

SPEECH DAY 2018

Headmaster's address – Anthony Micallef

Distinguished guest Mr Simon Fenwick, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mr Stack, members of the Board of Trustees, members of Staff, Old Boys, guests, parents, friends and students: It is my privilege to present the 149th annual report of Brisbane Grammar School.

I have much pleasure in conveying to the community that the School's 150th year since foundation has provided a litany of triumphs and much festivity. 2018 started with the news that last year's graduates achieved exceptional academic results. A total of 41 students achieved an OP1, which increased to 75 OP1 equivalent students when combined with those who earned bonus ranks; and OP1 and OP2 results accounted for 30% of the year-group, the second highest on BGS historical record. The maximum possible Australian Tertiary Admission Rank of 99.95 was achieved by three students, with a further seven students achieving an ATAR of 99.90. Overall, the consistency of the Senior Class of 2017 was evidenced by the median OP 4, only achieved once before by a graduating class.

By any available measure, Brisbane Grammar School students have consistently performed at the highest level. This is testament to our strong learning culture and to the overall breadth and balance of the educational experience BGS offers boys. Our students perform well in all kinds of assessments, including standardised tests like NAPLAN, precisely because they are challenged as learners to develop the broad suite of skills in thinking, communication and metacognition essential to leading successful and fulfilling lives and careers.

The 2018 NAPLAN highlights revealed that the Year 9 results are the best in Queensland as measured across all skill domains; BGS again has the strongest results in numeracy in the state in Years 5, 7 and 9; and BGS remains the best-performed boys school in Queensland across all NAPLAN measures.

Looking to the future, 2019 is year one of a transformed academic system for all Queensland high schools. Our current Year 10s, the Seniors of 2020, will undertake their studies in Year 11 and 12 with a completely revised suite of syllabuses in every subject, using a different set of assessment measures all culminating in a new tertiary rank for accessing post-school pathways.

Brisbane Grammar School is a strong proponent of the new standards and our talented teaching staff have been heavily involved in trials, writing teams, marking operations, consultative groups and workshops, ensuring our organisational readiness for the transition. Our students will be very well prepared, both cognitively and emotionally, for the challenges of the new assessment regime and just as importantly the current Year 11 cohort will be well versed for the final year of the OP system.

As in any new system, there are some changes in language and process to which we will adapt. What will not change at BGS are the foundational principles of a broad liberal education and the importance of students learning to be thinkers and not simply test takers. Building our students' critical thinking capacities to better equip them to regulate their own learning (what we term metacognition) is our strategic academic intent. Educational research consistently confirms that students who are metacognitive perform better in all modes and systems of assessment, both in and beyond school. Our commitment as a school to building Effective Thinking Cultures engages teachers and students to understand content through cognitions; to understand what they value in their thinking practice; to modify thinking as the context demands; to utilise knowledge in meaningful ways; and to understand and consciously employ the virtues of effective learners.

The education of young people requires scholarly, social and emotional instruction. It may be self-evident to say that schools play a critical role in supporting students to make healthy choices; however, we believe firmly in the view that we have a responsibility to teach, model, build behaviour practices and deliver curriculum that supports health and wellbeing.

The School continues to augment its child safety practices. The Child Protection Committee comprised of staff, parents, external experts and students have established a framework to guide the implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

As part of the School's commitment to the ongoing personal growth of our students, this year saw the commencement of the Extended Day Study Program. This course offers three hours of directed study and tuition two evenings a week. The feedback from students and parents has been overwhelmingly positive and student outcomes indicate that the program is valuable. The program will continue in 2019.

BGS aims to support its graduates to mature into men of character who contribute to their families and communities. The School's Public Purpose Program fosters this ambition. Our long-standing partnership with Nursery Road State Special School flourishes as does our relationship with the Exchange at Kelvin Grove, where BGS boys tutor refugee children. Fundraising remains central to the program and we continue to support multiple community partners.

