bolton, Acting Director Social and Environmental Studies Faculty

The ability to reconcile theory and evidence is a higher-order reasoning strategy targeted by the Science Faculty at this School. It is a strategy that our senior students wrestle with throughout their Extended Experimental Investigations (EEI). Happily, they usually manage to emerge victorious from the struggle.

Dr Sally Stephens, Director Science Faculty

On one level Information Services staff aim to awaken curiosity, offer new ideas and access to wisdom; but on another level they must provide the means for students to be challenged to work hard, tackle the difficult questions and think deeply.

Mrs Kristine Cooke, Director Information Services Faculty

We must equip our young women with appropriate skills so that they are able to make intelligent decisions whilst being mindful of short and long-term consequences. But we must also impress upon them the importance of solidarity—look out for, and after, one another.

Mr Stephen Fogarty, Director Health Studies Faculty
I believe that schools and teachers have an essential role to play in the continued development of a civil society. Teachers are the custodians of this and must never forget the life-altering role entrusted to them. It is our job to role model a love of learning, the ability to laugh, the ability to forgive as well as the ability to acknowledge and hopefully remedy failure and move on.

DR BRUCE ADDISON, ACTING DEAN OF CURRICULUM

Establishing a classroom environment which is supportive and nurturing and encourages creative thought, allowing students to ask questions, to make mistakes, to try imaginative problem-solving solutions, and to feel comfortable is the most important ingredient in successful teaching.

MR GREG BLAND, DIRECTOR MATHEMATICS FACULTY

We hope for them (our students) to be world travellers, not merely as tourists and traders and not merely in a physical sense. We hope for them to willingly expand the horizons and plummet the depths of their minds and spirits, to explore, to imagine and even echo and understand other ways of seeing and being, to ultimately share common pathways and make this a world inhabited and inhabitable by all.

MS LORRAINE THORNQUIST, DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES FACULTY

Having a broad and sophisticated vocabulary is essential. It is essential because without one, comprehension is compromised, and expression is imprecise. Building a strong vocabulary is an ongoing project that involves teachers across all Faculties at this School, but which more importantly requires input at home.

MR STEPHEN WOODS, DIRECTOR ENGLISH FACULTY

From the commercial perspective it might be simple to draw the conclusion that there is a real crisis in the classical music world, but from an educational perspective the study of classical music is gaining recognition as a powerful and essential contributor to the development of every student.

MR MARK SULLIVAN, DIRECTOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

A variety of opportunities are presented to increase the girls’ knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the universe, including a new Celestron telescope at Marrapatta. Personally, the clear images of the moon through the new telescope have ignited a childlike enthusiasm within me. The universe—it is yours to discover!

MR JAMES MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR MARRAPATTA MEMORIAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE

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DR BRUCE ADDISON, ACTING DEAN OF CURRICULUM
Chair of The Board of Trustees

SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley, AO, Governor of Queensland and Official Visitor to the School; Dr Amanda Bell, Principal of Brisbane Girls Grammar School; distinguished guests one and all — welcome to this the 134th Speech Day and Distribution of Prizes at Brisbane Girls Grammar School.

As always, my welcome, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, extends to all of you and I acknowledge that for each and every one of you the School has its own special significance in your heart, whether you are here today as a past trustee, a past student, a parent, a member of School staff, a donor or supporter, a combination of these, or whether you are a student of the School, or, of course, most importantly at this Speech Day and Prize Giving Ceremony, one of our prize-winners and/or graduating Year 12 students. But today, it is a particular pleasure to extend the warmest of welcomes to Dr Judith Hancock, AM, Principal of Brisbane Girls Grammar School from 1977 to 2001.

For those of you Speech Day stalwarts who have been with us for the past two years you will know that this is the moment that I reveal my favourite new read for the year in the ‘Chair of Trustees Book Club Annual Best Pick Award’.

Two years ago I shared with you some reflections on James Surowiecki’s *Wisdom of Crowds*, which went some way to explaining the ‘wondrous thing’ that happens at Brisbane Girls Grammar School, where the collective greatness of our crowds of girls, year after year, seems to exceed the greatness of each of them individually, and yet magically benefits every individual girl as a result of being part of such collective energy. This experience, we hope, lays a solid foundation for our girls to contribute confidently to the world with the wisdom that is an explicit part of our School’s published Statement of Intent.

Then, last year I shared with you my joy at finding the marvellous book, *The Age of Wonder* by Richard Holmes, which invites the reader to imagine a glorious time in history when curiosity and knowledge were not in rigid subject silos — when scientists were often also poets and poets consorted with and marvelled at scientists and the miracles of their new sciences. What a delightful metaphor for the wonder which results from our students, and our staff, as they deftly criss-cross between disciplines both curricular and co-curricular. This fancy cross-discipline footwork explains, at least in part, why we dare to assert in our School’s Intent that we seek to send our young women out in to the world armed also with a sense of imagination.

Wisdom and Imagination. Surely then, you think, this year’s book choice ought to reflect on the third vital element of our stated School Intent — integrity. For those of you who need the gentlest reminder about our stated Intent, it is now literally etched for you, in letters two feet tall, on the wall of the fourth floor of the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre. It reads:

*Proud of our Grammar tradition, we are a secondary School that establishes the educational foundation for young women to contribute confidently to their world with wisdom, imagination and integrity.*

However, this year’s book choice doesn’t reflect directly on the concept ‘integrity’, but on the accountability generally of the Board of Trustees for ensuring that the School delivers what is promised through our stated Intent.

In his trademark acerbic style, Watson provokes us to look through meaningless platitudes and jargon — in a world where too many politicians wring their hands and plead that they are committed to ‘accountable government’ and yet steadfastly refuse to answer a straight question with a straight answer in language that you and I speak and understand, without so much as a hint of objection from the journalist putting the question. This is the world we inhabit: in which we do not have ‘record drought conditions’ but ‘extreme weather events’ according to our Government Ministers. In which we have ‘learnings’ instead of good old-fashioned ‘lessons’ in life. In which a company does...
Chair of The Board of Trustees

SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

not speak honestly about hard decisions like retrenchment of 300 to 500 staff in difficult economic times but instead speaks of the company ‘considering the implications of the down-balance to be between 300 to 500 employees’.

