

## SPEECH DAY 2011

Students, parents, honoured guests and staff of St George Girls High School, it is with great pleasure and pride that I address you on the occasion of our 2011 Speech Day.

We have great reason for celebration in this our 95th year of educating gifted girls to achieve personal excellence. In every sphere of endeavour, the students of St George have excelled. Academically we have much cause for congratulations. As we wait to receive the results of the 2011 Higher School Certificate, we can reflect with pride on the achievements of the 2010 HSC candidates

Our Dux was Emily Brownlee who attained Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank of 99.65. Thirty-seven students achieved an ATAR which placed them in the top 2% of the state. Thirteen students were named top all rounders for achieving the top band in ten or more units. Five students ranked in the top five in the state in various subjects. I congratulate these young women here today who will receive the acclaim they so richly deserve.

As for our 2011 HSC candidates we do have some successes to recount.

In the Creative and Performing Arts we have a number of students whose work has been acknowledged as exemplars. Each year exceptional major works and performances are nominated for inclusion in exhibitions which showcase the very best in NSW schools. This year in music we have had one student nominated for ENCORE and one student nominated for CALLBACK In Visual Arts one student will have her body of work exhibited in ARTEXPRESS. In Drama, two group performances and an individual performance was nominated as exemplars. From this extraordinary nomination we have been informed that one group and an individual project will be included in ONSTAGE, a first for our school.

These are extraordinary achievements reflecting the creativity and talent of our students and the guidance and expertise of their teachers. We pride ourselves on the academic achievements of our students at St George.

However the achievements of our remarkable students encompass a much broader spectrum than simply academic success. There are many talents our students possess in diverse fields and these talents have been showcased throughout the year.

On the sporting field St George Girls has once again triumphed being named as Zone Champion Girls School in cross country and athletics. Three girls received sporting blues, two of them receiving blues for two different sports.

In dance one of our groups was selected to perform in the Sydney Regional Dance Festival at the Seymour Centre, the only group choreographed by students in the festival.

Our music tutorial program continues to provide tuition to 150 students in 19 performance areas. Our ensembles once again received accolades at the Engadine Music Festival, with all ensembles receiving gold awards for their performances. Our acapella plus vocal ensemble performed in the Expanding Horizons Concert held at the Sydney Opera House. In 2011 200 students or over 20% of our students participated in the performing ensembles program. A highlight of the year was of course the Music Road Trip to the Western Region of NSW showcasing their talents

and bringing the sounds of our bands and orchestra to small regional and central schools around Dubbo.

In the field of design our students continue to excel. We witnessed the excitement, colour and glamour of our wonderful INSPIRED evening. Our Textile and Design students showcased their creations as well as their poise and sophistication in what has now become a much anticipated annual event.

The talents of our drama students were showcased on two performance evenings. As well a record number of our students was selected to join the elite State Drama ensembles and to attend the State Drama camp.

In Visual Arts our annual art exhibition displayed the diversity of artistic talent which flourishes at St George.

As part of our extension and enrichment program, our students have participated in many activities – the Tournament of Minds, numerous public speaking and debating competitions, Model United Nations Assembly, inter school chess competitions, Mock Trial and the Da Vinci Decathlon to name just a few.

The Duke of Edinburgh Scheme is becoming increasingly popular with 58 girls currently working towards their Bronze and another 58 towards their Silver Awards and 18 students working towards their Gold Awards. The awards involve students in community service, physical recreation, developing a new skill and undertaking adventurous journeys.

In the area of service to the community our students have shown themselves to be young women with a desire to contribute to society. Our students have taken up the Premiers Volunteering Program with alacrity, with 15 students receiving a Diamond award which represents 80 hours of volunteer work. Next week one student will be awarded a Black Opal Award which represents over 150 hours of volunteer work.

Our Amnesty group continues to campaign on issues of social justice. Amnesty's biggest campaign this year was The Oak Tree Foundations Live Below the Line challenge. Amnesty members their families and friends registered to live on \$10 or less a day over 5 days. This campaign raised over \$5000 to provide much needed resources in impoverished communities.

Our students also participated in the 40 hour famine raising over \$5,000 to support projects to fight hunger in developing countries.

Our student Enviroclub continues in its efforts to raise awareness of environmental issues and to decrease our school's carbon footprint. This year the group came third in the Enviro Inspiro film competition. Their say no to plastic water bottles forum was attended by many schools and led to the Mayor of Kogarah inviting students to address council with a view to providing drinking fountains in our local area.