The BGS Gender Respect conversation invited boys to examine socially relevant issues such as equality and diversity and the immersion programs encouraged them to make a demonstrable difference in communities. Project Cambodia enabled Year 10 students and BGS staff to build houses and complete important infrastructure ventures. Similarly, the Cape York Indigenous Immersion permitted BGS staff and students to visit some of the most remote communities in Australia and learn from Elders in Cape York.

In line with our commitment to global citizenry, BGS takes part in many international leadership conferences. These summits provide a forum for students to globally network and explore world issues. This year, boys represented BGS at the Loudoun International Youth Leadership Summit in Virginia, others took part in the Asia-Pacific Young Leaders Summit in Singapore and space tours to the United States. International Physics tournaments and cultural exchanges remain popular.

Much closer to home our Outdoor Education program has experienced growth. At Pepperina Hill the renovation of the timber climbing tower has provided new age-appropriate height activities and the Mt Alford and Pulpit Rock properties, purchased last year, have been transformed, ready for an official opening in 2019.

The School's Boarding program also evolves. Boys from diverse backgrounds learn and live on campus within an environment that caters for their academic, athletic, cultural and emotional needs. In January of this year BGS completed renovations of both Harlin House Common Rooms, and the adjoining outdoor social space and a new staffing model, involving teaching staff, was employed to further enhance boarder care and academic coaching.

As one of the foundation schools of the GPS Association, Brisbane Grammar School has not only been celebrating its sesquicentenary, it has joined other member schools in honouring the best of the association's rich history that has made GPS 100-years strong.

While our future is bursting with options, the present has provided much to rejoice. The extracurricular program at BGS offers real choice and real independence. The School continues to manage the most wide-ranging program of its type in the association and boys continue to participate in vast numbers. Very importantly, we remain committed to guiding and developing our young athletes to compete determinedly in an intensely competitive environment.

Across all sports and activities, BGS secured GPS premierships in swimming, debating and gymnastics and the School's sailing and cross country teams placed second at championship events. Most strikingly boys had success at state and national level in tennis, rugby, rowing, swimming, debating, cross country, cricket, gymnastics, water polo, fencing, track and field, volleyball and snow sports. Our senior cross country squad, coached by Mr John Clancy, competed at the World Championship and placed an impressive fourth.

The School's cultural program was again grand. Grammar Community in Concert was spectacular, and another major highlight of 2018 was the concert tour of Europe. Our musicians performed in London and Paris, honoured our fallen BGS soldiers on the Western Front in France, shared their music with audiences in Warwick, Cambridge and Oxford and participated in the International Eisteddfod in Wales where the Grammarphones were placed second and our Head of Music, Mr Peter Ingram named best conductor.

Key to the growth of high-quality Arts practice at BGS is the facilitation of an engaging drama program. The Senior Dramatic Production, *The Boys We Lost at Sea* was a commissioned script written by Daniel Evans. It was one of the most memorable showcases of student comedic and dramatic talent, which resulted in an incredibly poignant and moving production. Additionally, student art exhibitions and the Old Boy collection at the Annual Art Show complemented a stunning cultural season.

While we continue to enjoy our current physical environment, master planning remains an important strategic focus of the Board of Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team to ensure the School continues producing its enviable educational outcomes in state of the art facilities. By Easter of 2019 an upgrade of facilities at Northgate will deliver an expanded, efficient and modern complex. Our sincere gratitude extends to the Wembley Club, Normanby Blues and Willow Club support groups, which each contributed to the design and funding of the upgrade, and the P&F Auxiliary who donated a further \$500,000 to realise this project.

In recent years, there has been considerable dialogue in educational circles to focus on an integrated science curriculum, known as STEM, to equip students with skills for careers in the twenty-first century. We have extensively researched the merits of the STEM agenda, and we believe the integration of Art with Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics is the key to offering divergent yet necessary ways of seeing and knowing the engineered world, or the visualisation that empowers modern scientific research. Hence, Brisbane Grammar School is driving its own STEAM agenda, integrating both the creative and scientific disciplines. The School is proceeding to the development and design phase in 2019.

