A few lines I stated for a newsletter video in 2010 that I still believe today. Six years on and not much has changed. My name is Alex Elliot and I am honored to represent all of you as Head Boarder in 2016.

I live in Murwillumbah on the Northern Rivers but for the past few years it is been the Gold Coast and St Hilda’s that I have called my home.

My journey to St Hilda’s started in grade five when my parents asked me if I would like to go to a boarding school on the Gold Coast. In 2009 I was an avid viewer of what I regarded as the best show on Nickelodeon…Zoey 101. As a result of the tv show my expectations of boarding school were set pretty high, these included; a cinema, sushi train and everyone riding around on mopeds. I was quite shocked when I came for my tour that it was not the case.

Despite my surprise I came to realise that St Hilda’s would offer me so much more.

I started boarding in 2010 as the only grade six. I have never been more excited in my life. In my eye’s I thought I was about to become a fully-fledged adult. I packed a week before the term started and arrived as soon as Boarder’s reception opened.

This initial excitement quickly faded by day two when the inevitable homesickness sunk in. For the first three weeks I found it quite tough to settle into boarding. I felt as if I would never be able to shake it. Until I discovered that the only way to move past it is fully immerse yourself into the school with your friendships, academics and co-curriculars. Challenge yourself and be willing to try new things. St Hilda’s can give you so much if you make use of the opportunities provided.

At the end of year seven I really missed my family and they decided to bring me back home and send me to a local school.

After my first day of year 8, I went home and said to my parents that I needed to go back to St Hilda’s. I thought I could find a school the same as this, with the same life and passionate students eager to always get involved. I couldn’t. I have never been anywhere like St Hilda’s, where girls show an incomparable sense of confidence and connectedness.

This experience made me grateful for everything St Hilda’s has to offer. I returned the following year in grade 9 with a newfound love and appreciation for the school and I suppose the rest is history.

Boarding has become my second home where I reside for 37 weeks of the year with my 178 sisters. After boarding for five years. That’s 20 rooms. 185 sheet nights and 165 boarding chapels, so far.
During my St Hilda’s journey this school has given and continues to give me a great sense of community. Sticking together through the good and the tough times. Coming from a smaller primary school where everyone lived 10 minutes from the vicinity, I value the diversity and multiculturalism. It constantly amazes me the there are families from all over the country and the world that decide that to send their daughters to St Hilda’s.

When looking for a definition of boarding, I stumbled across: A school that provides accommodation and meals for the pupils during the term time.

However, I believe that this is somewhat dull and only scratches the surface of what it truly means to be a boarder at St Hilda’s.

Sticking with Courtney’s theme of ‘be the change’, my aim is to redefine boarding in 2016. The boarding prefects Evie, Liv, Annie, Emily and I hope to do this by creating a larger boarding presence in the day school and become more interconnected. We also hope to obtain greater interactions between year levels within boarding. Emma and I will be working closely this year and we have begun exploring ways to achieve this. Although we will be teaming up this year, we will still be engaging in some healthy competition when we go head to head at carnivals with our first race being at the swimming carnival.

With 48 new boarders from around the globe and our new head of boarding Mrs Boyle, there has never been a better time to implement change and improve the school.

This policy for 2016 affects every single person in this room. Not just the boarders. I ask of all of you to support us in achieving this.

Big changes start with small steps.