



THE PITTWATER HOUSE SCHOOLS

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT FOR 2008

It is indeed a challenge to make the Principal's Report brief especially when the boys and girls and others associated with the School are so busy and so committed to living their school lives to the fullest.

I report on a year that has been a roller-coaster ride for many of us with numerous personal and team triumphs and some moments of incredible difficulty.

A young man studying in our University Foundation Year, Eddie Hsieh, who lived just along the road in Westmoreland Ave, succumbed to the epidemic of youth suicide in February after mounting pressure unknown to his School or his mates, from a Sydney-based Chinese gang. This affected his fellow students from China and some of the teaching staff and highlights the hidden dangers for young people within our own City.

The second and most striking pupil death occurred in May which deeply affected everyone when 16 year old Mia Waters succumbed to cancer. She bravely fought throughout Term I and despite hours and days and weeks of discomfort and powerful treatment she still smiled and joked her way through the Term with her large circle of friends and her family. I believe she made us a stronger school and when hundreds gathered right here at her amazing funeral, the true spirit of Pittwater House was profound. Each of our core values came to the fore in response to the life that Mia had led. She was one young woman who truly exemplified living life to the fullest.

I commend the Chaplain, Rev John Butterworth (The Rev, or the God Man of you are in the Sub-Primary), for his extra-ordinary work as pastor to the Pittwater House community this year. I recall how many people spoke to me about the Chaplain's support, kindness and ministry during those difficult times early in the year. He ministers to everyone in this place, to the relatives of pupils and staff, to teachers and this year to my family as every Prizegiving until today there has been a grand lady who sat in the front row. Through the years she gave the Founder and me 'the rounds of the kitchen' about School issues dear to her, including the old school boaters. Great Grannie Morgan is another who, sadly, is no longer with us.

The Pittwater House Family is proud of many wonderful and happy achievements of its pupils, teams, staff and parents throughout 2008. When reported the details are published in *Housenews* and put on the TPHS Web Site which is regularly accessed by current families locally and by relatives, friends and alumni all over the world.

Our community benefits greatly by having this independent school in its midst. Always referred to in the media as "elite" or "exclusive", we attract attention when we do great things and even more attention when things go amiss, as some of you will recall from mid year. It would appear that no publicity is bad publicity because there

was a spike in school enrolment enquiries at that time. Today the interest in a Pittwater House education remains very strong. Many families in our local area have aspirations for their children to attend this school and numbers for 2010 and beyond are brimming to overflowing.

Our community benefits from the calibre of the pupils we are producing. Time and time again I have heard through my role this year as Chairman of Pittwater Business Limited how local employers give preference to a candidate who attended Pittwater House.

Our wider community benefits from the generosity of our pupils through the Prefects' Charities. At the start of the year the 2007 Prefects presented \$9000 to Christine Murorunkwere Chair of the Abama Charity for the school project in Rugerero Province in Rwanda. During this year the prefects took on Cure Our Kids in memory of Mia to raise much needed funds to help in the fight against children's cancer.

Being physically active is part of living a full life. Pittwater House pupils have shone as individuals in team sports again this year with wins in athletics, basketball, cross country, netball and water polo plus individuals who have excelled in various sports including: archery – Jamie van Barbieri; athletics and cross country – Amity Delaney, George Firth, Elliot Green, Tyra Hugill, Stephanie Hunt, Matt McLeay, Spencer McTavish, Isabela Mitchell, Michael Peters and Aaron Jaques; cricket – Wills Brassil; gymnastics – Amy Smit and Michelle Jan; State level rugby league – Coach Mr Craig Sandercock; rugby union – Baden Donegal; snow sports – Ben Alexis, Maddie Alexis, Tara Daniel, Teia Key, Nicholas Karlowatz, Alex Smith, China Waters; soccer - Max Irish and Emily Doyle; swimming – Pascalle Casey, Elliot Green and James Close, tennis – Kelsey Dunlop, Charlie Smith and Alex McGrouther; touch football – Reece Jones; water polo – Pascalle Casey and James Close; and alumni Shane Rose (1989) won silver at the Beijing Olympics.

Being creative is part of living life to the full. In the performing and visual arts our bands, orchestras and choirs have given brilliantly of themselves and individuals have made remarkable contributions to the JSHAA Concert, the HICES Music Camp where Mr Jim Coyle was director of the Big Band; Adam and Niall Powers were medal winners in the National Band Championships, Cantabile Singers were formed from Forms 3 and 4; Alex Leon is in demand to sing at public events; outstanding instrumentalists include trumpeters Rebecca Williams and Harriet Channon, Harpist Mhari Lamrock-Pierce and organist Karl Klein; David Notholt won this year's Luncheon Competition; The Senior A Debating Team was most entertaining and successful in 2008; Georgina Butterworth's 2nd place in the Mosman Youth Art Prize and winning the Pittwater House Art Prize for 2008, Tom Mason's and Hannah O'Shea's Major Design and Technology Works were nominated for the HSC Powerhouse exhibition; Aimee Jan and Amelia Novakovic were nominated for *Call Back* the top HSC Dance students' performance and the thrilling news to have Ken Kuo nominated and now invited to perform at *Encore* the best of the best HSC Music students at the Sydney Opera House early next year.