So Watson made me just a bit uncomfortable thinking about our accountability to you — the people who care about, and rely the most upon, Brisbane Girls Grammar School achieving its stated Intent. Do we mean it or do we just say it? Well we definitely mean it, but how do we even try to achieve it? You are entitled to hold us accountable for answering that question. Let me try.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE BOARD

The 2008 OECD paper Improving School Leadership tells us, amongst many other interesting things, that the effectiveness of the decision-making board of a school makes a difference to the results schools can achieve for their students — and I don’t mean only in terms of academic results. The Board of Trustees believes this to be true and takes its governing role very seriously.

So who are we and what do we do? By legislation we are seven in number and the present Board comprises people from a range of careers and walks of life. That number includes two past students, four past parents (including one recent past parent), one current parent, one professional educator (although I am sure that Don Watson would prefer that I simply described him as he is — until recently the vice chancellor of one of Australia’s leading universities). All of the members of the Board give freely, and voluntarily of their valuable time, experience and resources. On behalf of the School community I would like to thank them all for this commitment. They are:

- Dr Mary Mahoney, Deputy Chair of the Board
- Mr Tony Young, Chairman of the Board’s Finance and Audit Committee
- Ms Sally Pitkin, also a member of the Finance and Audit Committee
- Ms Else Shepherd
- Mr David Vann
- Professor John Hay.

Under the Grammar Schools Act, 1975, each Board of seven is bestowed with the privilege and responsibility of governing the School for a term of four years. The present Board’s term expires next year, in November 2010. You will therefore begin to hear about the process under the Grammar Schools Act for the election of three positions to the Board, by and from amongst the donors to the School, and for the four other positions which are appointed by the Queensland Minister for Education. But in short if you aren’t already on the Roll of Electors, and wish to have your say in the election of the Board in 2010 — and you should care about who governs this great School — then it would be remiss of me not to point out that there are plenty of philanthropic programmes in the School (Don Watson would rightly insist that I call them ‘ways to donate money’) so that you too can join the Roll of Electors and vote, or even be considered for election, in the process which starts in May next year.

ACCOUNTING FOR OUR RESOURCES

The origins of the word ‘accountability’ take us back to the fiscal responsibility to account to one from whom you have borrowed money. In modern governance terms this translates neatly as our obligation to stand before you and account for the manner in which we have cared for and helped to grow the resources of the School for the benefit of our girls. This is the obligation to account for all of its resources — financial, physical and human — all of which are fundamental to enabling us to open the gate at the end of a five-year education at our School, and invite our girls to step confidently in to the unrealisable future.

In terms then of caring for and growing the School’s physical resources, I hope that I don’t have to tell you what has consumed most of the Board’s attention this past year. Have you noticed the beautiful green space which has appeared in the literal heart of the School, nestled between the grand old Richard Gailey designed Main Building and the soaring walls of the m3architecture award-winning masterpiece, the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre? And have you noticed at the edge of that fresh green space in the heart of the School the fittingly blue waters of the new Brisbane Girls Grammar School swimming pool surrounded by the even more fittingly royal blue glass wall?

We are delighted to be able to confirm completion of the new swimming pool on time and within budget and more importantly, given our stated Intent, in accordance with the School’s curricular needs for water sports and lifesaving balanced as far as possible with its extensive co-curricular uses. This balance was achieved largely thanks to the tireless and enthusiastic input and support of both the School’s Sports staff and the Facilities Manager who worked closely with m3architecture and Bovis Lend Lease to deliver yet another superb facility for the benefit of girls today and well into the unrealisable future.
The protection and growth generally of the financial resources of the School continues to challenge the Board. The pressure is, frankly, not likely to ease up any time soon. As outlined in my recent column in the BGGS News, our ability to rely on core federal government funding slowly but surely diminishes, thus constantly increasing the pressure on other sources of income, primarily fee income. Hence the Board applies an extremely tight rein to the management of the School’s finances. This is supplemented by the considered acceptance of responsible but increasing borrowings in relation to larger building projects and also by a range of new philanthropic programmes through which the generosity of donors and benefactors is gratefully accepted.

Your Board spends much time focusing on the issues of how we can best manage our resources for the future. I won’t say ‘sustainably’ for fear that Don Watson will include this speech in his next book, but on this occasion that might be the most suitable word if it hadn’t already been hijacked by mission statements around the world!

Before leaving the subject of the School’s financial and physical resources, I cannot express sufficiently the Board’s gratitude for the efforts of the Business Manager and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, Ms Colette Pretorius, whose professionalism and contribution in this area is, put simply, invaluable. We are confident that the School’s ongoing financial management is in good and safe hands with Colette at this particular wheel.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE WISDOM, IMAGINATION AND INTEGRITY OF OUR GIRLS, OUR PRINCIPAL AND STAFF

Indeed when it comes to the ‘resources’ having the greatest influence on whether our girls forge a path through the world with a sense of wisdom, imagination and integrity, the Board is clear that the most important of the School’s resources are always of the human kind. I speak of course of our teaching and administrative staff. Not only recognised at state, national and international level for leading the way across a range of teaching and other pursuits, all of the School’s staff are required to be involved in internal and external professional development activities and programmes. The point? Improving the educational experiences of our girls.

This has been particularly evident this year. In what has been an extremely difficult and draining year for so many of our staff in so many ways, it never ceases to amaze the Board how members of our staff always rise above any hurdle, no matter how high, to meet the ultimate imperative of providing the most excellent educational opportunities for our girls. On this point, we are confident that our students just could not be in better hands than they are with the staff of this School.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary leadership of our Principal, Dr Bell. Dr Bell, you do not accept anything less than 100 per cent (usually demanding more like 120 per cent) of yourself and this is an ethos which pervades everything you do in your extraordinary leadership of our extraordinary staff. It is Dr Bell and her staff that drove the development of our stated Intent and who together strive daily to create an environment that equips our girls for taking on the world with wisdom, imagination and integrity.

