Welcome to the Brisbane Girls Grammar School 2012 Annual Review. This has been a year of change for the School — and with change comes the opportunity for renewal.

This year marks the culmination of Dr Amanda Bell’s principalship. I recounted just some of Dr Bell’s achievements — all of which are for the benefit of our students — at this year’s Speech Day, which is reproduced herein. In addition to the tangible improvements Dr Bell has made to the School, it is the intangible — advocating scholarship; role modelling leadership; supporting staff; fostering a philanthropic culture; encouraging community service; and being loyal, judicious and determined — that is her legacy. Dr Bell has been the indefatigable head and heart of Brisbane Girls Grammar for eleven years. She departs with our heartfelt thanks and best wishes.

I am proud of our girls’ efforts this year, and equally so of the commitment of our staff and volunteers. We are sincerely grateful to the P&F, the Old Girls Association, alumnae, parents, and friends who give their time and energy for support groups and vital School activities. I warmly thank my fellow volunteers on the Board of Trustees, particularly Professor John Hay who retired from the Board this year. His expertise will be sorely missed. Our special thanks also go to a number of long-serving teachers transitioning into well-earned retirements at the end of 2012. While we bid a fond farewell to some, our talented executive team remains at the helm — steadfast and ready to embark on a new era with our new Principal.

The Board recently announced the appointment of Ms Jacinda Euler as the School’s sixteenth Principal. It will be a homecoming for Ms Euler, who taught at Brisbane Girls Grammar from 2000 to 2007 prior to undertaking senior positions at two well-respected independent schools in Sydney. Ms Euler’s experience as a senior educator and her sound understanding of the unique culture and educational philosophy of the School bodes well for a new era of leadership commencing in Term II next year.

This year also saw the Board approve an exciting building project in anticipation of the introduction of Year 7 in 2015. The new centre will provide a dedicated space for students in their first year of high school and, with its focus on contemplation and research, a counterpoint to the interaction and creativity offered by the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre. Construction will commence in 2013.

Another exciting aspect of renewal this year was the purchase of a dedicated sporting campus at Fig Tree Pocket. While Marrapatta, our Outdoor Education Centre in the Mary Valley, provides the girls with a spacious learning environment, the confines of our beautiful Gregory Terrace campus require innovative solutions. The acquisition of this thirteen-hectare site will enable the development of our own playing fields to further invigorate the School’s thriving sports programme.

We look forward to next year and, with the support of our community, confidently embracing all the challenges and successes that renewal will bring to this exceptional School.

Ms Elizabeth Jameson
Chair of the Board
Google’s Zeitgeist 2012 analysis [n.d.] tells us that during the year there were 1.2 trillion searches in 146 languages. It categorises the top–trending events, people and places globally and by individual country. No surprise that the London Olympics and Gangnam Style feature heavily on worldwide trends, and home–grown celebrities and the transit of Venus phenomenon feature locally. But these rankings are selective and only represent statistical frequency and not significance. Sometimes the importance of an event and its impact on positive change can slip by quietly, unnoticed.

At Brisbane Girls Grammar School, so much occurs in classrooms everyday of significance to individual learning and collective endeavour, even though it does not rank on the Zeitgeist register. But what happens in the teaching and learning programmes, the co–curricular activities, the service to community and the leadership opportunities is vital for our students’ and our society’s future development. In fact, the Girls Grammar phenomenon should be a top–ranking Zeitgeist item every year!

The 2012 Annual Review presents highlights of many achievements and initiatives by students and staff, as well as profiling milestones in the history of the School – such as the exciting recent purchase of the new sporting campus at Fig Tree Pocket. The Review is a snapshot of the educational landscape in this place, merely scratching the surface of what actually happens in the annual life of the School.

Philanthropic endeavour and community engagement via social media have also been features of this year’s strategic goals, along with design planning for a new building on Gregory Terrace to accommodate the 2015 Year 7 cohort while simultaneously providing a leading research centre for the School. These projects form part of our strategy to deliver the School’s aspiration ‘to be a leader in exceptional scholarship.’

At the close of 2012 and the conclusion of my principalship at this remarkable School, it is timely to acknowledge its perennial strengths: the marvellous spirit and positive culture that flourishes every year amongst the student body and Year 12 leaders; the scholarly role modelling and professionalism inherent in our staff; the considerable commitment to philanthropic support from our parent body, alumnae and broad Grammar community; and the support and dedication of the Trustees who ensure our School remains relevant and successful in ever–changing educational and legislative contexts.

Finally, I wish to thank the Brisbane Girls Grammar School community for eleven superb years, during which I have felt privileged to play a small part in its history. For the next Principal, Ms Jacinda Euler, I wish all the very best for her future leadership of what I believe is one of the very best schools for young women in this country.

Dr Amanda Bell
Principal
Our Intent:
Proud of our Grammar tradition
we are a secondary school that establishes the
educational foundation
for YOUNG WOMEN
to complete confidently
to their world with
imagination and
creativity

04.
This year also saw the conclusion of the stewardship of the School’s fifteenth Principal and exceptional leader, Dr Amanda Bell. After eleven years of outstanding service, Dr Bell departs to take up the position of Principal of The Women’s College within the University of Sydney. The strategic momentum of 2012, led by Dr Bell and her senior management team, focused mainly in two key areas: teaching and learning – and how to mine traditional notions of scholarship in order to provide cutting-edge, future-orientated learning opportunities for teenaged girls.

The School’s Aspiration stated in the Strategic Design for 2012–2015 challenges us ‘to be a leader in exceptional scholarship’. It has been interesting, yet unsurprising, that the prism through which the School has scrutinised much of its thinking and practice has been through a philosophical framework.

In doing so, the School benefited greatly from engaging Associate Professor John Armstrong as Visiting Philosopher this year. Associate Professor Armstrong is an Oxford- and London-educated writer and Senior Advisor in the Office of the Vice Chancellor at the University of Melbourne. He worked with our staff to develop a deeper understanding of the ideas underpinning our new Strategic Design so that the implementation of change was deeply considered and understood. The year started with a provocative address that included difficult propositions in order to engage staff in thinking about the intellectual and ethical culture of the School. Associate Professor Armstrong believes that this kind of discussion has the potential to lead to what he called a ‘small r’ renaissance view of thinking. His first address focused on ‘leadership’. If the School aspired ‘to be a leader in exceptional scholarship’, we had to be clear that we understood what we meant. He set the challenge early on in the year:

The ‘good ambitions’ required in order to create ‘exceptional scholarship’ for our students, during their time in the School and beyond, became very clear to us. Developing also from the work in 2010 of the School’s Scholar in Residence and Education Futurist, Adjunct Professor Erica McWilliam, a bespoke Brisbane Girls Grammar School Philosophy of Teaching emerged through the work of Mr Trent Driver, Dean of Academic Development. It maintains traditional notions of scholarship while positioning our teaching framework to be proactively focused on preparing our students for the future.

This framework aspires to more than just a seemingly successful, lock-step engagement in curriculum content to a desirable OP outcome for our girls. What we want for them is that they possess the well-developed attributes of a scholar when they leave us. We want our students to have a deep, innate interest in ideas; a desire to ask questions; the capacity to find answers through systematic, intelligent research; and an authentic engagement with their world. Indeed, we want every Girls Grammar student and teacher to have a love of learning – this in itself being, as Associate Professor Armstrong [2012] points out, ‘an honourable and insightful way of defining scholarship’. And, not content with that, we maintain committed to the Grammar tradition of establishing the foundation for our young women to contribute confidently, wisely and imaginatively to our ever-changing and globalised world.

The School’s newly articulated Philosophy of Teaching provides teachers with a shared language for understanding the craft of what they do with students. It is explicit in challenging teachers to create authentic and empowering learning environments for students that:

- foster rigour and deep understanding
- promote higher order thinking skills
- engage in disciplined and critical inquiry
- create connectedness across different contexts
- engage students with their learning and the learning process
- develop sustained and substantive communication skills.
The nature of learning and what makes an individual effective has been a subject of a significant amount of research in the last decade (Doidge, 2008; Goswami, 2008; Hattie, 2003; Oxley, 2008). The School has been keeping a close eye on what this research is telling us, as it is clear that it has great relevance for educators. Our response to this research has been embedded into our Strategic Design. In particular, recent neuroscientific research has provided increased understanding of how learning occurs, and the notion of neuroplasticity – the brain’s capacity to change – is understood and accepted.

The concept that people are able to improve cognition through repeated application and experience has significant and exciting implications for educators. Consequently, the School has developed a programme entitled Philosophy of Learning. This programme, under the leadership of Dean of Studies Ms Samantha Bolton, was implemented to all Year 8 students this year and received national recognition (Ferrari, 2012; Aly & Heggen, 2012). Providing students, at an entry–level stage of their secondary education, with the strong belief that they can influence their learning outcomes through their actions is significantly empowering and motivating. The work of Professor Carol Dweck (2006) from Stanford University, relating to a student’s learning mindset and its impact on their ability to make intellectual progress, strongly underpins our Philosophy of Learning subject. Dweck’s research demonstrates that an individual’s ability to manage challenges and setbacks is influenced by core beliefs about learning. Some students see intelligence as a fixed entity while others believe that it can grow through a systematic approach to work, resilience and self–belief. According to Dweck, those who believe the latter experience greater success owing to their inclination to persevere and recover from set backs. The culture of learning in the School has been enhanced by this new Year 8 subject. Combined with a commitment to increased staff professional development and communication of the philosophy to parents, it is anticipated that the benefits in terms of scholarship will increase.

The desire to understand the connection of varying learning spaces and how these spaces influence and shape learning and the development of teenaged girls is of great interest to the School. These concepts have been brought into particular focus this year as the planning for our new Year 7 and Research Centre has intensified. Consideration of the new centre has included discussion around the need to reflect the School’s heritage. Our gracious, historical Main Building on Gregory Terrace strongly symbolises our traditional foundations – based on notions such as scholarship and a judicious engagement with, and contribution to, the world – which we continue to hold dear and infiltrates all that we do. However, notions such as mobile learning technologies, modernity, flexibility and fluidity have also influenced educational thinking and, consequently, have shaped the brief for this new building. In contrast to the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre, which encourages thinking and behaviour that is social, creative and lively, it is thought that the new centre should be more about encouraging thought, reflection, contemplation, and considered reading and research.

When our two cohorts of 2015 arrive – Year 8 as well as the newly introduced Year 7 – it is envisioned that they will experience a School culture that is refined, comforting and mature in its traditional foundations, while being thoroughly contemporary, somewhat edgy and definitely exciting. In providing this, we will position our young women to effectively participate in and contribute to this rapidly changing world with wisdom, imagination and integrity.

Mrs Marise McConaghy
Deputy Principal

REFERENCES


Financial highlights for 2012

- The School maintained a strong financial position while completing various refurbishment projects in a number of areas.
- The year-end financial results were favourable and were in line with the Board approved annual budget.
- The downturn in the Queensland economy has had little impact on the School, with only a slight rise in timing of collection of debts; debtor balances outstanding still remain low compared to industry standards.
- The political climate has had an impact on the School with education policy and funding of independent schools remaining key election policy issues, both at the 2012 state election and the upcoming 2013 federal election. The Queensland Government has reduced funding in 2013 with funding down 4.5% compared to 2012 funding per student. There is uncertainty about the impact of the Gonski review of funding for schooling on future funding for independent schools.
- The contributions of parents and the School community to the Future Fund, supplemented by the excellent investment management of the fund, enabled the School to purchase its first dedicated sports campus in late 2012. The property consists of 13.11 hectares and is situated in Fig Tree Pocket. The property transferred to the School on 14 January 2013.
- The School managed to increase the number of curriculum and co-curriculum offerings while maintaining our all-inclusive fee policy.

Summary of financial results for the year ended December 2012

The graph below compares the School’s financial results over the past four years.

