



**Board of Governors
Chairs Prize Giving Speech**

Girls, Ms McRae, members of Staff, Parents, Friends and fellow Board members,

Welcome! It gives me much pleasure to address you today. But first of all, I would like to thank the girls and staff for an outstanding and very moving Senior Carol Service last night - the choirs, including the staff choir, sang their hearts out! Thank you.

The School continues to operate in an extremely challenging environment, with the toughest recession any of us have known, and with strong competition - from both independent and public schools.

Despite these times, the School's overall position remains very sound; we have experienced roll growth in spite of what is happening in the economy and the School has been managed very prudently this year, and for that the Board would like to sincerely thank the management team and all staff.

This year has been a time of new leadership and a re 'balancing' of the School's focus on our core business: excellence in teaching and learning.

With the School's vision of personal best for each girl, we strive for development of the whole person, a balance of achieving personal best in academic excellence, along with developing a range of physical and personal skills through participating, and in many cases excelling, in the arts and sports. Under-pinning life at Dio is our special character, developing the spirituality of our girls through a values-based education.

It is balance that I want to talk to you about today. When I discussed this topic with Heather McRae, she laughed, after all, she is a 'woman of the scales' with the star sign of Libra.

Balance or lack of it is a particularly relevant topic for all of us, as we juggle our family life, friends, interests, with work and contribution to the community.

I particularly like and resonate with a statement made by MP Katherine Rich on her decision to retire from Parliament after a successful career, at the age of thirty-nine.

She said, *"Women can have it all, but just not all at the same time."*

And from Hillary Rodham Clinton:

"Our lives are a mixture of different roles. Most of us are doing the best we can to find whatever the right balance is . . . For me, that balance is family, work, and service."

We often strive to find that 'elusive balance' where all aspects of our life fit in and work compatibly together. Latest research suggests that consistently achieving balance in our lives is an unrealistic goal. The reality is we get glimpses of it, as we move in and out of that rare equilibrium. The current thought is that it is not achieving that perfect state that should be the goal, but having the resilience to cope with being out of balance.

For the current generation of Dio girls, one of their key future challenges will be managing all the opportunities they have and deciding what is important to them as they juggle study, careers, pursuit of their interests in the arts, sports and recreation and home lives, in a world that is increasingly without boundaries due to technology and globalisation.

Trudeau and Shephard (Canada 2007) undertook a systematic review of research from the previous 20 years on the link between academic achievement and involvement in Physical Education Programmes and physical activity. They concluded that additional curricular emphasis on PE may result in a relative increase in performance per unit of academic teaching time. Physical activity has positive influences on concentration, memory and classroom behaviour. This philosophy is one that we embrace at Dio by encouraging and supporting our girls all to make the most of the curricular and extracurricular opportunities that are available at Diocesan School.

I would now like to take a moment to recap on some of the major achievements for the School in 2009:

- Awarding of a record number of 86 academic NCEA scholarships in 2009. A range of initiatives aimed at significantly enhancing teacher/student/parent communication.
- The launch of the Junior High School, to much better meet the needs of all girls in Years 7-10.
- From the onset of 2010, the School will assume full responsibility for boarding and Innes House. Since 1987, we have been very fortunate to have had the services of the Doris Innes Trust Board who have operated Innes House, enabling 250 girls from outside Auckland to attend Dio.
- By integrating boarding back under the operation of the School it will have a renewed focus. Over the coming years we expect the demand for 'flexi' boarding and short term boarding to increase, and Innes House will continue to provide a great service to our girls and their families.
- Opening of the fantastic Aquatic Centre.
- Attainment of the resource consent for the next phase of Dig Deep – the turf and underground car park – we will be in a position to confirm timing for this next project during the first half of next year.
- Last, but not least, this year has seen the start of Heather McRae's leadership. Heather is an outstanding educationalist and leader of people and the Board is 150% behind her.
- Heather's primary focus this year has been attaining educational excellence, and she knows that this will be achieved by having
 - excellent teachers who are nourished by ongoing professional development
 - the optimal curriculum balance

To ensure we do have the best teachers, who have a strong fit with the values and special character of Diocesan, Heather is involved in every staff appointment.

The Board is extremely appreciative of Heather's dedication and service, and wishes to acknowledge the incredibly impressive rate at which she has assumed natural leadership of all aspects of the operation of the School.

To the Senior Management team, who have supported Heather since her arrival, and to all staff for your hard work this year, we thank you for your commitment to Diocesan School for Girls.

Earlier this year we spoke with all members of staff about the harsh realities of the current economic environment, and the stresses being placed on school families, and our need as a school to do everything we could to manage as prudently as possible through this period. I

am delighted with the way in which the staff responded, and would like to thank you all for helping us through this year.

I thank my fellow Board members, in particular Deputy Chair Richard Adams, and all the members of the support groups for your commitment and service to the School, putting in many voluntary hours in support of the School and our school community: The Old Girls' League, Parents and Friends' Association, Heritage Foundation, Sports Foundation, Dio Arts, Doris Innes House Trust Board and the Dig Deep Committee. Let me just say that without this enormous contribution so much of what you see around you at Dio today, and what the girls currently do through the School, simply would not exist.

To parents, friends and grandparents, we thank you for your continued support of Diocesan, and your investment in your daughter's education through this great school. The Board is very mindful of the cost of a Diocesan School education, recognising that this requires sacrifice, and that the School must provide you and your daughters with exceptional value. Let me assure you that this is what we strive for – every day.

To the girls – today is your celebration, you do make us feel enormously proud - not only those of you who have received awards today for outstanding success, but to all of you for the personal goals you have achieved and for making the most of the opportunities at our school.

To those who are leaving us, all the very best for your future endeavours, and to those returning, who will benefit from the exciting developments underway, we look forward to welcoming you back in 2010.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and restful holidays. Best wishes to you all. Thank you.

Ut Serviamus.

Hilary Poole, Chair – Board of Governors