However, never content to rest on her laurels, the Principal is working with the Board right now to identify ever better ways to connect with recently past students to help verify the extent to which the School is achieving its stated Intent, and would welcome your feedback through the Principal primarily, or the Board where appropriate, at any time. After all, it is only by hearing from our community that we can really know if our stated Intent is more than merely intent and is reality.

ACCOUNTING FOR OUR FAMILIES

Girls, parents, this is where it is over to you. The Board can only do so much to provide the buildings, classrooms, equipment, swimming pools, and other resources to enable the Principal and your teachers to provide the best possible environment for our girls. Quite apart from the obvious constant support of our girls at home, so many parents already go the extra mile through involvement in time-consuming parent support groups. The same goes for the active members of the Old Girls Association, which marked its 110th birthday this year. The School would be much poorer both spiritually and, to be realistic, financially, without the support of all of these groups. The Board extends our heartfelt thanks for those tireless efforts which contribute so much to the achievement of our School’s ambitious Intent.
SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

Girls, it is your turn. The rest is up to you. I know that most of you seize every possible opportunity presented by the School, sometimes so much so that your parents are heard to lament ‘what about your homework’? But we do urge you to take every opportunity in both your studies and your additional sporting, music, drama and other extra-curricular activities. For it is through those opportunities that we hope and trust you will find the spark of passion for the thing, or things, that will feed your wisdom, fire your imagination and provide the foundation principles for integrity, which we might define as the sense of responsibility to do always what you know in your heart to be ‘the right thing’ most particularly when faced with life’s most difficult choices.

Year 12 girls in particular. Now comes your great moment, or at least your next great moment of many more. The moment you step out with confidence into the wider world beyond our gates, knowing that you are a privileged member of a 134-year-old club, that of the Grammar Girl — and I am sure the Old Girls Association awaits your application for membership. You carry with you our very best wishes, and our hopes that we have truly done the best we can to equip you with the confidence to take on the world of your adult life with ever-growing wisdom, imagination and integrity.

Perhaps even inviting Don Watson’s disapproval, may you be the authors of ‘extreme weather events’ throughout your lives, creating a veritable storm of wisdom, imagination and integrity for all that surround you and in all that you do.

MS ELIZABETH JAMESON

REFERENCES:

Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Ms Penelope Wensley, AO, Ms Elizabeth Jameson, Chair of the Board, Trustees, Dr Judith Hancock, Past Principal, special guests, staff, parents and girls, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the Brisbane Girls Grammar School Annual Speech Day and Distribution of Prizes for 2009 — the last time for some time, and possibly ever, in this historic Brisbane City Hall.

Apparently we are in the midst of an education revolution. A revolution can be a radical and pervasive change in social order, or it can be a circular course where you end up back where you started. The question is, which definition applies to the current reviews taking place in the Australian education landscape? Hopefully not the latter.

The federal government currently has a building education revolution (2009), a digital education revolution (2009) and a commitment to developing a national curriculum — a national curriculum which incorporates a mandate to improve literacy and numeracy levels for all young people. Unfortunately, while the will of the government appears genuine, not everyone is convinced.

Least of all the education writers and experts, as exemplified by this quotation from The Age earlier this month:

The federal government’s education revolution is headed for failure because of a lack of imagination ... and the “flawed” national testing of Australian students, one of the nation’s leading educators has warned.

Former Melbourne University dean Brian Caldwell has delivered a scathing attack of Labor’s school policies, arguing that the so-called revolution is “drifting off course” because the Government has failed to adopt strategies to genuinely improve students' results.

Releasing a report card evaluating the Government’s key education priorities — such as the push for a national curriculum, the schools stimulus package, and education funding — Professor Caldwell has ranked the Government’s achievements as unimpressive to date, with many of the policies “missing in action”. (Tomazin, 2009)

This, and sentiments like it, are unfortunate but increasingly valid. It is a noble objective to improve education for all young people and in a country as geographically large and culturally diverse as ours, we need imaginative, well-funded, intelligent education policies to deliver this government's stated desire to establish a ‘critical link between long term prosperity, productivity growth and human capital investment’ (Rudd & Smith, 2007). But more than that, we need inspired thinking to create a transformation in education to give our young people the best possible foundation for the future and our country the best possible opportunities to prosper.

Being literate is far more than being able to read and write. Professor Rosemary Johnston argues that a literate nation:

... aspires at some deep level to generating and inspiring ‘mind’ — which is more than what we think with, more than the place where we think ... The minds of a literate nation think across borders and encourage senses of identity that refuse to be contained by a single descriptor ... Such minds are more nuanced, at once both individually distinctive and ‘commonly’ human; they think beyond a ‘them’ and ‘us’. (p.12–13, May 2009)

Therefore, literacy goes well beyond teaching and testing the basics; it is about thinking and applying knowledge in reflective, creative, unique and socially beneficial ways. Teachers know this. A literate nation is not one concerned with meeting standards, but rather one which celebrates the difficulty of complexity and applies resources to enable innovative programmes for improvement.

A national curriculum provides an invaluable opportunity to think about how such an invention can contribute at a deep level to a literate nation. The development of a national curriculum already failed once in the early 1990s in spite of the considerable investment of time, energy, expertise and resources. For those of us involved then, it probably failed for many reasons, but certainly it became too cumbersome in its prescribed content and assessment and the states could not agree on certain aspects. It was abandoned.

So, what is different fifteen years later? What have we learned from last time and what should be happening better this time? There are still lofty aspirations, committees, consultation processes, state sacred cows and concerns from the profession about assessment and implementation. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) web site states:
The [national] curriculum will outline the essential skills, knowledge and capabilities that all young Australians are entitled to access, regardless of their social or economic background or the school they attend.