Surpluses have reduced from 2009 to 2012. This is due to the increase in expenses exceeding the increase in income. The main reason for the increase in expenses has been higher staff costs. The School has been working on keeping fee increases to a minimum while managing increases in costs. Surpluses are used to fund payments on capital loans, capital expenses, savings for large future capital projects and savings for uncertain events. A reduction in surpluses will result in a reduction in available funding to spend on capital infrastructure projects in the future. To assist in ensuring that the School’s surpluses remain healthy, the School has embarked on a project to improve efficiencies and thereby reducing overall running costs. This will be an ongoing project for 2013.
The graph (left) shows that the key sources of income for the School are:

- Tuition Fee Income – 70%
- State & Commonwealth Government Funding – 19%

Both these income categories rely on enrolment numbers. The School was in the fortunate position of once again enjoying high enrolments in 2012. Due to lower annual indexation rates for government funding, tuition fee income increased from 67% of total income in 2011 to 70% of total income in 2012.

Deployment of resources

The School’s income was deployed to ensure the School was adequately resourced to provide our students with a high quality, contemporary and creative learning place, as well as engaging outstanding staff to produce exceptional scholars. The graph (left) illustrates the School’s Operating Expenses; the core Operating Expenses are:

- Employee benefit expenses /staff costs – staff costs made up 63% of the School’s total operating expenses, ensuring that the School maintains its record for employing exceptional teaching and professional staff.
- Repairs and maintenance and Utilities – the School is very proud of its excellently maintained campus and has a rotational maintenance programme in place. Repairs and maintenance and Utilities expenses made up 8% of the total expenses.
- Information technology (IT) and Printing – technology remains a key focus for the School and made up 7% of the total expenses together with printing costs.
- Tuition costs – these costs fund the day-to-day student activities within and outside of the classroom and include approved activities such as camps, co-curricular activities, excursions and visiting speakers. Tuition costs made up 4% of the total expenses.

Capital expenses

The only major capital expense for 2012 was the work in progress in relation to the design phase for the new Year 7 and Research Centre to accommodate the incoming Year 7 cohort in 2015. In addition, as noted previously, the School purchased a property consisting of sports fields at Fig Tree Pocket. The property transferred in January 2013, with the deposit paid prior to the financial year end.

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 2012 included:

- Recurrent State and Commonwealth Government Grants, including Indigenous assistance:
  - Commonwealth Grants – $3,625,985
  - State Government Grants – $2,249,546.
- Literacy, numeracy and special education grants, including an ESL and Asian languages grant received from Commonwealth Government – $17,254.
- Funding from the Queensland Government for VET Coordination, Literacy and Numeracy and Special Education – $19,700.
- Queensland State Endowment grant provided to Grammar Schools in Queensland to assist with the additional compliance cost to comply with State Government legislation for Statutory Bodies – $21,500.

Ms Colette Pretorius
Business Manager
The educational philosophy of the School reflects this, based as it is on a genuine conviction that every student is capable of effective learning given an environment which is conducive to it. The necessary environment can be seen as consisting of both internal and external factors. That is, those features which are essential to creating optimal learning contexts relate to opportunities afforded to students, resources provided to students and behaviours exhibited by students, but also to the mindsets students bring to their learning. Underpinning all of these factors is the notion of student engagement.

As part of our commitment to promoting such an environment, in 2012 Brisbane Girls Grammar School has devised and implemented a new subject for Year 8 students, Philosophy of Learning. Significant educational research over recent decades has focused on the nature of learning and its accessibility for all. Philosophy of Learning was born out of the conviction that to promote exceptional scholarship, the School needed to ensure that the relevant findings were translated and packaged in a way that was meaningful to students and their parents. In short, we needed to take the essence of this research and use it to enhance the capacity of our students to learn well. Essentially, the aim was to involve the girls in a dialogue about learning that would empower them, ultimately leading to increased academic engagement.

One of the key concepts uniting much of the literature emerging over the past decade is that cognitive function and, consequently, academic performance are significantly influenced by experience and behaviour (Goswami, 2008; Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). Experience in this context obviously refers to opportunities, but it also includes the extent to which a learner chooses to engage in a particular activity. Thus, the learner has a significant amount of control over this experience. This reinforces the importance of motivation in the cycle of learning. Figure 1 illustrates the main components of this cycle and identifies the two key elements on which educators can have an impact: motivation and behaviour/experience. Clearly this impact then has a powerful influence on the others. Philosophy of Learning has targeted those two points of influence.

Year 8 Philosophy of Learning has been founded on giving students an understanding of how learning occurs. This assists them to remain motivated in the face of difficulties, as well as opening a discussion of the strategies that will allow them to refine their practices. Recent neuroscientific research has provided increased understanding of how learning occurs.

Generally, the notion of neuroplasticity – simply put, the capacity of the brain to change – is understood and accepted. This notion was given widespread publicity by Norman Doidge’s popular book The Brain That Changes Itself (2008). In this text, Doidge asserted that people are able to improve their cognitive outcomes through consistent strengthening of neural pathways. Although the evidence cited has particular relevance to medical situations, it does have significant implications for educators. The concept of a brain that can be strengthened through repeated application and experience is an important idea to communicate to students and is central to the material presented in the Year 8 subject.

Professor Usha Goswami from the Cambridge Centre for Neuroscience in Education provided a thoughtful analysis of the implications of neuroscientific understanding in teaching. Her identification of learning principles that she asserts can be demonstrated by ‘empirical studies’ (Goswami, 2008, p. 387) is paramount. In particular, the following ideas have been fundamental to the Philosophy of Learning course this year:

- Learning is incremental and experience based.
- Learning is multi-sensory.
- Mechanisms within the brain allow the structuring of information.
- Learning is social.
- Learning is inextricably linked with emotion.
Engaging students in discussions of these neuroscientific understandings of learning is motivating, given that significant weight is given to the role of experience. For them, that means repeated engagement in a particular activity or type of thinking – practice (Goswami, 2008, p. 382). This is particularly relevant in Year 8, currently the beginning of their secondary education, which can be characterised by increased academic anxiety (Galton, Gray, & Ruddock, 2000).

There are critics of a neuroscientific approach to education who speak of the danger of simplistic interpretations of seductive scientific findings (Weisberg, Keil, Goodstein, & Gray, 2008). Despite this, when used in a measured and thoughtful way, such findings enhance learning for many students. In fact, one might suggest that it is in the seductive nature of these scientific findings that the power to influence student learning lies. Providing students with the belief that they can have an influence on their learning outcomes through their actions (Grant & Dweck, 2003; Blackwell et al., 2007) is a significant motivator, linking with the creation of a mindset shown to be productive for learning.

The work of Professor Carol Dweck from Stanford University relating to a student’s learning mindset and its impact on their ability to make intellectual progress (Blackwell et al., 2007) has featured heavily in the curriculum of Philosophy of Learning this year. In essence, Dweck’s research (2006) supports the idea that an individual’s ability to manage challenges and setbacks is strongly influenced by their core beliefs about learning – that is, by their understanding of intelligence. Some students see intelligence as a fixed entity while others see it as something that can grow (Trei, 2007). According to Dweck, those who believe the latter experience greater success, owing to their greater inclination to take academic risks, and benefit from the challenges they encounter (Blackwell et al., 2007; Grant & Dweck, 2003). They are also more able to persevere when faced with failure because of their belief that their own actions can have an impact on their future outcomes. Thus, there is a strong connection between mindset and motivation. Dweck’s Brainology® programme (Mindset Works, 2012), which has formed part of the Philosophy of Learning curriculum, focuses on teaching a growth theory of intelligence to assist with improved motivation and behaviours.

By addressing issues relating to learning mindset, Philosophy of Learning has provided a springboard for discussions of resilience and its place in the learning cycle. Resilience in this context relates specifically to the acceptance and management of failure. Failure must be seen as an opportunity for learning and as part of the learning process. This is particularly important in the education of girls as they tend to ‘generalise the meaning of their failures’ while boys, in contrast, appear ‘to see their failures as relevant only to the specific subject area in which they have failed’ (Pomerantz cited in Sax, 2005, p. 81). Given this propensity of girls to generalise negative feelings, it is important that a uniform approach to the promotion of resilience is adopted throughout the curriculum. Philosophy of Learning has put this at the heart of the course.

Philosophy of Learning has allowed the students to see learning and its difficulties as relevant to all. The course has been presented in such a way that emphasis has been put on the teacher as a learner. Kort, Reilly and Picard (2001) suggested that the practice of teachers providing information to their classes in a polished form, which omits the natural steps of making mistakes and recovering from them, means that they are not teaching students that negative feelings such as frustration, confusion and anxiety are part of learning. Philosophy of Learning seeks to address this. Creating opportunities for reflection to improve the quality of learning which occurs (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2004) is also central to the curriculum offered through the course.

In 2010 Sir Ken Robinson spoke of a learning revolution where educational institutions challenge the often firmly held ‘singular conception of ability’ and ‘reconstitute a sense of ability and intelligence’ which embraces the diversity of human aptitudes and passions. In 2012 at Brisbane Girls Grammar School, we have revolutionised our curriculum to ensure that we are broadening the conception of ability and intelligence by providing students with an understanding of what learning means. It is a commitment to the facilitation of excellent learning that lies at the heart of the School’s commitment to exceptional scholarship and our educational philosophy.
Brisbane Girls Grammar School is committed to the intellectual, social and emotional development of our girls. Confident in the traditions and values underpinning our culture, the School embraces the challenges of the future to support our girls to become thoughtful, resilient and confident young women.

While the School is academically non-selective, our students have a remarkable record of achieving exceptional academic results. The School proudly acknowledges the 2012 Year 12 cohort whose results are a testament to their commitment to and enthusiasm for learning. These young women will continue on their life-wide learning journey, entering their chosen courses and careers, and living meaningful and successful lives according to their own aspirations and choices.

QTAC offers 2012

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<td>Bachelor degree</td>
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Overall Position results 2012

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<tr>
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Queensland Core Skills Test results 2012

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<th>LETTER</th>
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<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
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*state OP 1–25 =100%

Ms Samantha Bolton
Dean of Studies

REFERENCES


These high expectations extend to their involvement and engagement level, the honesty of their effort, their interaction with others, and being part of all that goes on in the broad life of the School. High personal expectations are part of the Grammar tradition and, in many ways, shape and mould our students’ experiences.

But, as a community, those standards should not be exclusive to the School’s expectations of our girls. All parents, irrespective of where their children learn, should have high expectations that their children’s schools will effectively prepare them to acquire the knowledge and skills to be successful in their futures. So, while we must always uphold the intellectual quality of what we do, we must also ask how the experiences of our girls in engaging with the curriculum prepare them with the skills for success beyond school.

At Girls Grammar, we are asking why our girls should be tethered to traditional models of instruction to become successful learners. If we genuinely aspire to produce exceptional scholars, who have a systematic curiosity in learning and the skills to be life–wide learners, we would be naïve to believe that learning only occurs in a classroom under our supervision. Or, more significantly, we would be misguided if we maintained that they only learn effectively when every student in a group is using the same technology in the same way at the same time under the instruction of a teacher.

Traditionally, the conversation about Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools has been dominated by the T in the acronym; the focus has been on what technology students will use, where it will be, what it can do and how often we can get access to it. From the perspective of educating young people, the emphasis should be on the I and the C; how it provides access to information that deepens and extends learning, and how its ability to enable communication facilitates collaboration and exchange to make learning easier and more engaging. It is in these areas that technologies are creating more open and flexible ways of learning (Organisation for Economic Co–operation and Development, 2006). This emphasis has driven the evolution in how technology is employed in our classrooms, and how it will continue to evolve in the coming years.

We have become a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) technology environment for our students, rather than prescribing what tools a student can use when and where. We allow all students to connect their own personal laptops, tablets and notebook computers to the School wireless network while they are on campus, giving them access to our learning resources and IT infrastructure with their own devices. We provide an integrated Learning Management System (LMS) that does not discriminate between manufacturers or operating systems. It allows students to collaborate, to review or download materials, and to complete interactive tasks whether they are on campus or at home.

