



**Pittwater House**

## From the Principal

January 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

A Happy New Year to the Pittwater House family. Whilst it gives me great pleasure to welcome all continuing families and our large group of new members to 2020, the beginning of 2020 has been marked with loss, destruction, separation and deep sadness, the like of which our nation is struggling to comprehend. As individuals we may have felt helpless as the bushfire tragedy unfolded, yet I know we all want to undertake support of impacted communities in an ongoing way. To this end, I have been in contact with our Head Prefects and collectively we will ensure the Pittwater House family shows its spirit of giving.

Despite this time of immense national challenge, I do hope these weeks of holiday have been all you wished and now you and your children are looking forward to the commencement of the 2020 Academic year. These weeks though are always important for children and adults alike as renewal time in our crowded lives and as I noted in the 2019 end of year Annual Report, a time to "...pause, breathe and smile and to momentarily step aside from our busy lives, stop doing and simply be...".

Of course, our School has not been idle through the recess period! The Campus has been a hive of activity as we work on a range of projects, the greatest of which is the Kindergarten to Year 2 Hub project. We have also seen the refurbishment of the Performing Arts precinct. Additionally works have included painting and carpeting, a new bell system and the final work to air condition the Hall. Works on the grounds continue; it is wonderful to see the Oval looking so green. These are precious weeks as we ensure all is ready for the return of our students. Additionally there are three holiday camps occurring: this week there is a Swimming Camp with students working on their techniques and speed for the forthcoming Swimming Carnivals, a Running Camp and a Basketball Camps for both Secondary and Junior School students.

Once again the Principal's Pack comes in electronic form. This allows you to download and print off those components of relevance to you and your family.

As always there is a substantial amount of information for all families in preparation for the year and we trust it responds to the questions you may have at this stage. There is, for example, useful guidance from the Heads of School for Day One, split as it is between new students on Wednesday 29 January (including all Kindergarten and Year 7 students) and all students on Thursday 30 January. Additionally the Business Manager, Ms Lynn Phelan has included some practical information regarding uniforms, car parking and safety, and bus travel.

### Academics

Our focus for 2020 remains on the provision of an all-round education, ensuring our students reach their full potential socially and academically. We were delighted with the HSC results from the Class of 2019 as my communication to you prior to Christmas outlined. The Dux of the Grammar School and the Dux of the

College will be presented with their medallions at our Opening of the School Year Assembly on the first day of School, and these fine young people will share a little of their story to inspire our students as they start the new academic year. Academic initiatives introduced through 2019 will continue this year as we support our students to achieve.

Whilst we relish our role in providing an all-rounded education at Pittwater House, working smartly is critical. So facing the New Year my wish is that every student strives for excellence and achieves their personal best, whatever that may be.

The transition to a new year is traditionally a season for celebration and reflection; it is a time to look forward to what will surely be another very busy year. It is most definitely a time to plan, to set goals and to make lists; these intentions that we all make come with a real sense of hope and optimism. I trust that each student will know where they need to make change and will take on the responsibility for *their* education by putting in the extra study needed. Our HSC students need to ensure attendance at the master classes and extra classes offered by their teachers and realise that their ‘race’ against all final year students in NSW must be measured and consistent in its intensity.

*And I ask of all our students: will you take responsibility for your future or are you merely expecting to coast along and watch it all fall into place?* For there are so many young people out there achieving great things—things that have purpose and contribute to the world and create a positive future for us all. It is a competitive world and each student, their teachers and their families need to appreciate the ‘hunger’ that is needed for success. For whether you are comfortable with the term or not, we live in a competitive world which students are largely shielded from until their HSC year. The word ‘impossible’ is a big word used by those who find it easier to live within the known perimeters rather than to explore the power each of us has to change and achieve at our optimum level. I want our students to think. I want our students to learn to think and to never enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought. For as John F. Kennedy said in his 1962 address to the graduating class of Yale, “we subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.” That is the challenge for all members of our community as we begin a new academic year.

### Attendance

Please note therefore the importance of attendance at school each day. Our Staff work hard to design interesting and relevant programs so that learning is meaningful and ignites the passion for learning in our students. Students are only able to benefit fully from the learning process by being present, punctual and participating actively in all school programs. Our term start and end dates are clearly stated in our documentation and available for two years ahead. There is therefore no excuse to book holidays in school time. To make this issue quite clear, students should **not** be taken out of school for additional holiday times. All students are expected to be present and to attend classes during term time and all other school activities that have been planned for them. A student’s attendance and punctuality are recorded in their academic report as the number of school days with an excused absence, unexcused absence and instances of coming late.

### Staffing

We have in place a Staff who seek the best outcome for your children and we encourage you to work closely with them. Various forms of communication are available and your Head of School will speak of these in the context of the new year. I ask that you work through your child’s class or form teacher as a starting point. Subject teachers, Faculty Co-ordinators, Year Level Coordinators, Assistants to the Head of Junior School and Heads of School are there too, should the need arise. The new Staff, including our Head of the Grammar

School, Mr David Heath, are undertaking an orientation program this week, in addition to their initial induction to our School at the end of last year. I shall 'introduce' the new members of Staff in our first edition of *HouseNews* next week.

### Pastoral Care/Wellbeing

Our programs for Pastoral Care and Wellbeing across the School are in place with specific programs having been developed and adopted by the Heads of the Grammar School and College. Their focus has unashamedly been on wellbeing as they have worked to provide a continuum from Year 7. Students will attest to the importance and value of these programs on their ability to cope with the challenges they face at varying stages of their schooling. To ensure the best possible input to either half or full day programs, we use external providers in addition to Pittwater House staff. Mrs Achurch too, has worked with Junior School staff to create age appropriate pastoral and wellbeing structures through, for example, the identification and appreciation of character strengths. The sense of continuity from these programs and the opportunities for mentoring, community work and a focus on specific needs for girls and boys will all be seen through the course of 2020. You will continue to see the benefits of Pittwater House providing a 'tool-kit' for life for our children and young people to become the best versions of themselves. Without a commitment to resilience, care and welfare for our community, our academic curriculum would be compromised.

Therefore, as we face this new school year, despite the technological advances surrounding us and the resources our students work with daily, our students need to feel safe in their learning environment. This launching pad from which they will follow their curiosity into the larger world they will inhabit, needs to be a place where they can transition from their childhood to their community of peers and the adult world. Developing a positive mindset, being open to learning, facing challenges and showing resilience are all necessary skills with our students needing to believe their abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This world of Pittwater House needs to be a happy place where the students laugh, where they explore and connect with people, thoughts and interests, and where they learn something of themselves and where they make great friends.

### Welcome Drinks – Friday 31 January

Together with the PHPA, we will be delighted to see you at the **Welcome Drinks on Friday 31 January from 6-8pm in the Hall**. All parents, both current and new to Pittwater House, are invited to celebrate the start of the 2020 school year with Staff and fellow parents from across the School. A separate flyer for this event is enclosed in this Principal's Pack. I look forward to welcoming you once more at this event.

Together with the Staff, I look forward to working with all families to ensure Pittwater House provides continuous growth and change for all who daily pass through our gates.

Yours sincerely



Dr Nancy Hillier  
Principal