The word ‘curriculum’ derives from the Latin meaning to race, or run a course; the proposed Australian Curriculum therefore should seek to set the course for the lives of young people. As educators, however, we know that a considered and effective curriculum is far more than a mere ‘course’ or path to follow. The word ‘national’ implies relevance and commonality for all. But surely the idea of ‘national’ can mean much more than this too.

Why does thinking about the distinctive geography, history and time of the nation have any significance in a discussion about national curriculum? Because these are not superficial differences — they reflect differing epistemologies (ideas about knowledge, about what characterises justified belief and what characterises opinion), different ontologies (ideas about being) and different cosmologies (ideas about the creation of the universe and one’s place in it). These are substantial and substantive differences and they affect both nation and education.

It would be a great national failing, if in devising an Australian curriculum, everyone was expected to fit into standardised levels of achievement and modes of delivery — regardless of their up-bringing or their location. Teachers know that tailored, individual teaching and learning that is relevant, imaginative and challenging will stimulate student engagement and ultimately literate minds. That is why flexibility of delivery and content is vital to successful education. That is why this year we established a new and unique faculty in differentiated studies to focus on cross-disciplinary, individual and innovative teaching and learning in response to a twenty-first century world.

A national curriculum for all does not naturally extend to one which is best for all. To cite an example, at the turn of the twentieth century as Australia approached Federation, there was a groundswell of sentiment now known as the emergence of our ‘national identity’. We were a colony approaching independence; a people grown from convict and free settlement in a country which required taming. Hard work, courage and the land became synonymous with the picture of the new Australia. This was reflected in the paintings of the time — especially by the Impressionists like Tom Roberts’ Shearing the Rams (1890) and Frederick McCubbin’s Pioneer (1904). But this was a flawed portrayal of a national identity and it ignored the traditional owners, the ‘original’ Australians. We must be alert at the turn of the twenty-first century that the introduction of something as potentially revolutionary as a national curriculum, presents an opportunity for a clever country to think laterally, expansively, inclusively and to question traditional perspectives.

Johnston argues that it is ‘an opportunity to provoke radical but informed thinking, not necessarily constrained by inherited systems. Such thinking interrogates; it may confirm what already is, or not.’ As Chair of the National Curriculum Committee for the Australian Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), I haven’t witnessed much radical thinking. The pace of the revolution agenda is not conducive to the percolation of ideas and imaginative solutions. We are in danger of a one-size-fits-all outcome which does not take into account difference and flexibility, let alone our dual history, multiple languages and landscapes, and our culture of multiple heritages (Johnston p. 27, 2009).

For example, for many of our indigenous young people in remote communities, English is not their first language and visual/oral communication is dominant — rather than written. If a literate nation is a thinking nation, perhaps the Turkish Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk’s observations should underpin why a diverse and different approach to devising a national curriculum is critical: ‘sometimes we think with words, and sometimes with images. Often we flit from one to the other.’ He asserts the primacy of the visual dimension in literary production and reception. In fact it was painting, Pamuk believes, that ‘harnessed his talent and gave him his deepest, most instinctive creative joy’: writing and a writer’s power to beguile and persuade. (Slattery, 2009)

So why has the current iteration of the national curriculum commenced so predictably and conservatively by reviewing the traditional disciplines of English, mathematics, science and history? What may it have looked like if it began with languages or multi-literacies, creative arts and multi-media? Would the world end as we know it, or possibly might our young people respond enthusiastically and learn better? Regardless of whether we think some subjects are more important than others,
not every culture, not every educator may agree, so surely the question needed to be asked in earnest at the outset: ‘where is the right place to begin and with what?’ It is now too late for that, but it is not too late to question the on-going process before finalisation. What is education in the twenty-first century and what is it for? The layout of a school day hasn’t changed substantially in a century. Why should a school day follow an adult working day? Convenience or because it is an educationally sound way to structure learning for twenty-first century young people? The dominant global school model has at its core ‘the underlying philosophy that school is good, progressive, develops potential, leads to social advancement and personal fulfilment, and teaches subjects relevant to the future lives of children who will thus grow up to be productive citizens.’ (Johnston p. 11, 2009)

Our staff, and I thank them deeply for it, question, research, discuss, invent, differentiate and think openly about change and what is best for our students. Our young women are taught to value imagination, the unknown and aspire to be productive citizens. Our School has a governance structure and a Board, for which I am ever thankful, which allows us the freedom to support the new, trial the different and realise ideas. We have a community of parents and alumni that value the approaches and decisions we take in the best interests of caring for and educating their daughters. Not all places can say that; not all young people in this country have access to a Girls Grammar. And so a responsibility falls to us all to ensure the outcome of the government’s aspiration for an education revolution — for an Australian ‘national’ curriculum — can be the best it can be. Our teachers must continue to contribute, respond and lobby — as they now do — and our community must be watchful and engaged in the change process to ensure it is truly about and for all current and future young Australians. The enterprise of education is simultaneously exciting but excruciatingly complex and we need to be literate leaders to get it right.

Year 12, your future includes a role where you will contribute to our nation’s and this world’s development and sustainability. You can read and write; but you can do so much more. You can appreciate difference, you can reflect and imagine improvement. You can think and you know what it is to be literate in the most important ways. Your theme this year has referred to ‘Shake it Up’; don’t lose sight of this once you depart today and ensure that when you do ‘shake it up’ out there, it is for the right reasons and for the greater good.

DR AMANDA BELL

REFERENCES:
OCCASIONAL ADDRESS
INTRODUCTION:
Prior to her appointment in July 2008 as the 25th Governor of Queensland, Ms Penelope Wensley enjoyed a rich and distinguished career in diplomacy, playing a significant role in the promotion of Australia’s international relations and the development of Australian foreign policy across a diverse range of issues affecting peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and humanitarian concerns, the environment and sustainable development. Ms Wensley graduated from The University of Queensland in 1967 with a Bachelor of Arts with First Class Honours. She joined the Australian Foreign Service in 1968 — the only woman selected in an intake of nineteen — and served as an officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade until 2008, representing Australia in a wide range of positions overseas, in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Pacific and at the United Nations. Achieving the rank of Head of Mission in 1986, Ms Wensley served successively as Consul-General in Hong Kong, Ambassador for the Environment, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, High Commissioner to India and Ambassador to Bhutan, Ambassador to France, Algeria, Morocco, Monaco and Mauritania. In every case, Ms Wensley was the first woman to be appointed to the position, representing Australia.