On any given day, our girls are working independently in classrooms, collaborating in the library, working in groups over a snack in the cafeteria on their tablets, or sitting at the tables under the trees after school hours researching on their notebooks. Learning at Girls Grammar is not limited to a location or to a time of day; our girls are already using their own technology to personalise their own learning. A walk around the School grounds at lunchtime or before or after school reinforces that, when it comes to technology, one size does not fit all. We see in practice what researchers are reporting; students are adapting technologies to self–direct their own learning (Project Tomorrow, 2012; White, 2012). As Green et al. (2005) note, it is clear that digital learning landscapes afford young people a high degree of personalisation that formal school experiences do not acknowledge.
Most significantly, we encourage our girls to use their own technology in their classrooms on a day-to-day basis. Girls Grammar has a tradition of providing learning opportunities for our students that meet the individual needs of each girl, changing contexts and approaches to address differences in learning styles. Encouraging students to use the devices and technology that they are comfortable with encourages them to see ICT as the tool to help them learn, and draws their focus to their individual learning. A girl’s ability to develop skills in research, literacy, critical thinking or problem solving is not dependent upon a particular model of notebook or the latest brand of tablet, but on her engagement with her work and with her teacher.

By 2014 we will seek to have every student using their own devices in all of their classes to support their learning. We will continue to provide the specialist technology to support the curriculum where our girls will need it, such as our specialist computer laboratories and robust mobile devices for use in practical applications such as in Science subjects or in the outdoors. We will continue to provide the technical support so that they get the best from their device and will continue to upgrade our ability to deliver online resources through our wireless network. We will continue to maintain the security in our network access to the internet and will continue to skill our girls in how to interact in online environments appropriately and securely. Being a BYOD environment heightens our responsibilities to our students, rather than outsources them.

Throughout 2012 the School began the conversation with our broader community about how technology will be integrated into the learning environment of our students in the years to come. We have begun the conversation about what types of devices will work best in classrooms and how, as partners, the School and parents can work together to use technology to promote every student’s progress. We are employing digital pedagogies that allow our girls to engage with a curriculum that sets high standards of rigour and intellectual quality, and to deepen their ability to explore it. We are taking advantage of this opportunity to ensure that the learning experiences of Girls Grammar students continue to honour the high expectations we all hold for them.

Mr Trent Driver
Dean of Academic Development

REFERENCES
There has been considerable research and policy debate internationally regarding whether single-sex schooling yields academic and social advantages for girls (Shapka & Keating, 2003; Malacova, 2007). The question is a complex one, and no individual study is able to provide a definitive statement on this much-debated topic. A more cumulative picture is able to be formed if many studies can be analysed together. Public perception that single-sex education is beneficial to girls currently remains very strong, and research that has been conducted in a wide variety of contexts has found results supportive of this view (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2008).

The progressive school movement in the early twentieth century stressed the advantages of co-educational schooling. At this time, boys' academic performance was enhanced in mixed schools, and the societal norms of the day would appear to have placed priority on male academic performance. It was identified that the girls in general displayed a greater industriousness and this provided a suitable competitive environment for the boys. While Dale, one of the first educative researchers to conduct a large-scale study into single-sex education in 1969, argued 'that this was not at the expense of the girls' and that mixed-sex schooling presented a more 'natural' reflection of the family unit (cited in Sullivan, Joshi, & Leonard, 2010), current research would strongly contest this view.

Until the late 1970s, opposition to co-educational schooling focused primarily on traditional conservative views around the 'distractions' provided by the opposite sex and of the innate differences between boys and girls. The women's movement in the late 1970s and early 1980s provided more progressive views from feminists of this period. Spender's work presented observational and survey evidence to support girls-only schools (1982). Girls were able to access more teacher time and attention and were afforded better access to resources. The curriculum content and teaching styles in girls' schools were more accessible to girls and helped to raise their achievement and self-esteem (Sullivan, Joshi, & Leonard, 2010). Recent research by Belfi, Goos, De Fraine, and Van Damme (2012) has shown 'that single-sex classes are advantageous for girls' school well-being and academic self-concept.'

Girls' schools provide unique environments, experiences and stimulation that develop the mind-set of female students and promote positive academic self-concepts that present girls with the best opportunity to reach their academic potential. Current research attests to girls in single-sex schools achieving more highly in the middle years (Years 7–9), demonstrating outstanding results in Senior school and attaining higher enrolment figures at university (The Alliance of Girls' Schools, n.d.).

Girls' schools engender a healthy environment of competition whereby girls feel more socially empowered. Great pressure exists for girls to maintain their gender identity in schools where boys are present and, as a result, they will often shy away from competition. Risk-taking and competition are socially advantageous skills for leadership, but are often considered to be inherently male traits. Booth and Nolen’s 2009 study discovered compelling differences between the competitive choices of girls from single-sex and co-educational school settings. Single-sex environments modify girls' risk-taking behaviour. Free from gender stereotypes, girls find it easier to make riskier choices and competitive behaviour is enhanced. These observed gender differences in risk behaviour might reflect social learning rather than inherent gender traits. 'If risk attitudes are indeed primarily shaped by the environment, then changing the educational context could help to address under-representation of women in high-paying jobs and high-level occupations' (Booth & Nolen, 2009).

The under-representation of females in the areas of mathematics, science and technology has been persistent. These findings are disconcerting, considering that girls are often seen as the 'winners' in the educational system: 'On average, girls enter the school system earlier, they achieve better at the key competence of reading, ... they qualify in the more demanding segments of profession, their rates for obtaining a higher education qualification are significantly higher' (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung cited in Titze, Jansen, & Heil, 2011).

Gender bias impedes girls' full participation in maths, science, technology and physical education, as girls feel intimidated by the social perception that boys are the stronger performers in these subject areas. Single-sex environments can actually reduce the tendency of students to behave according to gender-typical stereotypes or norms and instead promote a gender-atypical self-concept that boosts the efficacy levels of girls. Girls are able to engage wholeheartedly and with greater ambition and reach their full performance potential.
These findings support the notion that gendered norms regarding education are not fixed and can be influenced by the context of schooling (Sullivan, 2009). Such an idea is well-supported by international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results that demonstrate a narrowing in the gender gap in mathematics performance with a more gender–equal culture (Titze, Jansen & Heil 2011). These results are indicative of a strong influence of psycho–social and cultural attitudes towards the academic performance of women.

Brisbane Girls Grammar School aspires to promote exceptional scholarship in gender–atypical subject areas. Research has found that, ‘Increasing the visibility of a critical mass of female scientists, engineers and mathematicians, and providing women opportunities to have personal contact with them, has a profound positive effect on young women’s self-perceptions in science, math and engineering’ [Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011]. Away from the associated stereotypical biases that tend to impede girls from full participation in mathematics and science, girls are able to embrace a diverse and rich curriculum, supported by outstanding teaching staff who provide motivation and challenge. Our girls excel in these areas, with accomplished performances in national mathematics competitions and Science Olympiads. Our students can boast of impressive accomplishments in the International Young Physicists’ Tournament that has taken them around the globe to compete successfully against students from many other nations. Our girls relish the opportunity to travel to the USA to take part in NASA Space programmes that include astronaut training and fighter pilot instruction. Girls Grammar is renowned for its impressive history of outstanding past scholars who have forged a path for women in the science arena and provided distinguished role models for all members of the School community.

Several studies have explored whether long–term benefits exist for girls educated in single–sex schools [The Alliance of Girls’ Schools, n.d]. While women who have graduated from single–sex schools are no more or less likely to be employed, these women earn a 19.7% higher wage than their co–educational counterparts (Biliger, 2007). Women who had attended single–sex schools were more likely to gain their highest qualification by age 33 in a male–dominated field (Sullivan, Joshi, & Leonard, 2010). Girls’ schools produce graduates who enter post–secondary education more academically and politically engaged with more confidence in their mathematical and technological skills (Sax, 2009).

Single–sex education produces optimal outcomes for female students, most particularly in terms of their engagement, confidence and career aspirations and most notably in areas related to science, mathematics and technology. The benefits of single–sex education tend to be found in fields that have historically favoured men and therefore represent a potentially effective vehicle for mitigating long–standing gender gaps. Brisbane Girls Grammar School provides an educational environment in which girls can be curious and confident in their learning as they strive for exceptional scholarship.

Mrs Anne Ingram
Dean of Students

REFERENCES


Service learning is widely thought to be traced to the writings of philosophers John Dewey and Jean Piaget who believed that learning best occurs when students are actively involved in their own learning and the learning has a distinct purpose (Billig, 2000). Learning through service is a powerful tool that plays a pivotal role in developing responsible and caring citizens with a deep understanding of democracy. Earnhardt (cited in Dedmond & Kestler, 2010) states that, ‘Service–learning opportunities allow students to experience the world of work and find out what’s beyond the classroom. They apply real skills to everyday life.’

Through participation in service activities at Brisbane Girls Grammar School, our students are encouraged to create a meaningful link between their school life and the wider community. Girls commit time and energy to community service activities to raise funds for charities and worthy causes, and in doing so help create awareness for issues and causes on a local, national and global scale. In a combined effort, the School raises over $40,000 annually for charities encompassing breast cancer and heart disease research, disadvantaged and homeless women, childhood diseases, global poverty, adolescent health, and environmental issues.

Our Aspiration to be a leader in exceptional scholarship requires us to educate our staff, students and the community to recognise the scale and diversity of learning opportunities and experiences available to them, and to not only be open to engaging with these opportunities and experiences, but to develop the capacity to reflect and learn from them. In our young women, we want to develop citizens who will be prepared to take informed and considered positions on issues and ideas and to then grow from these experiences. Billig (cited in Dedmond & Kestler, 2010) affirms the long–held philosophy underpinning involvement in service activities at Girls Grammar by stating that, ‘Students who participate in service–learning experiences become self–sufficient responsible citizens with positive outcomes in personal/social development, academic achievement, citizenship, and career awareness.’

In line with the new Strategic Design and Aspiration, the School Service Programme is undergoing a restructure to fully explore and develop the guiding principles of judicious and ethical engagement with the world and life–wide learning. To lead this exciting new phase, a Service leadership position has been created that will align Service with the other major co–curricular focus areas of Instrumental Music and Sport.

From 2013, a research–based service model will be promoted to the Service Captains to consolidate and build on the commitment the School currently has in this service focus area. Our long–standing Pink Day conducted each year by the Service Captains and Student Council raises close to $2000 for breast cancer research and is a highlight of service activities at Girls Grammar. Similarly, the Kirsten Jack Memorial Leukaemia Committee, named after a former student who passed away from acute leukaemia prior to commencing Year 11 in 1977, is committed to raising funds and awareness for research into leukaemia and other blood–cancer–related illnesses. The intention is to actively seek other research–based service projects to focus fundraising energies on, thereby providing a natural scholarly connection for our students, particularly in light of the high percentage of students who study the sciences in their Senior years, and who then go on to forge a career in this area. In shifting the service focus, the School is mindful of the need for students to feel connected to the service model and develop a sense of ownership to successfully drive the campaign throughout the year. Therefore, it is essential that the Service Captains and Student Council have the opportunity each year to provide input into the selection of the actual charity or research organisation to focus their energies on.