We live life to the full beyond the campus as well. The broader experiences of the weeks away at Abercrombie House for every boy and girl in Forms 3 to 10 have been a highly successful and a personally rewarding part of Pittwater House life and

described in *Housnews* by the pupils as “awesome”. The contributions of pupils through the community service programmes have been successful and includes adventurous activities such as Cadets. The Pittwater House Army Cadets and the 305 Squadron Air force Cadets provide unique opportunities for teamwork and leadership skills, in circumstances that challenge a teenager’s normal way of life. We have some outstanding young people serving their Nation through the cadet scheme and next year we will be adding Navy cadets who will begin parading on campus on Thursday evenings to complete the package. Many pupil-hours went into ANZAC commitments, camps and courses and two outstanding achievements included Ross Donadson’s 2008 ADFA Education Award and Scott Ferguson’s selection as NSW Army Cadets’ Regimental Sergeant Major for 2009.

Learning is part of living life to the full and academic excellence can be found in every classroom of this campus. The National testing, or NAPLAN, results were outstanding and we should be very happy with the position our pupils are in at Form 3, 5, 7 and 9 compared to the state average and compared to all other local schools. In many of the areas assessed our school result indicated work being done well above expectations.

Each year I award a Principal’s Gold Medal to our top achievers and in the 2007 HSC they were Sophie Walden UAI 98.4 and David Notholt UAI 98.15. We were delighted that 24% of our pupils achieved 90% or more in at least one subject and some in multiple subjects.

David Notholt and Chantelle van den Brink both won engineering scholarships on their entry to UNSW this year. Our pupils won two of the university’s 33 engineering scholarships – a remarkable achievement for David and Chantelle and a remarkable achievement for this school.

In the School Certificate and HSC last year we again demonstrated our academic success is not just reserved for those who achieve in the top 10% of the State but the majority confirmed how their subject results and UAIs were definitely improved by the commitment of the teaching staff and the School’s focus on organisation, study skills and diligence. Just in this week are very pleasing School Certificate results for 2008 which repeat this result as a school and for the individuals who sat the exams. These are great achievements across the board due to the leadership of Headmaster Martin Orrock and the diligence of his team of excellent administrators and teachers. This work is underpinned in no small measure by the work done by our Junior School teachers led by Head of School Janice Gonczi because their early intervention and the laying of solid academic foundations provides the best possible start for the 4 to 12 years olds under their care. Please join me in thanking your teachers.

I also want to mention two teachers who are retiring today. Mrs Anne Auld has been teaching in the Junior School since 2005 and before that was a teacher at Aberfeldy for many years. Mrs Auld has been a dedicated and highly valued member of staff over all that time and today we join together in wishing her well for her retirement. Also retiring after a year of long service leave is Mrs Sue-Ann Mathews who retires after 25 years of dedicated and loyal service to Pittwater House Junior School.

Overarching all that we do here is a brilliant Board of Governors and I sincerely thank them for the responsibility they shoulder on behalf of the corporation and their support for the vision of the Founder, Mr Rex Morgan.

The talent of the Heads of School, the Business Manager, Director of Admissions and all who report to them ensures the stability of Pittwater House as a thriving local business enterprise. We were delighted to welcome Mr Col Crawford, and his wife Jacqui, as Guest of Honour at this year's Prizegiving. Being a quintessential local businessman, his vision, vigour and standards, which can be found embedded in our own core values, have made him a cherished member of our community. With his late wife Pam and his children, who are now Pittwater House parents, he developed his renowned car dealership which is today an icon of the Northern Beaches. Col Crawford Motors Pty Ltd, like The Pittwater House Schools Limited, is a business that is a highly respected institution within our community.

The world and national economic situation will affect us all. Families living on the Northern Beaches are perhaps flies caught in the web of the business world. Pittwater House will continue to be strongly independent, will continue to be relied upon to provide a safe and caring environment and will continue to be solid as a rock in stormy seas thanks to our bank, Westpac, our competent fiscal policy, our wisely constructed management strategy, the good governance of our Council of Governors and highly effective management team.

Therefore the big changes are coming.

We are about to see the first black president of the United States. There is great hope that President-elect Barack Obama will provide a circuit-breaker to the economic crisis and I hope that he will be bold enough to make individual Americans engage with and learn more about the rest of the world. Our own link with Woodward Academy in Atlanta is an immensely valuable tool. This year Mrs Alison MacDonald visited Woodward and taught about Australia to the many classes she visited there. We will not forget the experience of welcoming from Woodward Mr Woody Ward and his daughter Saffron earlier in the year. Many of the pupils at Woodward are black coming from successful "Southerner" families. We need to better understand our own black heritage in Australia, a diverse and noble culture of 40,000 years often neglected because of the remoteness of its communities and the slim threads that connect them. At Pittwater House we are sorry for this neglect and joined with the rest of the nation to express this on 13 February this year.