In 1994, Ms Wensley was named The University of Queensland’s first woman Alumnus of the Year for her achievements in the field of international relations and was also awarded an honorary doctorate for her distinguished contributions to international relations. Ms Wensley was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in 2001 for her distinguished service to the development of Australia’s international relations.

Her life-time involvement with the promotion and protection of Australia’s interests internationally, and her long and active engagement with the development of national and international responses to various global challenges, has created a deep commitment to the advancement of international understanding and cooperation, through enhanced communication, contact and exchanges between countries and cultures. Ms Wensley has a particular interest in humanitarian and human rights issues, including the protection and advancement of the rights of women.

Ms Wensley, as the Governor of Queensland, is the Official Visitor to the School and please join with me in making her welcome.

DR AMANDA BELL
PRINCIPAL

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS
As has become customary in our state on all major public occasions, in the spirit of reconciliation, I acknowledge the first inhabitants and traditional owners of these lands before European settlement, the Jagera and Turrbal peoples, their elders and their descendants.

I acknowledge also the Chair of the School Board of Trustees, Ms Elizabeth Jameson; Deputy Chair, Dr Mary Mahoney, AO; and the other Board Members and Trustees present this afternoon; School Principal, Dr Amanda Bell; President of the Old Girls Association, Mrs Christine Purvis; President of the Fathers Group, Mr Jonathan Blocksidge; President of the Mothers Group, Mrs Debra Loose; senior staff, teachers and administrative staff, parents, family and friends of the students, members of the extended School community and of the School’s various support groups, and the stars of today — the students — in particular, the Year12 girls for whom this will be the last Speech Day they attend as students of Brisbane Girls Grammar School.

It is a great pleasure for me, as Official Visitor to this prestigious school, to join you all this afternoon for this annual Speech Day, always a significant event in the life of any school, as the ceremonial culmination of the efforts and the strains of a year of study and learning, of sporting endeavour, of cultural activities and community engagement, of the joys of friendship and of friendly competition, of challenges made and challenges met.

For the graduating class of 2009, today’s Speech Day will probably prove to be the most memorable, because it marks in a formal, official sense the end of one phase of your lives — your school days — and the commencement of the next, whether that be further education or training, entering the workforce or perhaps a ‘gap year’ of travel and work.

For each of you, the 2009 academic year has no doubt been an intensely personal journey, and yet, in the myriad activities in which you have participated, both academic and non-academic, you have been links in a chain in one of the longest and most ambitious educational projects in Queensland — a project...
Ancient History will tell you that the Victorian
Those girls here today who are students of
change happen in the world.
improved and that individuals could make
of the optimistic idea that the world could be
spirit of democracy, the spirit of endeavour;
evoke ideals drawn from classical civilization:
reflective of the Pantheon, was designed to
Main Auditorium with its fluted columns
adorned with allegorical reliefs, to this internal
architecture of Ionic columns and pediments
your school. This building, from its external
Victorian ideals that inspired the founders of
this building wears in its very fabric the same
fifty years separates your school and City Hall,
having been built in the 1920s. Although
City Hall is younger than Girls Grammar,
having been built in the 1920s. Although
which, some of you no doubt know, began in
1875 in George Street, with Mrs Janet O’Connor
as Principal, after Sir Charles Lilley (the former
Premier and Chief Justice of Queensland)
declared that the girls of Queensland deserved
the same educational opportunities as their
brothers. It was a radical concept for its time:
amost six years before women were even
permitted to enrol at university in Sydney
and Melbourne, the ambitious Brisbane Girls
Grammar Project had begun, and ever since
1949, Speech Day has been held here, in the
Brisbane City Hall.
City Hall is younger than Girls Grammar,
having been built in the 1920s. Although
fifty years separates your school and City Hall,
this building wears in its very fabric the same
Victorian ideals that inspired the founders of
your school. This building, from its external
architecture of Ionic columns and pediments
adorned with allegorical reliefs, to this internal
Main Auditorium with its fluted columns
reflective of the Pantheon, was designed to
evoke ideals drawn from classical civilization:
the spirit of democracy, the spirit of endeavour;
of the optimistic idea that the world could be
improved and that individuals could make
change happen in the world.
Those girls here today who are students of
Ancient History will tell you that the Victorian
imagining of some of these ideals was somewhat
removed from some rather brutal realities,
but despite that, these references still serve
to remind us that in our culture, our civilization,
there are certain values, certain ideals that we
hold to be timeless and goals that are worthy
of our time and our effort — and just like the
buildings that exemplify them, they require
care and attention if they are to remain strong
and resilient.
The late Victorian writer G K Chesterton
described education as ‘simply the soul of a
society as it passes from one generation to
another’. It is a lovely phrase and a sentiment
that I believe Sir Charles Lilley would have
appreciated, and which I think also is reflective
of the generations of young women who have
moved through Brisbane Girls Grammar School,
and who have gone on to make extraordinary
contributions to our community and our country.
But it is also a challenge to the young women
here today. It seems almost quaint that a scant
134 years ago, that establishing a girls’ grammar
school would be considered radical thinking,
but still today, in 2009, more than 60 million
girl children around the world do not attend
primary school at all. In 1873 Sir Charles Lilley
said that ‘We know that so far as any real
knowledge is concerned the great mass of
women have been left in complete darkness.’
It is, unfortunately, still the case for millions of
women around the world today. It is right and
appropriate to focus today, with the awarding
of prizes and honours, on the achievements of
girls at this school, but as we do so, we should
mourn the missing achievements of millions
of young women whose illiteracy and lack of access
to education renders them silent and voiceless,
condemns them to remain in that darkness of
ignorance.
We should never take our education — and
the privileges of our lives — for granted. I confess
I did. My full awakening to the enormity of that
privilege came well after I had completed school
and university, joined the Australian Foreign
Service and begun my career as a diplomat.
My first posting was to France — like Australia,
an advanced, affluent society — built on similar
values and ideals, with the very symbol of
‘La Republique’, a feminine figure, portraying
soaring, vigorous freedom and equal opportunity
for men and women alike. But my second
posting, to Mexico in Central America, was
starkly different. There, I was confronted for
the first time, directly and daily, with grinding
poverty and its brutal consequences, especially
for women: women seated on the pavements
of ignorance.
nothing, only with hand outstretched, begging;
women and children ranged along country
roads, holding up iguanas in the hope that
tourists would stop for photos and pay a few
pesos for the experience; young girls in rural
Guatemala (one of the countries to which I
travelled as part of my work), spending their
days not at school, but instead walking miles
just to get water, carried in huge, heavy pots
on their heads; women disadvantaged in every
way imaginable — with seemingly no prospect
of breaking the cycle of poverty and ignorance
that was their heritage — a very different one
from mine — and yours. And yet it was possible
to do so. We — Australia’s aid program —
built a well for those village women, liberating
the girls to attend school; we provided sewing
machines to the older women and classes in
sewing and microfinance, giving them a
capacity to earn, but even more important,
dignity and independence; and, even through
these modest efforts, I saw a community
transformed, women and girls awakened to
new possibilities, and having glimpsed them,
eager for more, eager especially to learn,
having seen that through learning they could
change their lives.
Now, as you girls have churned through the
school year, the grind and the stress of exams
and assignments, you probably haven’t always