A comprehensive scaffolded programme of service activities enables our students to engage in an appropriate level of activity for them individually. Each House has a designated House charity for which to raise funds and awareness. In addition, all students in Years 8 and 9 are involved in House–based fundraising for two World Vision sponsor children. Numerous charity committees such as Save the Children, Oatkraft Foundation and Interact provide another outlet for students to become service–minded. The Second Chance Committee, for students in Years 11 and 12, addresses the plight of homeless women in Queensland, particularly those aged 15 to 19 years, with the aim to assist these women to secure a home and return to independent living.
A continued emphasis for the Service Programme is the development of a suite of tangible service opportunities whereby students can give of their time to others less fortunate than themselves. The concept is comprehensively explored in the Year 10 Ethics Community Service Programme, whereby each student undertakes a minimum of fifteen hours of service activities in their own time throughout the year. Mrs Anne Stubbington, Year 10 Community Service Co-ordinator, wrote in a recent Grammar Insights article:

Girls who invest something of themselves for the benefit of others through service, reap the rewards themselves many times over in their sense of being and their understanding of the world. Giving to others helps them to become better people. (2012)

It is this desire to engender an intrinsic sense of altruism in our students that has led to the expansion of opportunities to make authentic and meaningful service connections. To build on the Year 10 Community Service experience, students in Years 11 and 12 are provided with opportunities to engage in activities such as volunteering for Wonder Factory afternoons at the Royal Children’s Hospital, preparing sandwiches for the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade or assisting with Second Chance Committee ‘pamper afternoons’ for homeless and disadvantaged women.

The pinnacle of our service activities is the Antipodeans Abroad (Antips) expedition, which is offered to Year 12 school leavers each year. Antips draws together and extends the themes of outdoor education, personal challenge, community service, teamwork and leadership through its planned programmes in developing countries around the world. It is this synthesis of themes that we believe makes Antips most suitable for students in their final year of secondary schooling. It also provides our immediate alumnae with a unique opportunity to contribute to the international community. The Antips experience represents a culmination of the growth and development students have experienced during their secondary schooling. Students report great gains in self-confidence and self-awareness, and that they discover they are tougher and more adaptable to challenging situations than they thought possible. They also describe Antips as the ‘perfect’ way to end high school and prepare for university (McGarry, 2011).

There is no doubt that participation in service activities helps to build positive relationships amongst students and staff, and it contributes to an overall sense of cohesiveness in a community. Through active involvement in the Service Programme, we hope to instil in our students a lifelong commitment to serving others to assist them to move successfully beyond the school environment as valued citizens who are contributing and making a difference.

Mrs Judith Tudball
Dean of Co-curriculum

REFERENCES
An integral element in a Grammar girl’s education is to experience and explore a range of leadership experiences and styles, thus equipping her with a suite of skills and opportunities to ‘find her voice’. In this way, she will be able to employ and adapt appropriate leadership styles and strategies in her adulthood.

How did our Year 12s arrive at the point where they could enunciate their thoughts and beliefs so coherently? The journey started in Year 8. Each student is given the opportunity to envision ideas and see them to fruition. This encouragement is practised in the classroom, on the sporting field, in co-curricular activities and in the arts. A Year 8 student ‘pays it forward’ to create Easter crafts for the aged; a Year 10 student negotiates her service component with an external organisation; an idea to support a team is hatched and becomes the ‘BGGS Spell’; songs are created, performed and celebrated giving greater significance to special events such as the Valedictory Dinner. These not only give a sense of identity and community, they also allow each girl to have belief in herself and to have confidence she can make a meaningful contribution.

The key elements to the Grammar leadership journey are role modelling, relationships, opportunity, perseverance, and service. Students are nurtured and encouraged to recognise these elements from their entrance into the School.

Where does this leadership experience begin for the Grammar girl? The new student commences her journey in leadership with powerful role modelling from her 12 “buddy”, House captains and other senior members of her House, especially exemplified by the 2012 Head Girls, Tanvi Karnik and Phoebe Tronc, who stood before their peers epitomising Grammar girls leading with assurance and integrity. The beauty of role modelling is that age does not define the model. A strong Grammar characteristic is the acknowledgement of talent, regardless of the age of the student. Gifted performers of differing ages, act as role models for their peer group and the School in scholarship, music, sport and the co-curriculum. Libellum, the School reading group, provides a place for a Year 8 voice to be heard just as effectively as the Year 12. The outstanding violinist in Year 10 encourages all aspiring musicians and provides an honoured place for this new Grammar girl. The Year 12 coach encourages the Year 8 softballer to listen and learn and perhaps dream of coaching and contributing in this way herself.

Leaders learn to cultivate meaningful relationships. The ability to communicate, listen, empathise and really hear the other person is integral to successful communication and, hence, effective leadership. Each Grammar girl systematically explores her personal abilities in Ethics lessons, House activities, and personal and group leadership experiences commencing in Year 8. These build to a crescendo with the democratic voting of Year 12 leadership positions at the end of Year 11. The girls elevated to these positions have specific roles, but they are supported by the entire Year 12 cohort. The whole group is regarded as the leaders of the School. Each Senior accepts this responsibility by the wearing of the XII badge, but it is the positive relationships nurtured from the earliest Grammar experiences that ensure the success of the Year 12 guidance.
The leadership journey cannot be made without allowing each girl the chance to shine. Both formal and informal opportunities abound, creating the challenge for those who wish to grow. Whether it is delivering an assembly address, performing or behind-the-scenes organising for ‘The Voice’ on the pool lawn, captaining a Year 9 netball team, being a Year 10 guide on Open Day, playing the lead in a Junior production, or organising a fundraising stall, opportunities present themselves and validate the Student Council–designed 2012 School motto of ‘No Limits’.

Tenacity and resilience, so closely linked with self-belief and so important to leadership, are reflected in all elements of Grammar life. Accepting a challenge, taking a risk, succeeding, failing, evaluating, regrouping, and trying again is reflected in every attempt at team selection, writing an assignment, auditioning for a musical group, getting back on that bicycle, mastering a difficult soliloquy, or attacking the next hill at Marrapatta. As so eloquently stated by a Year 12 student in her exit survey, ‘Always strive for what you want, even when it seems impossible. Overcoming adversity and difficulty is what defines a strong and independent person.’

Robert Greenleaf asserts that good leaders must first become good servants (cited in Robert K. Greenleaf Center Inc., n.d.). The concept that leadership is service to a community is not a new one. Good leaders provide a potent example to all, and the students of 2012 were no exception. Grammar Goes Green led by the Service Captains, Jacqueline Roberts and Holly Richardson, was a great success where Year 12 students volunteered their precious time and energy to revitalise the banks of Enoggera Creek. Sandwiches made in the early morning by Year 11 and Year 12 volunteers for homeless people through the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade was another selfless act where girls embraced the concept of giving their most valuable commodity: time. These activities also embrace the collegial leadership style preferred by young people. Adolescents show an understanding of the social effects of their actions and can distinguish between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ leadership. Moreover, ‘moving beyond self to connect with the interests of others for pro-social purposes ... has been a finding from both schools and sports literatures’ (Lissio et al. cited in Dempster, Stevens, & Keeffe, 2011, pp. 6–7).

The leadership experience undertaken by the Year 12s was diverse and comprehensive, and began the day they entered the School. While much of it was cooperative and collaborative, some leadership positions also reflected a more hierarchical structure. This is the mode of operation many students will confront in the workforce, even though it may not be their preferred choice. By knowing the alternatives, by being encouraged to experience the strengths of different leadership paradigms, each girl will be empowered to accept leadership roles in her community and professional life and, perhaps, have the strength and conviction to change traditional models.

Mrs Pauline Harvey-Short
Associate Dean

REFERENCES
The Queensland Government’s initiatives to transfer Year 7 to high school in 2015 and to introduce the Junior Secondary model that will incorporate Years 7, 8 and 9 (Queensland Government, 2012) are opportunities for school communities to discuss how we do things, to share this information with one another, and investigate how we might do things differently in the future. For Brisbane Girls Grammar School, it is a chance to harness creative energy in order to imagine and construct an environment in which exceptional scholarship continues to flourish.

In a sense, what we are heading into as an organisation is a process not unlike that which our students experience throughout their school years. Adolescence itself is a process, and our duty of care in this process of change extends to students, staff and our wider School community. In transition, people have to let go of predictable and comfortable environments. In managing change, the School adopts a collaborative approach, with consideration given to all stakeholders. We know that a lack of clear communication, whether internal or external to the School, can generate anxiety and fear of the unknown. While change may provoke a sense of loss of control, at the same time it can stimulate genuine feelings of optimism.

Brisbane Girls Grammar’s introduction of Year 7 in 2015 will be consistent with the School’s long tradition of demonstrating initiative, adaptability and educational leadership. In accordance with the Board of Trustees’ future-oriented approach, preparations have been underway for almost a decade. Upon the announcement of a compulsory preparatory year and altered state school entry ages back in 2007, we clearly identified that our specialist focus on the education of teenaged girls dictated a logical step to move our intake year from Year 8 to Year 7. The implications of this structural change with respect to enrolment policy and practices, financial ramifications, management of student numbers, accreditation requirements and logistical matters were just some of the issues considered. Above all, commitment was made to making educational outcomes the priority.

The redesigning of our School landscape – both physical and intellectual – involves a greater shift than a mere change in the delineation point between primary and secondary school.

Along with the convenience of the School’s Gregory Terrace location, come the challenges of a confined inner-city site. We are proud of our innovative solutions to maximise space on our Spring Hill campus, particularly by making use of vertical space. While our existing facilities can theoretically accommodate the planned increase in student numbers with the Year 7 cohort, careful thought is being given to options for appropriate improvement of buildings and facilities. Our Masterplan incorporates the reshaping of current spaces and creation of new spaces with a future-focused outlook to optimise the School environment for our young women to learn, interact, play, connect, relax and reflect.

Professor Carole Dweck’s (2006) work on the importance of a ‘growth’ mindset rather than a ‘fixed’ mindset is an important aspect of our academic care for our young women. The School’s leadership team has also recognised the need to encourage a growth mindset among our staff and within our parent community.

A key staffing initiative this year was the creation of the Dean of Student Transition position to draw together all planning and co-ordination related to the introduction of Year 7 in 2015. The role’s responsibilities include project managing the successful transition of Year 8 simultaneously in that year, as well as all new student transitions in other Year levels from 2012.
Staffing and resourcing models indicate that we will require an increase in staff numbers to cater for our expanded population, so future recruitment processes will examine carefully the skill sets of candidates, particularly those with a background in junior secondary education. Our current staff has extensive experience working with this age group – our new students will be only a little younger than the majority of our current Year 8s – and we will continue to develop our existing staff to cater for the needs of these learners. This process is underway through identifying staff experienced in, or interested in specialising in, middle-years education and shaping professional development programmes accordingly. Curriculum offerings are being crafted and implemented with our current students to optimise their critical thinking skills and metacognition and to ensure that the learning process continues to be dynamic and accessible for all.

The School’s focus is on ensuring that the psychological adjustment of our young women during this transition from primary to secondary school is stable. Students are generally eager to leave behind the closer attention and ‘caring’ of primary school; however, they are nostalgic for this initially – as are their parents. We strive to achieve that very delicate balance between providing sufficient reassurance and enabling student independence and development.

Transition experiences for new students are well-supported and age-appropriate and begin well before a girl starts her first day. In the year prior to commencing at the School, families are invited to a number of activities offered to help girls feel welcome and confident during the transition into their new school life and, importantly, to give them the opportunity to meet and form friendships with their future classmates. In 2015 the number of new students will double, with a simultaneous intake of almost 450 girls. Particular attention is being paid to how we best care for those Year 7 and Year 8 girls at the same time. Senior students will have the opportunity to develop their leadership skills further as they play an even more important part in the care of our new students.

After commencement, the House system helps our girls develop both as individuals and as members of the larger connected School community. This comprehensive framework of care ensures every girl is known and valued as an individual. Over her years at the School, a girl’s House Group provides her with many opportunities to develop her interests within a wide-ranging programme of cultural, sporting, service and leadership activities.

Brisbane Girls Grammar School has always had a future-focused outlook. Education cannot remain in stasis – Hedley Beare (2001) calls this ‘the myth of the unchanging school’. By spending a little more time at both ends of schooling, our young women will have more opportunities to prepare for the twenty-first century world. While the imperative for change is external, the internal opportunities for growth and development that present themselves as a result are boundless.

Ms Sarah McGarry
Dean of Student Transition

REFERENCES
Thank you to our many valued Brisbane Girls Grammar School community members – alumnae, parents, grandparents, staff, and friends – who generously provided their support throughout 2012. Your gifts, in a variety of forms, are a wonderful endorsement that you share the School’s aspiration to be a leader in exceptional scholarship.

