



OLD GIRLS ASSOCIATION
INC.

115th Annual General Meeting, 28th March, 2015

Agenda Item 6. President's Report for 2014

1. Opening Remarks

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the 115th Annual General Meeting of the Old Girls Association of the Brisbane Girls Grammar School, particularly in the year of the 140th anniversary of the School. The OGA is almost 25 years younger than the School itself. We rejoice with the School in its many achievements. Pauline Harvey-Short has provided her insights into words to live by in the 27th March BGGGS Newsletter and I am shamelessly stealing her words – and the words of some of the Old Girls she quotes.

Pauline drew attention to the fact that BGGGS was founded on strong values and has developed a rich culture to support these, encapsulated in the school motto *Nil sine labore*, and reflected in the School's aspiration and intent. The aspiration? *To be a leader in exceptional scholarship*. The strategic intent? *Proud of our Grammar tradition, we are a secondary School that establishes the educational foundations on for young women to contribute confidently to their world with wisdom, imagination and integrity*. And so say all of us. Pauline also refers to some of the mottos developed by senior students since 2000. *Dream it, Dare it, Do it* was the catch-cry in 2000 and this statement is now embedded in the pathway at the front steps of the Main Building. *Born to be blue*, developed in 2002 truly captures the essence of the School – *Build bridges, Live and learn, Unleash the Spirit, Extend yourself*. The OGA by its very existence pays testimony to the School's values, ideals and beliefs as they are expressed in these various slogans.

This AGM will be short as we all have a ball to attend. Formalities will be kept to a minimum. Do enjoy the refreshments. Take an opportunity to look at the School.

I welcome the Chair of the Board, Elizabeth Jameson, the Director of Development and Alumni, Lea Walker, and the OGA/Alumni Officer Claire Tynan. I also present the apologies of the Principal, Jacinda Euler.

2. The Management Committee

The Management Committee met six times during the year and assisted the School in various matters and coordinated activities of the OGA, as well as discussing future activities and

relationships with the School. OGA membership grew to 787, comprising 21 honorary members, 595 life members and 171 annual members. Considerable activity and discussion focused on the matching of the School's database of alumni and OGA's membership database. A final clarity has hopefully been reached and reconciliation of the versions undertaken. The School's database, TASS, will be maintained as the true record. No doubt some further cleaning up will be undertaken. Many thanks to Sue Meeking for working so hard on this onerous task, and to Wendy Carter and Claire Tynan from the School.

The Management Committee for 2014 comprised:

Janine Schmidt (Hogg 1964) President
Jenny Gray (Vallis '1969) Vice President
Dorothy Bourguignon (Scotney 1956) Minutes Secretary
Sue Meeking (O'Brien 1965) Secretary/Treasurer
Sue Jordan (Squire 1967) Assistant Treasurer
Roselyn Cheales (Miller 1972)
Ann Caston (Pressland 1958)
Pauline Harvey-Short (School representative, Harvey 1971)
Carly Lambert (2011)
Sylvia Pegg (Gaulton 1965)
Sophie Phillips (2011)
Salliann Powell (Johnson 1986)
Grainia Schmelzer (King 1981)
Jean Vallis (Genn 1942)
Diana Wood (Thacker 1975)
Leigh Fielding (Gow 1984)

I extend my thanks to each and every member of the Committee for service to the OGA and the School in the past year. In particular, I thank Sue Meeking for her outstanding service and commitment as Treasurer. Sue has done so much over many years. Sue has epitomised the OGA and her knowledge of our members has facilitated the work of the Association and ensured that vitally important personal touch, dealing with most of the enquiries and concerns. She has kept a tight rein on the expenditure and ensured that the accounts were always up to date and that our financial affairs ran smoothly. Sue has indicated she will not stand as Treasurer in the coming year. She has served as Treasurer for 16 years and demonstrated an amazing commitment. She has lived through many changes and has put all her energy into serving the OGA. It is difficult to imagine the Committee without her. We wish her all the best in the next stage of her life and we know she will stay connected – particularly when her granddaughter attends the School in 2025!