As I near completion of this report it is important to acknowledge the valuable contribution of members of this community. First, I recognise the foremost influence of the members of the Board of Trustees. Their prudence and practice are critical to the realisation of agreed goals and preparation of future projects. I am indebted to the Chairman of the Board, Mr Howard Stack, who has, for many years, so capably guided the School.

In addition, my appreciation is offered to the members of the Senior Leadership Team for their untiring support of our community. I also wish to publicly thank all Brisbane Grammar School staff. I extend my appreciation for the amazing work done throughout the year; the limitless hours spent supporting the boys; and the professionalism with which they enacted the School values.

I also want to make special mention of seven long-serving members of staff, who retire this year. Firstly, Mark Brusasco, who served in many roles over a distinguished 37-year career, but none more important than as Deputy Headmaster. His contribution to the teaching of history, coaching of football and the development of fine young men cannot be overstated.

I also acknowledge the following retirees: Mr James Hill who was on staff for 41 years and the master-in-charge of fencing for decades; Mr Mark Woodford, who captivated students with his teaching of biology and who gave much time to the growth of the football program, retires after 38 years; Mr Don Barrett, who taught Latin and in recent times mentored members of the Languages department, retired after 23 years of service; Ms Lynda Kerridge provided 23 years of invaluable administrative support to the academic and extracurricular departments; Mr Alex Croot served as a Sports Assistant and strength and conditioning coach for 22 years; and Mr Mark Tyszkiewicz assisted students and BGS families in his role as school psychologist across the past 16 years.

In total that is an incredible 200 years of service to the Brisbane Grammar School community. On behalf of the School, I wish our retirees an abundant future filled with much adventure and enduring good health.

I also want to acknowledge the parents. No school can fully succeed without the support of an engaged and benevolent parent body. I thank the following people for their work in important community roles: Chris Austin, President of the Old Boys' Association, who has worked closely with the School to fortify relations; President of the Parents and Friends' Association Craig Chapman, who has actively supported and promoted school initiatives; outgoing President of the P&F Auxiliary Genevieve Kenny-Fowler and incoming President Julie Farr for leading an assemblage of good-natured and generous people.

I also offer my thanks and best wishes to the senior cohort. They have been a dynamic and industrious year group. The student leaders – Marcus Ray, Elliott Hunt, Harvey Nihill, Andrew MacGibbon and Hugh Reiser – have been marvellous in their personal efforts and in their dependable leadership of the student body. The spirit and support demonstrated by the seniors at all events says much about their loyalty and commitment to the School's ethos. We wish the Year 12s well in their future ventures.

Throughout the year the School has had much delight in celebrating our 150th anniversary since foundation in 1868. This milestone year provided us with the opportunity to not only share our rich history, but also connect with countless members of our extended community.

In addition to our normal calendar of events, this year BGS hosted innumerable celebratory events to feature this landmark. We commenced our sesquicentenary year with a Gala Dinner at Brisbane City Hall; treasured a Royal Visit from the Duke of Edinburgh Prince Edward; held a special Grammar Community in Concert; conducted celebrations in interstate cities; hosted regional gatherings; and international reunions. We celebrated everything sport; held the inaugural Harlin House Reunion; and importantly acknowledged our precious volunteers, donors and sponsors at our annual Celebration of our Community.

As we look towards 2019, we will be ending our BGS150 celebrations with a special event commemorating the day the School's doors opened in February 1869. We are also looking forward to launching the official School history book written by esteemed historian Helen Penrose. *Light dark blue* will reward those who wish to sample the School's history, as well as readers determined to delve more deeply. This elegant hardcover book celebrates the School's distinctive place in Queensland's educational landscape.

In closing I extend the School's sincere greetings for the festive season to all members of the BGS community. I hope that the summer vacation affords you time to be with family and friends and to rest after a remarkable year of celebration and achievement. I look forward to leading this community as the School embarks upon newer and bolder enterprises in 2019 and beyond.