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E Wolkaholme
J & S Wyer
J & S Yates
S Young
Year 1991 Reunion
C Yu
P & J Ho
J Zivcic
The Courier Mail declares Brisbane Girls Grammar Queensland’s top performing girls’ school, taking the top spot for average OP scores achieved by a girls’ school over the last five years.

Awarded Queensland Debating Union ‘Championship School of the Finals’. Debating Co-ordinator Mrs Anne Byrne received an award from the QDU in recognition of her service to debating in Queensland.

Girls Grammar was awarded a Highly Commended in the national MoneySmart Week Awards for work in Enterprise Management. A Year 10 student won the national ESSI Money competition which was held as part of MoneySmart Week. And Year 10 Brisbane Girls Grammar students scooped three of the top prizes in the BuySmart Awards.

Dr Sally Stephens, Director of Science and Mathematics, received highly commended in the Prime Minister’s 2012 Awards for Science Teaching.

Students participated in a number of diverse activities beyond the classroom including: the Lord Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council; the 2012 Queensland Music Awards; QSA Tertiary Entrance Committee; the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Leadership and Teamwork Awards; Duke of Edinburgh Award; Ecoman workshops; the national Australian Institute of Public Affairs Essay Competition; the UQ Student Economics Competition; UQ’s Young ICT Explorer event; the UQ Young Scholars programme; and Write About Art workshops.

Grammar girls took advantage of international learning opportunities including: the International Young Physicists’ Tournament in Germany; a leadership course held at Harvard University; a mini-immersion language programme at the Goethe Institute in Sydney; the Mathematics Modelling Forum in Singapore; a study tour to France in September; the inaugural Creative Arts and Humanities US tour; and Antipodeans Abroad expedition to China.

In the QUT Accounting in High Schools programme, a Year 12 student topped the high school cohort and Girls Grammar students obtained the top four results. A Year 12 student won the annual Business Educators Association of Queensland Accounting Competition.

Year 10 and 11 students competed in the finals of the 2012 Australian Individual Debating and Public Speaking Championships (AIDPSC), with one winning the Australian Debating Championship Award.

Grammar girls continued their commitment to service, with a total of $62,712 raised for charitable organisations in 2012. Students gave their time and energy to organisations such as the Ecumenical Coffee Brigade and the Royal Children’s Hospital Wonderfactory, and supported homeless young women.

Drama students continued to work closely and workshop material with Australian playwright Lachlan Philpott.

A new co-curricular group, the Kleio Society, was formed to engage students who are interested in the ancient world.

The Singer/Songwriter Studio and Composer’s Workshop Programme continued to flourish with a songwriting workshop conducted by prominent songwriter Roz Pappalardo.

A Year 11 student was selected to represent Australia in Water Polo in the U20 and U18 Pan Pacific Tournaments. Another Year 11 student was nominated as a Water Polo ‘Rising Star’ in the Queensland Sportswoman of the Year Awards.
Ms Jacinda Euler appointed as the sixteenth Principal of Brisbane Girls Grammar School, commencing in Term II 2013.

Girls Grammar continued to excel in QGSSSA sporting competitions: the School was named QGSSSA Cross Country Champion for the nineteenth consecutive year; the School won its first Open Touch QGSSSA Premiership, as well as its first Badminton Premierships; and fourteen out of a possible twenty-eight Premierships were won in QGSSSA Winter Fixtures of Hockey, Netball, Tennis and Volleyball.

For the second year, the School was invited to participate in the Independent Schools of Queensland Differentiation in Mathematics Project.

Students participated in the Da Vinci Decathlon, an academic interschool gala day and won the Creative Producers Challenge.

Girls Grammar hosted Quest 2012, the Year 8 Grammar Schools collaborative activity. Students packaged and marketed a new range of fair-trade coffee beans.

Reverend Tim Costello came to the School as Visiting Scholar and spoke about social challenges faced by different communities.

Associate Professor John Armstrong was the School’s Visiting Philosopher. He discussed the philosophies underpinning the School’s strategic Aspiration to be a leader in exceptional scholarship.

Girls Grammar hosted a presentation from representatives of the Reserve Bank of Australia, who examined the contemporary economic climate. Our girls were joined by students from seven other schools.

The excellent participation rates of Girls Grammar students in science subjects continued. In 2012, over eight-eight per cent of the Senior cohort studied at least one science subject and approximately fifty per cent studied more than one subject.

Students satisfied their passion for science in 2012 by pursuing extension studies at the School’s Centre for Science Research (CSR); Science Olympiad training; the Forensic Science Camp in Armidale; a biotechnology and bioengineering forum, BioFutures; the Queensland Institute of Medical Research; and the Extreme Science Experience.

Faced with the ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ scenario of experiencing a transit of Venus and an eighty-three per cent partial eclipse of the sun visible from Brisbane, the Science Faculty supplied every student with a pair of approved solar viewing glasses. Activities were organised to ensure that students understood the history and the science of each event, and to allow each of them to observe these wondrous cosmic events safely.

The School’s annual Digital Design Showcase incorporated a new Year 9 Typography unit complementing the usual Year 10 Digital Photography. Over 250 guests attended the showcase in June.

Students successfully participated in many extension activities with a mathematical theme: Australian Mathematics Competition; QAMT Problem Solving Competition; Intermediate Mathematics Olympiad; Maths Teams Challenge; QAMT Year 8 Maths Quiz; Maths Challenge for Young Australians; and the Mathematics camp at Marrapatta, ‘Mathapatta’.
The School acquired a third campus – a thirteen-hectare site at Fig Tree Pocket to provide space for our thriving sports programme.

The inaugural Sportswomen of Excellence Celebration held in October was a resounding success.

Marrapatta celebrated twenty-five years, highlighted by a four-day visit from a koala dwelling in the trees at the front of the residence.

This was the foundation year for the Library Angels, a group of students from Years 9, 10 and 11 who generously give their time to assist with a range of library services.

The Spring Hill Young Writers workshop ran again this year, with students from Brisbane Girls Grammar, Brisbane Grammar, St Joseph’s Gregory Terrace, and All Hallows worked with published author Brain Falkner to produce collaborative writing pieces.

Apollo Club, the reading group of Brisbane Girls Grammar and Brisbane Grammar senior students, continued for its third year.

The Junior and Senior Writer in Residence programmes were improved by changing the model to one in which two writers attend the School periodically throughout the year. This model offers stronger and more sustained mentorship for young writers.

The International Studies Faculty once again welcomed students from our affiliate schools in France, Germany and Japan.

Creative Arts students performed and exhibited throughout the year at events including: Year 8 Showcase; Year 12 Art Graduation Exhibition, Junior Drama production, Senior Drama production Songwriter Studio showcase concert, Aspire project showcase concert; and two winning entries from the Originals Songwriting competition played on ABC radio.

Music students collaborated with the Topology Ensemble in composition and performance for assessment.

Twenty students ventured on the Sydney Drama Tour, attending live theatre performances and participating in drama workshops conducted by the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) and the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP).

Queensland College of Teachers profiled the Centre for Professional Practice, established by the School in 2005 to enhance student learning outcomes through ongoing teacher education, in a research paper on School Partnerships and Centres of Excellence.

EOWA Employer of Choice for Women (EOCFW) citation granted again in 2012, the seventh consecutive year the School has received this recognition.

Dr Kay Kimber, Director of the Centre of Professional Practice, received a Griffith University 2012 Arts, Education and Law Group Research Excellence Award.
I have recently had cause to ponder the power of pop. Cast your minds back to the august occasion of the annual Brisbane Girls Grammar School Gala Concert. Then, as today, we delighted at the skill and the art of the hundreds of musicians in this School. Under the magic baton of Mr Mark Sullivan and the music staff, these girls always turn a gathering into an occasion.

At Gala this year, the crescendo came for me when the stage, jam-packed with our fabulous musicians, erupted into that most important piece of music – Abba’s ‘Dancing Queen’, complete with blinking disco rings. By musical contrast, we marvelled at a great many beautiful and classic performances that evening such as one of my personal favourites, the stunning ‘Lakme’ by Delibes. ‘Dancing Queen’, however, just made me want to dance! (Which I did the next morning in the gentle, non-judgemental privacy of my own lounge–room.) That is the power of pop!

The power of popular culture has crashed through, and now virtually owns, the world of music. The karaoke bar is dead! Long live YouTube! Now, every truly ordinary person can reach out to an ever bigger – global – audience to live the pop stardom of which they were surely robbed.

And when it comes to art, pop occupies an entire movement of its own. The pop art movement of the 1950s and 60s saw the likes of Andy Warhol seize their inheritance from their modernist predecessors and turn soup cans and rubber ducks into objet d’art. Suddenly, ‘Artists’ declared everyday images and objects, advertisements, and neon signs were ‘Art’.

Of course Abba, and now Lady Gaga, were and are purely the Delibes or Mozart of their time; Warhol the Michelangelo of his. That which we revere as high art of past centuries was frequently merely the popular culture of its day. The lot of the artist has always been to seize the inheritance of past masters, learn from it, then turn and go one step further in their own direction. Evermore may it be thus.

I am on thin ice here. A dissertation on the history of any art movement is a risky business, with Dr Bell in the room, formally educated as she is in the field of art history. So I will not play with fire (particularly while skating on thin ice), and will return to my reflections on the power of pop.

The School community knows our proud Aspiration ‘to be a leader in exceptional scholarship’. It is one thing for music and art to succumb to populist forces, but when it comes to the lofty matter of ‘scholarship’ we at Girls Grammar rise above the popular to the high-minded, right? Wrong!

Put simply, we aspire to the whole student, nurturing the ‘exceptional’ and the unusual. Every soup can, every rubber duck, is its own work of art. The inheritance for each of our girls is to seize and learn from the culture and traditions that have been laid down for them over 137 years, and then to turn and go one step further in their own direction.

The art for the School’s exceptional teachers in such an environment is not merely to teach, but to educate – to help our girls think, challenge, reflect and, hopefully in the process, to find and tap into their own beliefs and their own uniqueness. The seemingly ‘ordinary’ becomes extraordinary – exceptional – if only you look at it the right way.

Experience teaches us that school is not where you will actually find all of your own beliefs and uniqueness, but that it lays the foundations for doing so. This, we believe, is why our families choose this School for their daughters. We thank you for entrusting us with that extraordinary responsibility.
We share this stewardship responsibility with so many others: the P&F, the Old Girls Association and other volunteer parent support groups. While on the topic of volunteers, I would like to acknowledge the enormous contribution of Professor John Hay as a Trustee over the past eight years until his retirement from the Board earlier this year. A former Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland and a recognised innovator in educational leadership in Australia, he is already sorely missed at the board table.

I would also mention in this vein a member of staff who has made a truly exceptional contribution to the life of this School for over four decades. This year we farewell Miss Elizabeth Hatton, someone who is the embodiment of ‘life-wide learning’. A Girls Grammar student herself in the prime of the psychedelic pop-art 1960s, by the end of the 60s Miss Hatton was a physical education teacher and, after completing her Arts Degree, she also became a history teacher, and I can tell you from personal experience in her 1978 class an excellent one too. Having had senior roles across teaching and pastoral care as well as administration, few can match, and none exceed, the breadth of Miss Hatton’s contribution over such a long period. Miss Hatton, we scarcely believe that it is true that you are retiring, but must accept this truth and thank you sincerely on behalf of the many students whose lives you have affected.

All of these efforts by the many are always for our girls. This year we have thrilled at many great achievements by our girls, with lots more to come today as we award prizes and leaving certificates. Gala was a celebration of the great musical achievements of our girls. A new event in the School’s calendar, the recent Sportswomen of Excellence Awards, conceived and most ably delivered by Director of Sport Ms Sally Northcroft, was an impressive celebration of the sporting life and achievements of so many of our girls.