I would also thank Dorothy Bourguignon for her commitment to keeping the minutes of the Committee. Dorothy has indicated that after 23 years, she would like to hand over this role to someone else. We thank her for the outstanding work she has done over the years, and look forward to her continuing with the Committee in a less onerous role. Ann Caston has done a sterling job with the memorabilia, managing it all, ensuring delivery to our customers and always being present at the reunions for sales. It remains an important source of income for the Association – an enormous thank you to Ann (and husband Tony!). We look forward to the continuation of her work. Diana Wood has excelled with coordinating and delivering the provision of refreshments at the Gala Concert as well as representing the OGA at the P and F Committee when the President has been unavailable. Thank you to Diana. Jenny Gray has provided good support as Deputy President and Editor of the Newsletter. Thank you to Jenny. Salliann has continued to organise *Everything Old is New Again* superbly and arrange for the further deliveries of the war-cry memorabilia. We are

grateful to Grainia Schmelzer, Sue Jordan, Leigh Fielding, Jean Vallis and Sylvia Pegg who have provided great support through their membership of the Committee and their involvement in our events.

None of our activities would be possible without Pauline Harvey-Short. She works tirelessly and imaginatively to ensure that our goals are achieved and that any support needed from the School is obtained. Pauline coordinates the work of the Service Girls who attend and assist at all our events, and help with mail-outs and many other activities. We truly thank them, and Pauline.

3. Support of School Events

The BGS OGA continued to support and participate in various School activities. These included:

- Open Day on 1st August in the Annie Mackay room. Members of the Management Committee greeted visitors including prospective and enrolled students, encouraged old girls visiting the School to become members of the OGA, sold memorabilia and displayed photographs and pictorial reminders of the school, seeking identification of unknown personalities in the photographs. The atmosphere on the day and way in which the School community works together at such events is testimony to the School's aim of "exceptional scholarship".
- Year 12 Assembly in September. The OGA has participated in this event for the last few years and Salliann Powell told her story to the girls present, outlining what continued association with the School had meant to her. All were inspired and the School's traditions continue to live on in this way.
- The School's Gala Concerts demonstrate the commitment of the School to the power of music and the creativity and energy of staff and students (not to mention parents). The eighteenth concert was held at the UQ Centre at the University of Queensland on 25th October. The theme was *After Dark* and provided the framework of Brisbane life after dark for the various presentations. The young musicians gave outstanding performances, including the premier of a student's work by Claudia Cameron. The massed choir, big band, chamber and symphony orchestras entertained and inspired with works ranging from Grieg to Vivaldi, and *Chicago* to *Phantom of the Opera*. The OGA team led by Diana Wood and assisted by Service Girls from the School ensured that drinks and refreshments were available during the interval, raising over \$1500. Diana has been coordinating this event for over 10 years and the OGA thanks her for her commitment and energy.
- The OGA was again privileged to be represented at the 2014 Valedictory Dinner. The timing of the G20 meeting in Brisbane in November 2014 meant that end-of-year School functions customarily held in the Southbank Convention Centre were moved to other venues. The Valedictory Dinner was held at the Suncorp Stadium. The highlight of the evening was a "flash mob" performance by the girls on the hallowed green playing fields as they outdid the Broncos and the Brisbane Roar. The evidence is available at <https://vimeo.com/112456030>. Angela Hirst was the keynote speaker and related her journey since leaving school. Following an architectural degree in Brisbane, Angela gained a PhD in food ethics with cooking experiences in London and Paris. She is now the Director of Wandering Cooks, as well as a young mother, writer, researcher and teacher and has established Brisbane's first incubator for food entrepreneurs. All were inspired by her story.
- Representatives of the OGA attended the Speech Day and enjoyed the collegiality and warmth of the occasion.

- The OGA was represented at the Welcome to New Parents in 2015 and took the opportunity to meet Old Girls returning to the School as mothers of new students. The simultaneous intake of Year 7 with Year 8 appears to have been very successful and the newcomers to the School seem confident and enthusiastic.
- The OGA Management Committee was pleased to be invited to the opening in March 2015 of the new Research Learning Centre by the Governor, His Excellency, the Honourable Paul de Jersey AC. It is one of the events associated with the 140th birthday celebrations. The building graces the Gregory Terrace frontage of the School. At night it is full of light and learning to passers-by and during the day it is packed with the girls who are obviously enjoying its facilities and ambience. In the words of the Principal, Jacinda Euler,

This is already an inspiration space. There's a tranquillity and a beautiful light here. There's an excitement about the space because the girls come in and they find their own corner, their own nook; they personalise it. There is a sense that it's a blank canvas; they can move the stuff around and keep the space evolving. We believe a building that promotes true scholarship allows for choice, decision making and individual responsibility.