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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felt ‘eager’ about study or thought over-much about the benefits of education and its transforming influence. Yet, through your schooling here, you, too, have been transformed and given the means to change and to shape your lives — and, I would suggest, the lives of others. Because, as students of Brisbane Girls Grammar, you haven’t simply received an education — you have been given important values which will define your character and your outlook throughout your life — values that I know include respecting others, caring about others and assuming responsibility for assisting others less fortunate than yourselves. You are the beneficiaries of a liberal education and a progressive, outward-looking philosophy of teaching which, in the words of the Principal, has been designed to ‘prepare young women for a full and active role as global citizens with the skills, confidence and resilience to live and make a difference in an ever-changing world’.

I don’t pretend for one moment that making a difference in an ever-changing world is something to be savoured and enjoyed. It is distressingly easy, in such a complex environment (and I have observed this directly myself since I became Governor, dealing with problems of youth homelessness, substance abuse and other difficulties) for some young people to become confused, to lose their way or even to lose hope, but I have every confidence that these graduates, these accomplished young women, will not sink, but swim — and swim, moreover, purposefully, with both strength and style.

I am confident they will do so because, unlike this building, whose foundations are in swampy land, these young women have strong foundations to support them. Their strongest foundations are their families, whose determination to see their girls given the best education possible led them to choose this school and, in some cases, I have no doubt, to make sacrifices to enable their daughters to attend Brisbane Girls Grammar and then to take advantage of all the programs and opportunities available to its students — both for study, such as the imaginative outdoor education program and the exchange programs in Asia and Europe — and from across the full gamut of extra-curricular activities: sport, culture and community engagement.

Alongside the families have been the teachers, who have worked with enthusiasm and dedication to educate and inspire the girls in their care, to instil in them the ethic and the spirit of the School motto of ‘Nil Sine Labore’ — Nothing without work — another classical reference, from the wonderful Latin lyric poet and satirist, Horace, inscribed on the shield that is on every school badge, as a daily reminder that without effort, nothing worthwhile is achieved.

For the Year 12 girls, wearing your school uniforms today for the very last time (except perhaps at some fancy dress or theme party or reunion down the track — don’t discard them — you’ll be glad someday that you hung onto them!), you will no longer have that visible reminder, but you will carry that message with you nonetheless, as an integral part of the set of skills and values you have been given to make your way in the world.

I congratulate you on your achievement in graduating, on the completion of your formal school education and I wish you well in whatever you choose to do. As you do make your life and career choices, I hope you will be adventurous and imaginative — and remember always that life is something to be savoured and enjoyed and tackled with a sense of humour, imagination and fun: the sort of humour, imagination and fun that I was delighted to see displayed in today’s Courier Mail, with the notice advertising the School for sale, ‘staff included’! Keep that clever, cheeky spirit; keep that imagination in your lives — it will serve you well — but temper it with compassion and generosity towards others, mindful of those women — indeed the millions of men, women and children who still suffer the darkness of poverty and ignorance, of discrimination and disadvantage. With your knowledge and abilities, with your education, there is scope for you to create change, to make a difference in the world, and, as women who have been educated, and educated well, I feel you have an obligation to repay that gift. You are not just the heirs to a tradition, to the heritage of ideals and values that you have been bequeathed as Girls Grammar graduates, you are custodians of your education — a gift that grows with the giving — and I hope that you will find ways to spread that gift outward throughout the world and that as you do so, you will find yourselves leading lives that are interesting and rewarding, but even more importantly, ones that are truly satisfying, happy and fulfilled.

**MS PENELOPE WENSLY, AO**
Head Girls

SPEECH DAY ADDRESS

Good afternoon to Her Excellency Ms Penelope Wensley AO, Governor of Queensland; Chair of the Board of Trustees, Ms Jameson; Dr Bell, staff, parents, friends and girls.

This has, by no stretch of the imagination, been a perfect year at Brisbane Girls Grammar School. 2009 may have begun with its usual (though undeniably extraordinary) calendar of events, but as the year has progressed, what we have observed is that special ability of the School and indeed of the staff, students and community to cope with adversity. We experienced inconvenience — case in point, the infamous, although now taboo, ‘Swine Flu Week’. We experienced joy, excitement and gratitude when we returned from the September holidays to find the School’s intent emblazoned on the CLC Media Wall and a new pool that we just couldn’t wait to take a dip in. We experienced loss, in the form of a staff member, Mr Bromiley, who is greatly missed. However, through all this we experienced an enduring and pervading sense of community. The ability of this group to come together in times of difficulty, of happiness and of grief, to name a few, has been the outstanding factor in making 2009. It is the strength of a community character shown at these critical times that truly illustrates the unyielding bonds within the School. Throughout these shakier times, we have relied heavily on each other for assistance, for laughs and for company, gaining a positive, progressive outlook on situations, which has helped us greatly in coping.