It is not only in these extremely popular pursuits that our girls spend their hours hopefully finding lifelong passions. It is from physics to philosophy, debating to drama, in School and community service, and in Antipodean adventures – pursuits too many to list. They are critical to the life of this School and to the shaping our girls lives as they pass out into the world.

Year 12s, you face an exciting and challenging future in that world. There is still a great deal worth struggling against in a world in which, as we’ve seen this year all too brutally, girls in some places suffer abuse and even violence merely for asking to be educated.

Your inheritance as a soon-to-be alumna of Brisbane Girls Grammar School is both a great gift and a great responsibility. I hope you will learn from those who have gone before, and treasure the exceptional start in life that you have had here; but now turn and go one step further in your own direction. I hope you will do your little bit in any way you can to make a positive difference, but also have fun with this life. To quote the popular culture expression, ‘Dance like no-one is watching’. Seize life. Relish it. Celebrate it. And please share it. Make your life a Warhol or a Michelangelo, as you prefer, but make it yours and be true to yourself.

You will forgive me though, today, if I dwell on someone else who will in January 2013 pass out through the white-picket fence and into the world beyond Girls Grammar – Dr Amanda Bell.

Dr Bell, where do I start? Well perhaps I should use some wisdom from Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and ‘Begin at the beginning ... and go on till [I] come to the end: then stop’ (Carroll, (1865/2012).

Dr Bell started with us in January 2002, eleven years ago. A first-time Principal, she followed in the formidable footsteps of Dr Judith Hancock AM, one of the School’s longest standing and most significant Principals. Many were sceptical that anyone could do that. The Board of the day, and no doubt Dr Bell too, were well aware of the pressure and the sense of expectation.

Dr Bell, however, never blinked nor wavered in her clear determination to accept the gift and the responsibilities of the office of Principal. With great respect for the extraordinary inheritance that came with it and the certain knowledge that she must not squander it but learn from it, Dr Bell knew she had to turn and go one step further in her own direction.

What then did this radical new artist do with her ‘inheritance’ as Principal?

Today, eleven years later, our Intent is writ large on the internal atrium wall of the Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre. It is not a departure from our past, but a veritable celebration of it. It acknowledges our tradition, emphasising that we seek to equip our girls to give to, not take from, their world with wisdom, imagination and integrity. Our Aspiration to exceptional scholarship is deeply ingrained in all we do.
This Aspiration and Intent also mark with great accuracy the leadership of Dr Bell. She not only believes them – she lives and breathes them. She is a role model for our girls, and for us all. She personifies the exceptional scholar. This is not only evidenced by her gaining her PhD in 2008, but, more importantly, by the way in which she puts deep, complex thought in to everything she does. Sometimes this has been uncompromising when the interests of the School and our girls are concerned.

We have seen palpable signs of Dr Bell’s approach across the arts, sciences and sport, first and foremost in her constant focus on the continuous development of our highly competent staff. We have also seen very tangible signs of it:

Dr Bell’s first project came in 2003, with the significant upgrade of the 1960s science classrooms to contemporary science labs comprising the eastern wing of the School.

After that much welcomed step, she turned her attention to her own passion – the arts – which had not in living memory had a discrete home on the School’s main campus. Addressing that problem, and also the very clear mandate that all learning spaces in the future must be flexible in their use, thus evolved the award-winning Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre. This resulted in a forty-five per cent increase in teaching and learning space, a sixty-five per cent increase in usable space and a vibrant new central hub for the School.

This was quickly followed by the advent of the beautiful royal blue pool, all weather undercroft and green space finally opening up the heart of the School.

Meanwhile, much needed improvements to social/professional/collegial space for the staff and the general learning spaces of the Gehrmann Centre were also addressed during Dr Bell’s tenure.

Last, but not least, following on from previous Board announcements, development of a dedicated Year 7 building adjacent to the School’s western wing is due to commence next year in 2013, in time to welcome the new Year 7 cohort in 2015 – another initiative of Dr Bell.

And there was something else I was meant to tell you. What was that…?

[Play Fig Tree Pocket video]

Today I am proud to announce the final physical legacy of the Bell era. We have this week contracted to buy a third campus to add to Gregory Terrace and Marrapatta. Our new sports–dedicated campus will be at Fig Tree Pocket, the former Marist Brothers site. This, like at least one other major announcement in 2012, was not something we started the year expecting. Having had this site in our sights for some time, and with thanks to the vigilance of the School’s Business Manager Colette Pretorius, we were able to secure this wonderful solution to the constraints of our inner–city site and need for greater space for our thriving sporting pursuits.

But, back to the other piece of news we hadn’t been expecting this year; Dr Bell, you are leaving us. Your leadership has been exceptional. You have carefully and judiciously built your talented senior team, headed by your able deputy, Mrs Marise McConaghy. You therefore leave us in stronger and better condition than ever. I don’t know whether you belong in the category of Warhol or Michelangelo – 80s disco pop or classical opera diva – but I do know that your mark is indelible. Those who come after you will know both the gift and the responsibility that comes with the inheritance of your legacy of eleven exhausting, exhilarating years of unflagging determination and loyalty to the School and its young women.

Year 12, Dr Bell, it is time – ‘Can you hear the drums Fernando?’. You each and all go with our best wishes for a wonderful, colourful, challenging, toe-tapping, foot-stomping future.

Thank you.

Ms Elizabeth Jameson

REFERENCES
Firstly, to Ms Elizabeth Jameson, thank you so much for your overwhelming reflections on the last eleven years. The achievements and initiatives you outline are the result of the collaboration, commitment and creative endeavour of many, and I pay unqualified tribute to you and the previous Chair, Dr Cherrell Hirst; to present and past Trustees; to my marvellous staff; and to our incredibly supportive community. Nothing in this great School is the work of a few, but rather the energy, belief and endeavour of many. I count myself incredibly fortunate to have played a part in this short period of Grammar’s long life.

When I invited my adult children to this, my final Speech Day, you would have thought I had asked them to have all their teeth removed – so positive and exhilarating were their memories of their own speech day experiences. However, they didn’t really have the freedom to decline because they probably felt an obligation to be supportive children, as well as imagining the consequences if they were otherwise pre-disposed. When faced this year with giving my usual Principal’s Address and the special Occasional Address, an obvious opportunity arose to double my time allocation and length of my speech, but I actually like my family, friends and Year 12 so I am sure you are all relieved to know I decided against that option. I actually have the freedom to make those decisions – fortunately for you!

I decided on the F-word as the topic for my final address, and I am sure Year 12 are nodding knowingly, waiting for the Bell-wave of F-for-Feminist discourse to wash over them. But let’s see …

Our wonderful Head Girls, Tanvi Karnik and Phoebe Tronc, came to meet with me early this year to unveil their 2012 theme: ‘No Limits’. Being somewhat predisposed to scepticism, I immediately envisioned a state of anarchy. But, because I am older and hopefully a little wise, I calmly asked them to explain the thinking behind the decision, while I panicked internally. Naturally they took a positive position of great enthusiasm where there were no limits to the opportunities available to the students and no limits to their participation, or to their learning, or personal growth. A great theme, and one Year 12 should be proud of promoting and role modelling this year.

But, because I am older and wiser the basic idea still worried me a little. Everyone needs boundaries of some sort. Boundaries in life define our responsibilities and prevent us from being self-serving and hedonistic. No-one really has the freedom to do as they wish, in spite of a view that everyone has a basic right to be free. Somehow these two related concepts – no limits and freedom – took hold in my mind.

So lately I’ve been thinking a lot about that F-word ‘freedom’ – as I’m sure Year 12 have been, too. I’ve been thinking about it for two reasons: firstly, because it is one of those over-used words such as ‘leadership’ or ‘awesome’; and, secondly, because it is such an important word conceptually, but I’m not sure we give it enough consideration. We know we value it, we know we want it, but what is it exactly and how does it work?

What is freedom? I resisted the urge to immediately resort to Google or Wikipedia and instead consulted the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship webpage ‘Living in Australia: Five Fundamental Freedoms’ [n.d.]. It was a less than an entertaining read, and I was disappointed with myself at the outset because I could only name three of the five. Freedom of Speech was the most obvious; the others were Freedoms of Association, Assembly, Religion and Movement. Interestingly, they were not listed alphabetically and Freedom of Speech was first. And it is Freedom of Speech I wish to specifically talk about today.

Evelyn Beatrice Hall, an English writer who published under the male pseudonym Stephen G. Tallentyre, famously paraphrased Voltaire with: ‘I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it’ (cited in Wikiquotes, 2012).

I wonder what radio broadcaster Alan Jones would make of that, when it seems so many people disapproved of his recent comments related to the Prime Minister.
Do we defend someone’s right to say whatever they wish? The Australian Government’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship (n.d.) tells us that: ‘Australians are free, within the bound of the law, to say or write what we think privately or publicly, about the government, or about any topic.’ But it also goes on to say that: ‘Free speech comes from facts, not rumours, and the intention must be constructive and do no harm … Freedom of speech is not an excuse to harm others.’

The Finkelstein (2012) report on regulation of the media released early this year stated that, ‘a free press plays an essential role in a democratic society, and no regulation should endanger that role.’ It ‘has a responsibility to be fair and accurate in its reporting of the news.’ The press ‘is a powerful institution which can, and does, affect the political process, sometimes in quite dramatic ways.’ But ‘a free press can cause harm – sometimes unwarranted – to individuals and organisations’ and, therefore, ‘should be publicly accountable for its performance.’ It acknowledged that ‘codes of ethics regarding accuracy, fairness, impartiality, integrity and independence should guide journalists and news organisations.’ In fact, these qualities are fundamental to all aspects of society. The report recommended that a News Media Council ‘be established to set journalistic standards for the news media in consultation with the industry, and handle complaints made by the public when those standards are breached.’ In other words, the free press needed to abide by agreed ethical standards and these boundaries needed to be enforceable.

Chris Berg (2012) helpfully summarised this paradox of ‘free speech but with strings attached’ in an extract from his new book In Defence of Freedom of Speech: From Ancient Greece to Andrew Bolt:

It is easy to support freedom of speech when we agree with the content of that speech. So we need to ground our support for free expression in something more than platitudes – a resilient foundation that can cope with both the pleasing and the offensive. Freedom of speech has been, and still is, one of our most vital liberties. If we discard it, we critically undermine the moral foundations of liberal democracy, and lose our basic human individuality.

The Alan Jones debacle further precipitated the lengthy debate about freedom of speech in the media. Articles appeared such as, ‘“Free” Press is a Slave Unto Itself’ (Smith, 2012); ‘The Ultimate Dilemma – Freedom to Preach v Freedom of Speech’ (Henderson, 2012); ‘Snail Mail Litigation Leads Way on Free Speech’ (Ackland, 2012); and the list goes on and on. There is no doubt that our society passionately values this freedom, but it comes hand-in-hand with moral boundaries.

So, what relevance is all this to you, as students? Your personal opinions are not likely, at this stage, to be heard on radio, or seen on TV, or published in a newspaper. But there is a public forum where your opinions and status updates may readily appear: social media. Malcolm Turnbull observed in his 2012 Alfred Deakin Lecture:

[The] avalanche of condemnation which followed [Alan Jones’s comments] was delivered by thousands of Australians expressing their views online, especially via Twitter and Facebook … Australians spoke for themselves, unedited, unmediated via the social media.

Accordingly, and unsurprisingly, Alan Jones then complained that he had been the victim of social media bullying.

We tell you all the time to think before you press the ‘send’ button. To ask yourself the questions: Would I be happy for my mother to receive this? Would I like to receive this? Is my post or text or up-date based in fact rather than rumour? Am I going to make the recipient feel better or worse? Will my post add value to the discussion? Perhaps if the media personalities and the general public asked themselves these basic questions, then much of the angst, the vitriol, the unpleasantness and the unwarranted would disappear.
Freedom of speech, and indeed any true freedom, does not exist in a vacuum – it comes with responsibilities. It is a privilege and many freedoms we enjoy have been fought, argued and struggled for, and should never be taken for granted. The enemy of freedom is apathy; the cost of freedom is responsibility.