And in the words of the Director of Information Services, Kristin Cooke, herself an Old Girl,

Libraries ...provide challenge and transport students beyond the known, the safe and the expected...School libraries...are a playground for young minds
- The OGA was pleased to be represented at the *Sportswomen of Excellence* celebration. Daphne Pirie told stories of her rich life experiences and delighted and inspired all present.

4. Communication

- The OGA issued one newsletter for the year in early March 2015. We hope to do better next year in this regard and will work with the School on the production of a joint OGA/Alumni Newsletter.
- The OGA was pleased to present a column in each issue of the School's Gazette under the banner Old Girls/Alumni.
- The website remains an important part of the OGA's communication platform and the OGA is working with the School to improve its content.
- A letter was sent by the President at the end of 2014 to each Year 12 girl encouraging membership of the Old Girls Association. A number of life memberships resulted from this outreach.
- Members of the OGA Management Committee receive the School's weekly online newsletter and are delighted to be able to obtain knowledge of the School's developments in this way.
- The OGA is aiming to conduct as much of its communication online as possible both to enhance our activities and to reduce costs. We shall always however remember those members who are not comfortable with electronic means of communication.
- Communication between the OGA and the School has improved during the year with meetings being held between the President, Janine Schmidt, Pauline Harvey-Short, Lea Walker, Director, Development & Alumni, and Claire Tynan, the OGA/Alumni Officer. A meeting was held in late 2014 with these representatives, the Principal, Jacinda Euler, and

the President of the Board, Elizabeth Jameson. It has been decided to schedule these meetings each term going forward to ensure that the OGA and the School have ongoing effective communication and provide mutual support.

5. Events

- *Everything Old is New Again*. For the second time, this event was held in March. The function provided an excellent opportunity for current mothers at the School who are also old girls to reconnect, reminisce and meet other Old Girls with common interests. The fashion parade of formal dresses from over the years were modelled by current students and ably compered by Associate Dean and OGA Committee member, Pauline Harvey-Short. Salliann Powell, Grainia Schmelzer and their team ably organized the event. A steady flow of chilled champagne and delicious nibbles combined with shared memories and laughter ensured *everything old was new again*. The same event for 2015 was held in March. Service girls who assisted wore eight “muck-up” uniforms suitably amended from the standard presentation for final school assemblies – creativity and imagination really do abound.
- *Service in our DNA*. The OGA continues to be a member of the National Council of Women Queensland. Its newsletter highlights the achievements of Queensland women and a recent issue featured three successful women who started their lives at BGGs, and in particular focused on Yvonne Bain’s achievements. The annual combined event of BGGs/NCWQ, the Young Women’s Forum, *Service in our DNA*, was held in May 2014. Four passionate young women, including the Managing Director of the Ashintosh Foundation, Rebecca Conrick (Service Captain 2009) and President of Towards International Medical Equality, Bethany Holt (2009) impressed and inspired all present, including current girls at the School. Steph Carter (an Old Girl and NCWQ member) and Lynne Mumgomery do much to ensure the success of this event.
- OGA and the School have been working together to co-host events, with the School and the OGA logos heading up invitations and activities. We were pleased to be associated with the Grammar Women events including:
 - Grammar Women in the Arts on Friday 23rd May with approximately 75 attending. Stars of stage and screen Angie Milliken (MDA) and Anna McGahan (Underbelly, House Husbands) and producer Katrina Torenbeek (Out of the Box) entertained an enthusiastic audience, facilitated by fellow old girl and former news presenter Marie-Louise Thiele.
 - Grammar Women Entrepreneurs on 24th July 2014, with Dena Blackman, Suzy Roden, Dorothy Hawkins and Lizzie Stafford all talking about their experiences in inaugurating businesses as diverse as Dial-an-Angel, sports physiotherapy and a magazine and bookshop
 - Grammar Women in Finance and Law on 18th September 2014, with Di Lohrisch, the Honourable Justice Margaret McMurdo, Fiona Lowes, Anna Palmer and Leah Blackford describing their experiences in mortgage broking, mergers and acquisitions and corporate and court law.