At the Student Council Induction at the very beginning of the academic year, we asked that you all embrace our motto. This was ‘Own It, Shake It, Bring It’. There is no doubt that we have owned this year. We have made our Grammar journey our own and as always we have come out on top, despite some struggles along the way. In fact, at that initial assembly, we said ‘it’s very easy to be caught in the trap of doing the same thing every day’. This, we hope, has been false in 2009. We have been shaken, whether against our will or of our own accord, but we most certainly have brought it! We have brought it to every aspect of our school lives and this is evidenced by the outstanding and varied academic achievement here this afternoon, the undeniable success of our fundraising efforts, along with our athletes — sixteen QG Cross Country titles isn’t bad — musicians, many of you would have been at the Gala, debaters, wanting to argue the result of their QDU Grand Finals and more …

So, in a world where we have only really known school and committed ourselves to it, where we remain relatively sheltered from hardship such as the Global Financial Crisis and war, where our problems are often quite petty, and in a year that has not been perfect, we are astounded and grateful and cannot begin to express the value of that unity, as demonstrated by the girls. Because it is this unity that has really allowed us to pull through and to excel as a school, resulting in such an exceptional year.

We might go one step further and say it has been positive unification that has made it a superb year. This outlook has been essential for managing school — it is powerful, infectious and heartening. While it may seem trivial, a positive outlook, or lack thereof, can determine our quality of life. At intervals throughout Term IV, Mrs Forbes, School Psychologist, discussed with Year 12 the issue of happiness. One of the key points that we took from the discussion was that happiness is not necessarily linked to power or wealth but to how we treat others and in turn, how they respond. To love, the capacity to be loved and gratitude are some of the most significant contributors to leading a meaningful life. We are lucky enough to say that there are many examples of such qualities at Brisbane Girls Grammar School and we credit the success of this year to the love and gratitude shown by the Grammar community.

We started off the year with a Valentine’s Day celebration to spread the love and to help raise money for Victorian bushfire victims. The community responded splendidly to the cause culminating in a four-figure donation to the Red Cross Appeal. The entire year has followed with a similar response. With every fundraiser that has been organised, whether it is Pink Day, the Tri-Grammar Series, G-Factor or Movember, we are always able to clearly see the generosity that we appreciate so much. Year 12s this year gave up mornings to make sandwiches for the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade, serving the homeless of Brisbane. The girls offered their time to making a tangible difference in the lives of others. We have received a very positive response about how this gave the students a sense of real achievement and purpose. And ‘the love’ is always evident in Blue Day celebrations, when girls sign the Brisbane Girls Grammar School banners and in the send-off war cries. Events such as the Spring Fling, Harry Potter Day and Blue Days would not have been so much fun without the School’s ability to come together and create such a unique atmosphere of appreciation for each other.
One of the outstanding lessons that the School teaches us is to be grateful for what we have, which is obviously a great deal. Dr Bell spoke with the Year 12s about what luck is and what we make of it. Very few of us were able to express a suitable answer that covered all the bases, but now, it seems that fortuitous circumstances that led us to be up here with this particular set of 1100 girls before us is … well, call it fate, kismet, whatever you like, but it has been fabulous. We were lucky in the first place to have attended such a wonderful school with wonderful students and we were lucky to have had such an eventful year and we were lucky in the extreme to have led you all. However, we truly believe that the whole School has acted on its luck and really made something out of it. Gratitude for our good fortune is again reflected through positive responses to fundraisers.

The point of all this positive psychology, Mrs Forbes told us, was to be able to experience ‘flow’: a mindset in which a person is fully immersed in what they are doing and time moves quickly. We believe that this year the School has existed in a constant state of flow. Time has moved oh-so-quickly and we have been consumed by 2009 and doing everything we are so good at. Thank you to the whole of the student body for being part of a very special year for us. Girls, your enthusiasm has spurred us on during the more difficult parts of this year. We have said before that leaders should reflect the people they lead, their actions should be governed by the people and for them. You have engaged with us and embraced us and for that we are thankful. Our thanks must especially go to our own cohort, the Year 12s, who have risen to the challenge of leadership and have shown all the qualities that we mentioned earlier. We could not have asked for a better group. We hope that the Seniors will remember that they will forever be part of this community, which has given so much to them. Remember that it is communities and the bonds in these communities that pull us through the difficult times. They are the ones who have lifted us up for the past five years and will continue to do so. At the same time, we are no longer students here. Our association with the School will continue but our lives are not so closely bound to it anymore. We are now entering another phase. We will have to open ourselves to new experiences but we were fortunate enough to have attended a school which has equipped us for the next step in our lives.

We are so proud of the way that each girl has risen to meet challenges that blocked the path of her purpose. We are thrilled that each Grammar girl has made their journey their own, though at times they may have been shaken, they have still brought everything to the table and shown the rest of the world what they are truly capable of. We are grateful that we have been so lucky as to lead the School that we love in 2009.

BRITTANY BRUSASCO AND JULIANA DING
Valedictory

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Dr Bell, Dr Mahoney, Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees, Mr John Lee, President of the Parents and Friends Committee, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to be speaking to you tonight. One morning a couple of months ago, I was writing up some medication charts in the nurses’ station when I received a phone call from Dr Bell asking if I would come tonight. My reaction was of pleasure and surprise, and of course the immediate answer was ‘yes’! My own Valedictory Dinner was eleven years ago and I have been trying to recall the atmosphere of the evening. I remember feeling proud and relieved to be finishing high school. I was excited about the future with the immediate prospects of summer holidays, later starts in the morning, and being uniform free. I was thankful towards family and staff for the support to make it to the finish line. These sentiments may apply to people in the room tonight, so congratulations everyone — students, staff and family members — on your valuable contributions towards this evening’s celebration.