In 1968, Lou Reed took Germaine Greer to a club in Greenwich Village to hear a new singer called Kris Kristofferson. One of the cleverest song lines Greer recalls (2008) from the night was from ‘Me and Bobby McGee’: ‘Freedom’s just another word for nothin’ left to lose.’ The song continues, ‘And nothin’ ain’t worth nothin’ but it’s free.’

In other words, freedom may not be all it is made out to be and, in fact, freedom without boundaries and without qualification may be akin to a world missing a moral compass. It is important to realise that great ideals come with great responsibility and trust – there are limits.

Year 12, Greer posited (1970) that ‘The fear of freedom is strong in us.’ And no wonder, the responsibility of it is immense. Perhaps you feel a little fear about that freedom today? You want to be independent – free of school, parents, restrictions and obligations – but that can also be a scary thought because it means your childhood boundaries disappear and you have to set your own limits within the society of which you are a part. In other words, you are accepting that it is you who are responsible for your decisions and actions.

One of the most difficult, but important, things we do as parents is to allow our young adult children to be free – free to stand on their own two feet and hopefully develop into caring, thoughtful, responsible and successful citizens. Year 12, tomorrow the School sets you free – except, as you well know by now, ‘once a Grammar girl always a Grammar girl’, so you never really leave. Thanks to your teachers and your parents, you have been given the very best educational opportunities with ‘No Limits’. Make the most of what you have learned.

Like you, I have learned more than I would ever have imagined from this great School. For you, as for me, it will be impossible not to take Grammar’s influence into the future. Like you, I thank the School for all it is and represents – the wonderful traditions, its supportive and generous community, an unashamed dedication to scholarship and its motto Nil sine labor. Like you, I shall miss it immeasurably and, with you, wish it every success in educating future generations of exceptional Grammar girls.

Dr Amanda Bell

REFERENCES


2012 Annual Review / Brisbane Girls Grammar School
Good afternoon Ms Jameson, Chair of the Board of Trustees; Dr Bell, Principal; special guests; staff; parents; and girls.

Firstly, we would like to thank Dr Bell for her delivery today. It was so special to hear from our very own Principal who has experienced and achieved so much. Your message about freedom will resonate with all of us, but especially the Year 12s as we venture into the world. We promise to keep our moral compasses close at hand.

We also want to thank Dr Bell for her support of the Year 12 sleep-over at Marrapatta during the week. The Year 12s spent two glorious days dancing, singing and enjoying each other’s company. Dr Bell has been such an inspiring and strong role model for us during our time at Brisbane Girls Grammar. From Year 8 to Year 12, our relationship with our Principal has grown from apprehension to admiration. Dr Bell, you have helped us to grow this year as leaders, and we could not have taken the Year 12s on this journey without you.

This year,

The limit does not exist.
With courage and integrity
The Grammar girl is ready to persist.
Presented with a myriad of opportunities,
She believes in her endless capabilities.

At the beginning of 2012, in hope of encapsulating the nature of our motto ‘No Limits’, we quoted American President Ronald Reagan. In an address to US university students in 1983, he stated, ‘There are no such things as limits to growth, because there are no limits to the human capacity for intelligence, imagination, and wonder.’ We believe that these words truly exemplify 2012 for Brisbane Girls Grammar School.

There were ‘No Limits’ to involvement.

One of our biggest goals this year was to unite the School as one force, by encouraging every girl to get involved in sport, music, arts and academic endeavours. In saying this, we hoped each girl would grow to believe in herself and others, as she began to realise that she has limitless potential, especially in a School that has so much to offer. Whether the motto gave girls the courage to audition for a choir, join a sports team for the first time, or, more simply, attend a School play and make new friends along the way, we are proud of all the girls for embracing ‘No Limits’ this year. Even if girls were not directly involved in an activity, we aspired to ensure that they felt excited to support their Grammar sisters and attend as many events as possible. This allowed for a contagious level of energy to be developed in the Girls Grammar community, as limitless numbers of girls cheered their sisters on.

There were ‘No Limits’ community service.

This limitless ability for students to give their time is also reflected through numerous service initiatives, which link our School community to the global community. Lead by the Student Council, there were a variety of successful events throughout the year, including Harry Potter Day, Pink Day, Blue Days, Valentine’s Day and Grammar Goes Green. We were extremely proud to be involved in the Service Programme, as it is one of the many things that makes Girls Grammar unique. We would like to thank all Grammar girls for their commitment, passion and generosity, as they were the driving force behind each event. In our five years here, service has been one of the best things about Grammar and we feel so privileged to have been involved; it is surely one of our ‘favourite things’.
There are ‘No Limits’ to how thankful we are to this School.

We owe the successes of our academic work to our teachers. That one apple given to you on Teacher Appreciation Day does not truly do justice to all your work. You are all A+ teachers, the apples of our eyes – we are so appreciative of what you do.

We are also thankful to our friends. You were our army this year, picking us up when we were down and inspiring us to be the best leaders we could be for you. Our mission this year was to serve you to the best of our ability, and we hope we have succeeded in this. We would like to thank you for supporting and believing in us as your Head Girls for 2012. We are so thankful for every opportunity this role has given us. We have had the time of our lives, and we hope you have too.

We have been a powerful Grammar force, dressed to conquer all obstacles with our Senior jackets and QCS ribbons and sharing the energising, invigorating QCS Handshake. As departing Year 12s, we have confidence that we are all ready to carry the Grammar experience to the world as independent young women, contributing to the global society with wisdom, imagination and integrity. The potential of a Grammar girl is limitless.

This year, we share our ‘lasts’ with Dr Bell, who is also embarking on a new adventure at The Women’s College within the University of Sydney. To all Year 12s and Dr Bell, we hope you will follow The Sound of Music and:

Climb every mountain,
Ford every stream,
Follow every rainbow,
Till you find your dream.

The close of 2012 marks the end of a remarkable – or should we say limitless – era. To all our Grammar sisters, we hope the Student Council’s vision has encouraged you all to approach every aspect of your life with courage, optimism and resilience. We hope we have inspired you to take failure in your stride and surprise yourself with your capability to be resilient.

Class of 2012, just remember,
No matter how far, or how wide you roam
You’ll still call Girls Grammar home,

and,

Just to keep up with tradition
Today we have one last mission
And that is to remind you that this year there are ‘No Limits’.

Finally,

So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, good night
We hate to go and leave this pretty sight
So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye
Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye...

Phoebe Tronc and Tanvi Karnik
I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet this evening and pay my respects to their elders, past, present and future.

Ms Elizabeth Jamison, Chair of the Board of Trustees; Dr Amanda Bell, Principal; Ms Margaret Ridley, President of Parents and Friends Association; teachers; parents; and, most importantly, graduating class of 2012, it is an honour and a privilege to be here tonight and to celebrate your achievements with you. In my job, I give a lot of speeches, but this is the first one in a long time that I have struggled to write and been nervous to give. Hearing about some of your achievements, and knowing the journey you have been on, I feel very under qualified to be your guest speaker.

A lot can change in twelve years. That was my biggest realisation over the last few weeks. Tonight, you celebrate having completed twelve years of education, having grown up into young women, ready to take on life's challenges, excited and nervous about what comes next.

In those same twelve years, I, too, have grown up. I moved away from home, travelled, worked in retail, then as a youth worker, later as a banker, then as a communications manager and, now, as the Executive Director of UN Women Australia. I married a guy I met at uni. I lost my brother. I have done four university degrees. And I have developed a strong sense of just how much further we have to go before men and women, in this country and across the world, are considered equals.

Twelve years ago, you were buying your first backpack and getting ready for Year 1 and I was sitting where you are now. I was sporting a very, very bad haircut (which haunted me through schoolies); I was excited that both my best friend and I had passed biology – a miracle after a minor incident involving a Bunsen burner and our hay infusion experiment; and I was terrified. I was terrified of who I would be when I was no longer England House Captain, a debater and a very average student. I was unsure of what OP I would get, and what I wanted to do.

Rather than focus on what has changed, I will focus on the constants in my life. I will try to give you a bit of an overview of what I have been doing since school and the decisions I have faced, before reflecting on the things that being a Grammar girl gave me, which have been pillars of every decision I have made.

I have always been a confident person in one way. From a young age I could talk underwater (as my family will tell you); I love meeting new people; I get energy from challenging situations. But throughout my time at Girls Grammar, I was genuinely challenged trying to work out what I wanted to do, as opposed to what I felt I 'should' do. I thought I was good with people, so I decided to study Human Resources, through Business Management. I loved the concept of humanity and the challenges of development, so, to keep me interested, I decided to do a double degree in Business and International Relations. I decided to go to The University of Queensland, mainly because my mum worked there and my brother went there, which guaranteed me lifts, free lunches and a 'safety blanket' – always a good reason to make a decision!

There were two things I loved about my time at UQ – debating and working. I try not to talk too much about debating for fear that it makes me sound a little geeky. By the time I finished school, being a debater was nearly ‘geek chic’ – but, wow, that didn’t seem to be the case at university. I worked initially in retail and later in my degree I did tutoring and worked at a school with students with behavioural problems and then for an NGO that focused on disadvantaged and marginalised young people. In these jobs, I saw young people whose parents had committed suicide, young people who were homeless, and kids who were addicted to drugs – young people who, despite all these challenges, wanted to finish school and make something of their lives. But in some ways, I was on auto pilot. Ask me what I loved and I would say debating and working in the area of social justice and equality. Ask me what I was going to do when I finished uni, and I would say banking.

So I graduated from university with my Human Resources degree and got a graduate job in banking, which should have been the dream job. I remember my dear old grandpa being so proud of his only granddaughter working at the bank, despite his slight fear that I might get shot living in Sydney. So off to the deep west of Sydney I went, where I learned to count and reconcile cash, to manage hold–up situations and to train staff with varying levels of engagement in their roles – not quite what I was expecting, but valuable skills none the less.
Without wanting to give you a painful amount of detail about my first year of employment, what I started to realise was that what I loved, and what I was passionate about, were not the things that I was spending most of my time doing.

Late in my graduate year I was involved in a car crash, which nine years later has paled into insignificance. But it was a bad crash. I was the passenger and my boss ran a red light, running us under a truck. I later found out that he had been drunk at the wheel. I was hurt, but, more than that, I was embarrassed and ashamed – how could I not have known that he was drunk? How could I have put myself in that kind of situation? I was the kid that was very risk aware, never made those sorts of mistakes. I didn’t realise because I had never met or interacted with an alcoholic before then I didn’t know the signs. Once I knew them, it all made a lot of sense. By the time I got out of hospital, he had lost his job and I never saw or heard from him again. I kept thinking about his wife and kids and how they would support themselves when he was unemployed.

That crash for me was a jolt. It made me realise that I wasn’t enjoying my chosen career and that only I could do something to change that. I met a man who ran Homelessness Australia at an event and, as I do, told him my life story. Possibly in an attempt to get me to stop talking, he told me that he just happened to have a communications manager role going, and invited me to apply. Suddenly, I had never wanted anything more in my life – a role that centred on communications and that had a core focus on equality. I got that role at the age of 22, and I will never forget the opportunity that this change was for me.

I will also never forget the looks on my parents faces when they got back from overseas and I told them that I had quit banking, accepted a lower salary, moved to Canberra (and in with my then boyfriend – thankfully, he later became my husband), and was now working for an NGO with four staff in the back suburbs of Canberra. But as ever, they were very supportive.

The important part of that story is about knowing yourself. Knowing what motivates and inspires you, and making choices based on those things, not on ‘shoulds’. All the energy I spent thinking about what was the ‘right’ career was entirely wasted, because I never thought about finishing that sentence and finding the ‘right career ... for me’. Girls Grammar instilled in me a sense that I could do anything I wanted in the world – the challenge for me was defining what anything meant to me.