6. Reunions

The School scheduled all Reunions for the weekend of 13th – 15th June. The classes of 2004 (10 year), 1994 (20 year), 1984 (30 year), 1974 (40 year), 1964 (50 year), and the 60 year plus and OGA Recollections celebrations were held at varying times over the weekend. The OGA sold memorabilia at most of the reunions. While a good time was had by all who attended, much discussion has

ensued since about the challenges and effectiveness of scheduling all reunions for one weekend. A debriefing paper prepared by the OGA Committee and the School has made various recommendations going forward. In summary, in future, two 10 year reunions will be held on the one weekend and scheduled throughout the School calendar. Class representatives from each year will be involved in assisting the School with the organisation of the reunions and there will be considerable forward notice of such events. The OGA will continue to be the major host for the 60+ Reunion which will remain combined with the OGA Recollections event.

An extremely successful five year reunion was held in October. It was an informal event and while the largest group focused on the 15 year reunion of 1999, others were appreciative of the opportunity to meet with their former friends and colleagues. There is merit in 5 and 10 year reunions and the School will be organising both, going forward.

The OGA assisted the Principal, Ms Jacinda Euler, in hosting on 29th May a Sydney reunion for alumni and old girls of the School. The event was shared by Old Boys from BGS in the early part of the evening.

7. Involvement with other Groups

As noted, the BGGGS OGA continued to be a member of the NCWQ (National Council of Women Queensland) and was represented at its various events. The BGGGS OGA continues to have ex-officio membership of the Parents and Friends, with either the President, or Diana Wood attending meetings. It is a useful means of involvement in current School activities. The P and F shop has continued to sell OGA memorabilia and the OGA is extremely grateful to the P and F for its support of the OGA in this way.

8. Memorabilia

A range of memorabilia continued to be provided. Items available included key rings, badges, mugs, glass paperweights, pens, cards, tea towels, wine glasses, teaspoons, coasters and tumblers. Popular items included the pearl bracelet and the School war cry bags, proudly being carried by current girls at the School. The arrangement with the P and F Shop selling OGA memorabilia has worked extremely well.

9. Events for 2015

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| • Opening of Research Learning Centre | Friday 13 March |
| • Everything Old is New Again | Wednesday 18 March (6.30-8.30pm) |
| • AGM | Saturday 28 March (2-4pm) |
| • 140th Celebration Ball (Brisbane City Hall) | Saturday 28 March (6.30-12am) |
| • NCWQ/BGGSSOGA Young Women's FORUM | Wednesday 13 May (4-6pm) |
| • Sydney Old Girls Event | Saturday 15 May (6-8pm) |
| • Open Day (Fig Tree Pocket Campus) | Saturday 23 May |
| • School Open Day | Friday 31 July (4-8pm) |
| • Grammar Women Event | Thursday 13 August (5.30-7.30pm) |
| • Melbourne Old Girls Event | Thursday 3 September (6-8pm) |

- Annual Recollections Reunion Afternoon Tea Saturday 5 September (2-4pm)

10. Concluding Remarks

The OGA has been raising concerns for some time about the relationship of the OGA and the Alumni within the School. The OGA is keen to harmonise the two groups and is actively working with the School on several initiatives. The OGA is pleased to say that progress is being made with such achievements as the use of the OGA logo and the School's logo on various documentation, a planned joint newsletter, and regular meetings between the OGA, the Principal and the President of the Board as well as school representatives. I thank all concerned. I also attended an afternoon tea with members of the Board in 2014 and the OGA hopes to make a presentation to the Board in the near future.

The appointment of Claire Tynan as OGA/Alumni Officer has allowed us to make great strides. We thank her enormously. She has added a greater sense of professionalism and pride to all we do. We look forward to continuing to work with her into the future. We would also add a special thank you to Jenny Davis, Librarian, Special Collections. Her support is always appreciated and nothing is too much trouble.

There are many great grammar women and it is not wise to refer to any one of them in particular. I cannot however fail to note the passing of Margaret Mittelheuser, one of our great Grammar women. We extend sympathy to her sister Kathryn.

We thank the Principal, Jacinda Euler, for all her support and assistance during the year, and Lea Walker, the Director of Development & Alumni. The OGA is in a stage of transition and it is vital that we preserve our traditions going forward and find new directions as well. Thank you to all who are assisting as we do this. If each of us gives a little, then together we can achieve a lot.

Janine Schmidt AM,
President, BGGGS OGA
28th March, 2015