Our third annual green day was attended by ten Sydney Region Schools and raised over \$2000 to support the Australian Koala Foundation. Having a very cute Rose the koala visit for the day certainly was a highlight.

In the area of student leadership our girls have interacted with the community in a wide variety of official functions.

The outstanding leadership qualities of our students were acknowledged this year when our outgoing school captain Amy Li received a Sydney Region Award for Student Excellence.

Our SRC has initiated many successful student events as well as supporting a number of charities. They have shown great entrepreneurial and leadership skills.

St George Girls High School it is clear is educating gifted young women to become well rounded high achievers. These achievements are the result of many factors. Excellence begins in the classroom where highly experienced and dedicated teachers and motivated and focussed students create a powerful quality teaching and learning environment.

I pay tribute to our teaching staff for their dedication to their craft, their high standards and expectations and their commitment to supporting each student in their care.

The quality of our teaching staff has been acknowledged again this year with a number of prestigious awards. TAS teacher, Ms Leto was awarded a Sydney Region Award for excellent teaching by an early career teacher. Next week our head teacher TAS Ms Castle will receive the Director General's Award for Excellent Service to Public Education, one of only thirty awards granted in NSW. Recently our Head Teacher PDHPE Ms Cooper was the recipient of the Mardi Calder Award for outstanding contribution to regional and state sport. This award is given to one person annually by the region and acknowledges Ms Coopers enormous contribution to sport over many years. These prestigious awards are well deserved and an honour for our school and indicative of the calibre of the teachers at St George.

Every year we bid farewell to a number of important staff members and this year is no exception. Earlier this year Ms Voss in the English Faculty and Mr Jagelman in the Languages faculty retired after many decades of service to public education and our school. Mr Seed leaves us today to commence retirement and Ms Vourdanos will leave us at the end of term to pursue other career interests. Ms James left us at the beginning of third term having successfully gained the position of Head Teacher TAS at Lucas Heights Community School. Ms Field in the Social Science faculty will retire at the end of this year after thirty six years in teaching thirty five of them spent at St George. I also wish to acknowledge outgoing temporary teachers Ms Burg in science and Ms Cunningham in visual arts for their dedicated service to our school.

We wish all of these esteemed colleagues the very best whether it be in facing the challenges of a change in career direction or in retirement. The service they have given to St George and to Public Education is highly valued.

I also wish to acknowledge our support and administrative staff, a team of thoroughly professional and hardworking people. These people are vital to the effective running of the school and also play a key role in the welfare and care of students. I thank them for their efforts on your behalf.

On a personal note I would like to recognise the contribution made to the school by my Deputy Principals, Mr Morris and Mr Ponder and to my executive team who provide educational leadership in each of their faculties.

Their total commitment and absolute dedication to our school are greatly appreciated by all staff and particularly by me. The work of our staff is underpinned by the families, parents and caregivers who entrust us with the education of their daughters.

We are very fortunate to have a positive and supportive parent community which is appreciative of our efforts. In particular our two parent organisations, the P and C and the Mothers Committee are made up of a group of parents who tirelessly and energetically work on behalf of our school. I thank the Mothers Committee for their contribution to the refurbishment of the drama studio and the P and C for air-conditioning the hall. As well as these major projects their representations on the schools behalf over many years has culminated in the acquisition of our school gymnasium which was officially opened this year. I also thank and acknowledge our local member Cherie Burton who has been a long time supporter of our school for her representations on our behalf.

I thank both parent groups not only for their substantial contribution in providing resources for our students but also for bringing the community together in celebrations such as the magical Mother Daughter Dinner held earlier this year and the wonderful Multicultural Food Festival held recently.

The ex-students association The St Georgians continue to generously support the school and keep alive the history that is St George. This year they provided the school crest which adorns the gymnasium wall facing Harrow road.

It is the combined efforts of all of these people, the students, the staff and the parents working as a team with common goals, values and aspirations which make St George Girls High School among the best in the state.

It has been a rich and rewarding year and we all have cause to reflect with satisfaction on the success attained by all.

To the recipients of awards and prizes I congratulate you.

You should be very proud of your achievements which we honour here today.

2012 promises to be another exciting year for St George.

I wish every family in our community a safe and happy vacation.

I look forward to working with you again in 2012 to build further on the excellence that is St George Girls High School.

Carole Knott  
December 2011