This legacy of neglect is right here on the Northern Beaches Peninsula hidden in our history. Many are ignorant of the wiping out of the Guringai peoples through "white man's disease", Smallpox, when only four of them survived the 1850's. Fortunately a handful of descendants live today in Sydney preserving the treads of their culture. This year we have used our Warringah Council Eco-Schools Grant to create an Aboriginal Garden. Small though it is, it delivers an important message about cultural understanding and friendship for our pupils.

Our cultural experiences are varied at Pittwater House with the visit in of a group of pupils from Winituksa School at the start of the year and our visit out to Thailand in a few weeks time. Who in the secondary school can forget last week's visit by 250

pupils from our Japanese Sister School Chiba Keiai. There is a plan for us to visit them in Japan next year perhaps as part of a wider itinerary.

We continued to welcome boys and girls from a range of nations including Germany, China, Sweden, Russia and Brazil and I am delighted at how much these young people help to widen our views of the world. Our staff boasts a number of ex-pats as well and the diversity of their homelands is amazing and wonderful.

We also welcome whole families from New Zealand, UK, USA, Ireland, Canada and South Africa amongst others. We have cross-cultural families as well which in many ways goes to the heart of this great Australian Nation. Australia is an international superstar in terms of the cohesion of its cultural diversity and I think this cohesion is reflected at Pittwater House which celebrates this often. Australia is part of a great organisation of diverse cultures that history teaches us was once the British Empire. This Commonwealth of Nations allows a free flow of information through the common language of English, the language of world commerce, and at its head is the Queen. In Her Majesty's Commonwealth Day message this year she said:

"In the Commonwealth, governments, businesses, communities and individuals should each strive to match words and good intentions with deeds. Every contribution has its part to play. Whatever we do, wherever we live, our actions in defence of the environment can have a real and positive effect upon the lives of others, today and into the future"

Tucked into this part of the message is a call to play our part which links to my theme today of living life to the fullest. The Queen calls on individuals within the Commonwealth of Nations to defend our environment. As I said in my report last year each of us doing a little can achieve a great deal for our environment. A good example has been the introduction of a system on our printers and computers this year called "paper cut" and this accounts for the paper individuals are printing and compels each of us to be aware of the carbon dioxide we have produced or the trees we may have used up. This is a small step in pushing the responsibility for the defence of our environment back on the individual consumer, exactly where it belongs.

Despite difficult issues that seem well beyond our reach the new year is looking very exciting for us at Pittwater House.

We will be engaging in the debate about the Rudd Government's National Curriculum and its ramifications; we will be developing and enhancing middle schooling with better classrooms and targeted teachers; we have appointed a new Co-ordinator of Innovation and Learning Support; we will be improving our system of awards and prizes; and the Library renewal and refresh programme will complete the layout, colour schemes, furnishings and fittings in the new library on the top floor of West Wing.

The pastoral care system in the Secondary School is also being enhanced and reinforced. This springs from a concept Mr Jim Coyle put on the table about four years ago to invigorate the Houses. In essence he had a plan to reinforce the Pittwater House system of pastoral care through structural strength and involve every teacher completely and meaningfully.

I acknowledge the outstanding work by our pupil leaders under the command of Head and Second Prefects Florence Lockhart, Taylor-Lee George, Dominic Wheeler and Wills Brassil and Captains Maddison Alexis and Sebastian Davies-Mills.

Let me conclude by thanking a group of people who live life to the fullest. They provide a great deal of support and a lot of fun for us at School. That is the hardworking members of the Pittwater House Parents Association committees. I especially acknowledge the work of the Treasurer Mrs Vickie McGrouther who has also co-ordinated canteen management this year and the leadership of Vice President Mrs Julie Galbraith and President Mr Todd Alexis. There is always a danger of singling out people who are part of a group of dedicated volunteers but I hope you will agree with me that I can acknowledge today two very committed volunteer mums. They are Mrs Verity Powers and Mrs Andrea Brooke who have run the clothing pool operations in 2008. I would also like to acknowledge the work and support of Mrs Sherelee George who has been an active volunteer for the Parents Association for the last 20 years.

The Parents Association Committee people are a delight to work with please thanks them for the work they do for Pittwater House.

The pupils, staff and parents of this great school have lived their lives to the fullest once again and we finish 2008 with a wealth of experiences from deepest sorrow to the highest of joy. I thank you all for the support you have given me this tumultuous year and I look forward to the challenges and joys that 2009 will bring.

Richard Morgan
12 December 2008