I am also excited because like the Year 12 students, I have just finished a major milestone. About three weeks ago I sat my final specialist exams in Psychiatry, and last Friday, while in San Francisco as part of an urgent post-exams holiday, I found out I had passed! Leading up to the exams, I had in mind that it was such a ‘big deal’, much like Year 12, so here I am all over again, feeling excited, relieved and thankful. But I am sure most of you will not be still doing exams in eleven years’ time.

Tonight I would like to share some ideas about important influences on my path since leaving school. I have been thinking about how my very special education at Grammar has had ripple effects that have helped me along the way. And it was truly special. I think the values of Grammar — in promoting the importance of women accessing an outstanding education — sets you up to know that the world is at your feet, but also that you will need skills, and to work hard to develop them.

The areas I would like to talk about tonight are creating opportunities for your future, seeking out mentors, knowing your resilience, and appreciating your communities.

In terms of the first topic, opportunities, Grammar taught me that any opportunity was open for me to pursue. When I was a medical student I had to do a year of research as a part of my degree. Now the prospect of this did not thrill me, but I saw it as an opportunity to pursue my goal to live overseas for a year. I wondered what I could do, given that I couldn’t really afford to do that. I had a talk to the man who ran the College in Melbourne where I was living. Don said, ‘Well, Peter Doherty is visiting at the moment, why don’t you have a talk to him?’ I was taken aback. I thought, ‘Peter Doherty?! Nobel Laureate?! You mean just give him a phone call and ask to work at his hospital for a year?’ Well, that is what Don said I should do and he gave me the phone number. ‘I can’t believe I am doing this’ I thought, as I picked up the phone. But Peter was very easy-going and understanding and said he would send some emails to people at his hospital. As it turned out, they set up a program which meant that I got paid in $US to do a year of my degree at one of the world’s leading cancer hospitals. I’d like to tell you a bit more about how that went later, but for now, the message I would like to get across is that if you keep trying hard and doing well, other people notice. And if you sometimes move beyond your comfort zone, be persistent if some initial prospects don’t work out, and ask other people for help, great things can happen. This links to my next topic — the importance of continuing to find mentors.

As a young medical student I was interested in the prospects of a career in surgery. I loved anatomy and being in the operating theatre. But I wondered what the lifestyle would be like. I joined the Victorian Medical Women’s Society and met women working in a range of specialties, including surgery. This was very helpful for me to understand more about what the job actually involved. Along the way in my training though, I came to understand that my brain works better in a humanities way rather than a technical way, and I wasn’t actually that dextrous with my hands. Luckily, I really enjoyed my psychiatry rotation as a student, where the professor was also a great role model who told me about her pathway through careers and training.

Mentors can be role models who you identify with and think, ‘I want to be like that!’ They can provide valuable insights into different career options. They can provide encouragement, advice, and perspective if you are wondering what to do next. The Grammar community recognises that rich relationships may grow from networking, providing you with a strong mentoring foundation to develop however you wish.
The third topic I want to discuss tonight relates to resilience. The reason for this is that in whatever you do after school, as has already been the case, there are likely to be some speed bumps and setbacks along the way. Knowing your own strength, and developing supports and helpful ways of coping with stressful times can really make a difference. Getting through Year 12 I am sure has required resilience.

Resilience was a hot topic in psychological research, particularly since the 1970s, when researchers were interested in the outcomes of children from disadvantaged backgrounds. They noticed about two-thirds went on to be involved with problems like crime or significant psychological difficulties, but one-third did not. What helped this group adapt, survive and thrive? To keep it brief, and it is a big research area so I am making generalisations, some key factors included personality characteristics like being sociable, determined, and aware of self-responsibility; having a healthy sense of self-esteem; constructively seeking help when needed, and, having supports from trusted family members, friends or people from the wider community.

All of us have resilience, but if we think about how we cope well, and realise ways that are maybe not so well and address them, and remember the importance of getting help from other people at times, it can have a big impact on getting through when times are tough.

As an example, and going back to my research year in Memphis, it was quite a difficult year. I was a 20-year-old medical student with no laboratory skills in a high-powered lab. This frustrated my boss (not Peter Doherty), which made things difficult for me, and my project wasn’t working out. To top it all off, I never thought I would get homesick but I did. I remember one day I almost burst into tears when I saw a copy of the *Australian Women’s Weekly* owned by someone else at work.

What got me through? Support from a wonderful Australian family there who practically adopted me; keeping in touch with family and friends back home; going to a ballet class once a week with some hilarious Southern women who were more interested in group dinners called ‘Ballerina Margarita Mondays’ than exercise; and, looking forward to a trip to Europe at the end. That year also showed me that I could get through unexpected and difficult experiences, and was an important lesson to be adaptable about how things may work out.

The final topic I wanted to address tonight was the importance of community. Having been a part of the Grammar community for the past five years as students, you know how inspiring a group can be, and the heights it can achieve. You know that each group member is unique. I would encourage you to take those values to the groups you will be a part of in the future.

By appreciating the individual and the whole, and contributing a sense of spirit, others will react to this strongly.

The example from my life that stands out most to me is hospital communities. Every hospital is different. Some are academic hospitals, some service half a capital city, some are tiny and in the country. Some are happy and friendly, some are not, and some are happy and friendly despite the odds of difficult work and conditions. In those situations, I have noticed that it is the cheerful contribution of every individual, from the maintenance staff to the chief administrators, and the sense of esprit de corps that unites the team, makes things run smoothly and the workplace relatively enjoyable. So in whatever teams, groups and communities you become a part of in the future, I think a little touch of Grammar style will stand you in good stead.

In closing, what a future lies ahead — unknown, exciting, yours to take charge of.

And, the best thing is that you can keep in touch! You may all go different ways, but if your year group is anything like mine, and with the help of social networking technology, you will also keep in contact to enjoy sharing the future and all that it brings. Good luck and congratulations on finishing Year 12!

DR KATIE MENDRA
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