From 2005 onwards, making decisions has become easier. I knew I wanted to work in the social equality space, in an advocacy–based role. I started to actively build a network in Canberra of other people who worked for NGOs and volunteered a lot of my spare time with different charities. Suddenly, as fate would have it, UN Women (then called UNIFEM) was looking to establish an office in Australia. I knew that I wanted the job. I knew it would be hard work – working on my own, setting up systems, doing all the administration – but I believed in the importance of gender equality and saw it as such a barrier to development around the world. I knew that I was too young to be an Executive Director of anything. My dad would possibly still argue that I could start by being the Executive Director of my own shoe collection before trying to run a business. I almost didn’t apply for the job because I felt my age was a barrier.

I remember that job interview like it was yesterday – 23–year–old Julie and five Board members. I knew I didn’t have the experience they were looking for, but I hoped that my passion, ideas and commitment to hard work would shine through. Those five women did an incredible thing that day. They took a chance on a young woman, and their belief in me was all I needed. Every day since, I have tried to find ways to support other young women, taking chances on them, giving them opportunities, mentoring where I can – because I now know the power of one person saying, ‘I believe in you and will put my support behind you to succeed.’

So, on my somewhat unusual journey to where I am today, what was the influence of Girls Grammar?

There are four things that I feel summarise what it means to be a Grammar girl: leadership, courage, passion for learning and kindness. These four things are not only critical to being a Grammar girl – they are central to the role that women play in workplaces, families and communities.
Leadership

There is a wonderful book called *Half the Sky*, written by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, which is about the roles that women play all around the world and their centrality to poverty reduction. In the book, there is an example of a little boy who is on a beach covered in thousands of starfish stranded by the outgoing tide. He is picking them up one by one and tossing them back into the ocean. A man walks past and says, 'Son, you can't make a difference here, there are simply too many – the tides have changed.' The little boy picks up another starfish, tosses it back into the ocean and says, 'Well, I sure made a difference to that one.'

That is the leadership that Girls Grammar teaches us. It is not about being the boss or having control. For me, leadership is about making the small changes that are within my sphere of influence – seeking to make even just one small starfish’s life better, because that is what you can do.

There was a woman who used to sleep in the entrance to the bank branch where I worked in 2005. The staff used to ask her to move on, sometimes laugh at her and would use other entrances to avoid speaking with her. I was 20 years old and very naïve, and I finally asked her why she was homeless. She replied, 'Because I can’t afford a place to live in Sydney.' I asked her if there was government support she could apply for that might help with rent. She just looked at me blankly and said, ‘But I’m homeless and I don’t have a bank account.’ Ever helpful, I thought, Ah hah! I work for a bank, I can help you, and in my mind I was already picturing this woman living in a nice little flat, safe and warm, and congratulating myself on being such a good person.

To receive Centrelink payments, you needed a bank account – that makes sense. So I got the form and started looking through it and came unstuck when I got to the question on ‘residential address’. The bank, my employer, required people to have a residential address before they could open an account (which seems fair), but this meant that people who did not have a residential address were not able to participate in the very system which was supposed to support them.

Once I understood this, I considered talking to this woman about registering her address as my home address, but decided that wasn’t the best idea, because I had no way of getting her mail to her once I left the branch rotation. Eventually, I had the idea of speaking with the local branch manager about registering people’s ‘residential address’ as the branch address. While not entirely true, it ticked the box, and allowed people experiencing homelessness to open bank accounts and receive the necessary support. This might have helped only one or two people in Parramatta, where I was then working, but it is one of the things I am most proud of from my time there. It was an opportunity to be a leader, and influence change in one part of a community.

Courage

There is an ongoing debate about whether courage is something you are born with or whether it is something you learn. I wonder whether it is something we all have, but only some of us get the opportunity to unlock it.

I think a lot about courage. I don’t believe that jumping out of a plane or climbing a mountain is true courage. Sometimes I think being a good daughter takes courage. Doing the job you love, rather than the job that pays the best, takes courage. Taking a chance on someone – being a good friend – takes courage.

Courage is the women and men who UN Women works with – who have left their homes; who have walked, or sometimes flown, across countries; who escape from bullets, hunger and extreme weather to arrive in Malaysia and Indonesia with even the faintest hope of a better life for their families in a country like Australia. Courage is the 14–year–old girl in Pakistan, Malala Yousafzai, who campaigned for girls’ rights to education despite knowing she would become a target of the Taliban, and who was shot in the head in October this year in an attempt to silence her.
For most Australians, the types of courage demonstrated in these examples are almost unimaginable. For many of us, courage needs to be about having the tough conversations and giving a voice to people who do not have the freedoms that allow them to speak out.

For me, courage is about speaking out about women’s access to reproductive rights. It is challenging the government and the opposition (despite knowing that part of our funding, and therefore our viability, is reliant on government support) on why there are so few women in Australian parliaments and why they are not represented in non–traditional roles in departments such as Defence and Treasury. It is about being in rooms full of men in suits in corporate Australia and advocating for businesses to take responsibility for ending violence against women.

Courage means something different for every person, but it is something that you learn at this School and something which will benefit you in your futures. Treasure your courage.

Learning

For some of you, there will be an intense sense of relief that you are finished school and have completed the chapter of your life that is full of exams. But the passion for learning is infectious and Girls Grammar instils curiosity in its students – subconsciously and consciously.

One of the most important things that I realised after finishing school was that my learning had only just begun. There will be times in your life where you are buried in books and doing exams, and there will be other times when learning is about experiences.

I would encourage you all to focus on the ‘experience’ part of your development as much as the academic part. I had studied the war in the Balkans and heard about the peace process, but it was not until I spent time in Sarajevo – speaking with women whose husbands had been killed and whose children had not received an uninterrupted education – that I started to get even the tiniest understanding of that conflict. Arriving at the UN Office, which still has a hole blown in one side and bullet holes across the entire front, makes you realise that this conflict was very real, very recent and that peace remains fragile.

At uni, I studied labour law and was very interested in the globalisation of production and what this meant particularly for women workers who were employed in what are commonly known to Australians as ‘sweatshops’. But it is not until you visit those women, in the shoe factories of Guangdong in China, that you can really appreciate both the value of the contribution of those workers to the economy and the complexity which surrounds their employment.

Girls Grammar opens your mind to experiences – whether through sports, music, languages or travel. That doesn’t end after school. Whatever you are going on to do next, don’t forget the experience side of learning.

Kindness

I think Girls Grammar teaches us all to be kind, or at the very least to understand the importance of being kind. In a fast–paced world, I think people often forget to take a moment and remember that being kind, even in the smallest way, could change the course of someone’s life.

In my role, I see kindness and generosity every day – and it is kindness in the face of adversity that inspires me the most. I remember travelling to North Queensland just after the cyclone in 2011 for some fundraising events that we had planned months before for the women of Fiji. Despite having lost their homes, or having had assets destroyed, literally hundreds of people came to those events, recognising that, no matter how damaged their community was, their lives and hardships could not compare to the women of Fiji. As I have travelled around Australia, women I don’t know have welcomed me into their homes and looked after me, welcoming me into their worlds and sharing with me their stories.
Kindness is the small population of Samoan women in Canberra who are currently trying to raise enough money to build a domestic violence shelter in Samoa. Kindness is the mothers in refugee camps in Malawi who are taking on the children of other families whose parents have died of HIV. Kindness is the women across rural and regional Australia who tonight are knitting baby bonnets for new-born babies in East Timor.

My time at Girls Grammar taught me to believe the best in people and to find ways to support them on their journeys. Being kind is the easiest thing you will ever do. It costs you nothing and can mean the world to someone else. I encourage you to think about the people who have been kind to you, the people you have been kind to, and the people who you might be just a little kinder to.

Tonight is the end of another era for Girls Grammar – another Year group off into the world. It is also the end of another era, which I would like to briefly acknowledge. While I didn’t have the privilege of studying at the School while Dr Bell has been the Principal, I have watched as an ‘Old Girl’ as the School has continued to grow and transform. Dr Bell’s leadership and stewardship of the School are well recognised around Australia, and she is regarded as one of Australia’s best educators. I hope that you are all very proud of your fearless leader and, over the course of tonight and the coming days, have the time to celebrate with her your shared achievements.

Look around you – the girls in this room are some of the best friends you will ever have. My three best high-school friends all went to different universities and studied vastly different things. We remain best friends.

You will make new friends – of course you will. You may go through a phase of distancing yourself from your ‘Girls Grammar days’ to find your own identity. Life will move on from who was cool, or smart, or musical; but when you see each other years from now, you will still be bonded by what you have shared.

I have been at UN Women Australia now longer than I was at Girls Grammar. I feel very privileged to have been part of these two communities, and I have grown up in both organisations. I hope that over the course of my future, I can do justice to the education I received, the opportunities I have had and the investment that has been made in me by my family, friends, teachers, mentors and colleagues.

Remember, as you finish school, to thank your teachers and your parents. The job of your teachers might be nearly done – but, wow, parents … it’s not over yet! Tonight, twelve years on, my poor mum picked me up from the airport, raced me home to change, tag-teamed with my dad, who dropped me off on his way to tennis and will pick me up again later. Tomorrow morning one of them will ferry me to the airport as I fly out to Newcastle – sound familiar? Despite living in Canberra, I am often found on a weekend sitting outside my parents’ place at Indooroopilly, pondering the world, running through the list of decisions I need to make, and getting their advice. I am not sure I realised when I finished school the profound impact they would have on me – but every day they demonstrate the values that I have been speaking about tonight.

Go forward into the world with leadership, courage, passion for learning and kindness. Don’t take this education and the opportunities you have had at Girls Grammar lightly. Know that having someone invest in you comes with a significant responsibility – for you to invest in others. Be guided by the things that make you happy and surround yourself with people who give you energy; but don’t forget to be challenged by those who disagree with you. Go forward today, next week, and in the years to come in the full confidence that you have been given the toolkit to do whatever it is that you want to do, and that Girls Grammar – its teachers, its students, its alumnae, its history, and its future – stands with you all the days of your life.

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BA(Hons), GradDipArts

Library Technician
Mrs Janet Tripp,
DipLibInfoStudies

Library Assistant
Ms Tily Askey

Online Learning Management Systems and Content Administrator
Mr Brad Nielsen,
BMm, BEd (Term II – IV)

Online Media Officer
Mr James Bergmann
(Term II – IV)

Payroll Officer
Mrs Brigitte Bickham

Personal Assistant to Deans
Ms Sally Condon

Personal Assistant to Business Manager & Deputy Principal
Ms Kirsti Moyle (Sem 2)

Project Officer (Finance)
Ms Toby Humble *(Term I – III)

Receptionist
Mrs Tracey Biton *

Mrs Lorraine Skillen *

Reference Librarian
Ms Helen Demack,*

BA, GradDipLibSc

Mrs Jill Rogers,*

BA, GradDipLibSc, MAppSc

Risk & Compliance Officer
Mrs Tina Hinspeter *

Secretary to Dean of Studies
(MPart-time)
Mrs Sue Martin,*

DipHSc(Couns)

Secretary to Dean of Studies
& Heads of House
Ms Jennifer Smith

Security
Mr Terry Brown

Senior Audio Visual & Media Technician
Mr Frank Casablanca,
DipMultimedia

Sports Manager and Workplace Health & Safety Officer
Mr Barry Greatorex,
BSportStudiesAdmin,
GradDipOutEd,
MAlLeisure.Mgt.MSSA

Stores Officer
Mr Phillip Hopkins

Secretary to Dean of Studies
(Part time)

Mrs Sue Martin,*

DipHSc(Couns)

Secretary to Dean of Studies
& Heads of House
Ms Jennifer Smith

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DipMultimedia

Sports Manager and Workplace Health & Safety Officer
Mr Barry Greatorex,
BSportStudiesAdmin,
GradDipOutEd,
MAlLeisure.Mgt.MSSA

Stores Officer
Mr Phillip Hopkins

* Part-time

# On approved leave