SCHOOL CAPTAINS POLICY SPEECH
Good afternoon Mr Crawley, distinguished guests, parents, special friends, teachers and students and welcome to the 2015 Senior Induction and first assembly of the year.

What an honour and privilege it is for me to have been chosen to lead the hundreds of St Hilda’s girls who will be the empowered and forward-thinking young women of tomorrow; young women who will draw on their privileged education, seize their opportunities, and change the world.

For this is our time. And this is our calling.

We pursue such bold notions with a purpose that goes beyond ourselves, that speaks of something bigger than us.

“Non Nobis Solum”. Not for ourselves alone.

In the 103-year history of our School, that simple Latin phrase has faithfully preached the benefits to society that can spring from our own successes, when the posture of our heart is turned towards others.

But, importantly, it also speaks of fostering a sense of community and school pride that should resonate with everyone who walks through our gates, from the freshest face to those preparing to embark on the next phase of their educational journey.

It is a statement that marries perfectly with the more contemporary school foundation motto, which describes St Hilda’s School as a place where girls can come to dream and achieve.

To truly flourish, girls need an environment where they feel supported, encouraged and empowered to pursue such ideals, a place where they are not afraid to push themselves beyond the boundaries of what they thought possible.

This is such a place.

I am fascinated by the world of human DNA and how it shapes our lives. When you delve into its intricacies and attempt to fathom its complexity, there is a profound message of hope and encouragement buried within the numbers.

It is a message that helped shape my speech today and inspire my policy for the year ahead.

Did you know that there are over 70 billion different human DNA combinations and yet, 99.94% of our DNA is the same?

So when we think about this literally, the only difference between you and me, or between you and Miranda Kerr or Barack Obama is 0.06%.

I found this fact truly astounding. We have an enormous amount in common, but, yes, it is this tiny fraction of differences that separate us and provide us all with the capacity to stand out in our own right. So, we all need to strive to harness the power of our entire 0.06% to achieve our full
potential.

My appeal to you is such: Be authentic. Be the most unique you that you can be. Make the most of your differences. Celebrate them. There is only one you, so embrace it. There is one thing that sets the world’s most influential or inspirational leaders apart from the rest of society: They embraced the full extent of their 0.06%. They sought not to copy the creativity of others or steal ideas and concepts, but walked the road less travelled; created pathways where there was impasse, made light where there was darkness, pushed through their own personal boundaries and the conformity of the world, and disrupted the norm.

Fiona Wood is one such inspiration. The former Australian of the Year and acclaimed Perth burns specialist led a team of doctors credited with saving the lives of many badly burnt victims of the 2002 Bali Bombings, through the use of her revolutionary ‘spray on skin.’ Dr Wood developed the world-first advancement in burns treatment, which would reduce not only the scarring from the trauma, but also the time it took for the skin to heal. She and a colleague pioneered this breakthrough after receiving a school teacher patient who had suffered 90% burns to his body in a petrol fire. Fiona Wood proves that even in challenging circumstances, all of us are capable of pushing our personal limits and reaching new heights. It only took 0.06 per cent of her to change the world.

Champion hurdler Sally Pearson may not have saved lives, but her story is nonetheless another fine example of what can be achieved if one stubbornly sets their mind to becoming the greatest in their chosen field. Born not into wealth and elite status, Pearson was instead raised as a sole child to a single mum who battled to pay the bills. There was no car in Sally’s household, her mum had to work weekends to pay for her athletics coaching and she had to catch two buses from school to training each day. Wealth is no determinant to success. Determination is. The focused ability to build on talent is. Developing that 0.06 per cent of your unique self is.

From a hungry teenager with a fierce competitive streak and an unbowed commitment to train, an Olympian arose, a world-beater emerged.

We should not be overawed by such accomplishment, but motivated, inspired; for the pathway to greatness that lays before us as we charge into 2015 is open and clear, albeit narrow and requiring focus.

Similar feats are entirely achievable, if we dare.

I believe that we can set new benchmarks in all areas of the School whether it be academics, cultural, sport or in spirit. As a school, it is imperative that we work together and act as one, while importantly still maintaining our own individuality and special characteristics. Our 0.06%.

There are three key messages that encapsulate my policy for 2015.

The first of which is a word that features in our own mission statement, a word with tremendous power and potential if used wholeheartedly. Love.

Love encompasses a gamut of emotions and connotations, but, for St Hilda's School in 2015 I want us
to strive to love our School, to love learning, whether it is in the classroom or on the sporting field.

As the famous saying suggests: “If you’re the smartest person in the room, then find another room.” Because yes, it is true that we can never stop learning.

We should also love the fact that we are all extremely lucky and privileged to not only have the right to an education, but to have an education here, at a school that is paving the way in education technology and pushing girls to dream and to achieve. We ought to love our School and its family, and show pride in it.

Secondly, another attitude that I believe is imperative to making our School the best it can be in its 103rd year, is respect. If you look at the word, respect is literally re-spect, meaning that we should give people a second chance, another look. We don’t always know people’s story. Instead of judgment and condemnation, we can choose to have fresh eyes, to use our words and deeds to help other women to grow, heal, learn and feel empowered, rather than using them to tear each other down.

As women and leaders of the future, we need to be the ones who support and build other women up, as the girls sitting in this room are the advocates for a better tomorrow. Let’s not be offended by petty things like schoolyard gossip, unhealthy competition, and jealousy. Don’t even give those trivial things any air to breathe. Instead, let’s be offended by our own selves if we dare embrace an attitude that settles for underachievement, of taking the easy road, of not developing our 0.06% in order to make a difference in this world.

And thirdly, a call to arms: Make. Your. Mark.

I am sure many of you, like me, watched the Imitation Game during the holidays. One quote stood out for me, acting as a reminder that greatness can reside in all if we each squeeze every ounce out of our potential.

“Sometimes it is the people who no one imagines anything of who do the things that no one can imagine.”

Or perhaps a bit more comically, so says Dr. Suess: “Today you are you! That is truer than true! There is no one alive who is you-er than you!”

Embrace it. You are extraordinary. Go and show the world.

So, as a new school year beckons, let us all make a firm commitment to reach our full potential, to be the Fiona Woods and Sally Pearsons of tomorrow, to leave your personal imprint on this ever-evolving world.

Every woman in this room today should feel empowered to make a difference, not just because of you own abilities and unique skill set, but because there are incredible women around you, sitting next to you this afternoon, in your classroom, in your team - willing you on, championing your cause.

A famous quote of unknown origins says that, “Your life won’t ever be perfect, but it can be purposeful. Live for something bigger than yourself and leave a mark on the world.” For this is our time. And this is our calling. Thank you.