HEADMASTER'S PRIZEGIVING SPEECH 2024

Teenaa koutou e te whaanau
Kei te mihi ki te Atua, ki a Ihu Karaiti hoki
Kuini Ngaa-wai Hono I Te Poo, paimaarire
Ki te hunga mate, e moe, e moe, e moe
Ki a taatou katoa, kia ora

Chair of the Waikato Anglican College Trust Board, Mr Andrew Johnson, trustees, fellows, staff, parents, friends of our School, and most importantly, the young people who sit before me today reflecting a diversity of backgrounds, talents, passions and ambitions, it is my privilege to present the 65th Headmaster's Report for St Paul's Collegiate School.

In addressing our School community today, I wish to start by providing some important detail regarding the purpose, preparedness and process we have undertaken as a Board and Senior Leadership Team with respect to the Board Chair Mr Johnson's announcement this morning that starting in 2026, enrolled Year 9 girls will join our school community, with this inaugural cohort continuing into Year 10 in 2027. I then wish to proceed to reflecting on some of the highlights of 2024 drawing particular attention to our Philosophy, Places, Programmes, and People. All to conclude, I steadfastly believe we are forging an exciting new era.

Just over four years ago I met many of the School's current Board of Trustees around a table where their questioning and brief commentary provided me with a deep insight into the sincerity and thoughtfulness in which they approached their governance responsibilities; in particular the responsibility to strategically advance a St Paul's Collegiate School setting for future generations to flourish within and benefit enormously from. At that time, the Trustees were already several years into intermittently discussing the future composition of the St Paul's Year 9 and 10 cohorts, alongside regularly reviewing the approaches and outcomes achieved by the expert staff residing on the Tihoi Venture School campus. These conversations continued.

As a proud teacher, leader and contributor in an all-boys educational setting for 15 years prior to arriving at St Paul's, I felt well-positioned to provide a perspective on some of the nuances of single-sex education during these discussions. Ultimately, I described the propensity for such schools to inculcate authentic schoolwide cultures full of pride and connection, to drive environments where excellence is celebrated through numerous traditions and rites of passage, and the effective instruction of young people via the specific content that appealed to their innate dispositions. I established quickly St Paul's was already practicing each of these cultural nuances.

Since then, our School roll has deliberately and incrementally grown, and we are grateful for the support of, and demand for places at, our school, as demonstrated by waiting lists in many categories of current enrolment. Unlike in 1985 when young women were first able to enrol in Years 12 and 13, or in 2010 when it became possible for Year 11 girls to join St Paul's, the decision announced today to begin enrolling female students as members of the School's two junior Year levels, reflects our School Board's belief that the opportunity to experience a St Paul's education should be available to both young men and women at all levels of their secondary schooling pathway. It is not a decision grounded in the need to grow the School roll, nor to address a financial circumstance. Quite the opposite; it has been determined because as Mr Johnson noted earlier, it is right.

Put simply, we are proud of our people and our programmes; experiencing a St Paul's education should not be determined by gender.

We want young girls to have a 5-year St Paul's learning experience should they and their parents wish for it. We want young girls to have a deep connection to the wonder that is the Tihoi Venture School campus and its associated outdoor educational opportunities. We want young girls to know they are worthy of the formative experiences we make available to our young men in Years 9 and 10.

Importantly we want our community to know St Paul's boys and girls will be taught in single-sex classroom environments in both Year 9 and Year 10. We strongly believe this approach provides our teaching staff with the best opportunity to design courses and content specific to the group they have in front of them. For example, a Year 9 boys' English class may be studying a different text to a Year 9 girls' English class who are learning in an adjacent teaching space.

We also remain committed to continuing to deliver on an average class size of 20 or less, including the continuation of streaming classes in Years 9 and 10 to allow for the benefits of effective differentiated learning.

There will be no change to the number of boys enrolled in the Junior School. 72 girls will be enrolled to start in Year 9 in 2026. These 72 students will progress to being the first cohort of Year 10 female students at St Paul's in 2027.

From 2027, Tihoi will operate differently, offering three intakes across each year (instead of the current two intake model). Year 10 boys will be separated into two intakes, each comprising of the existing 72 student capacity. Their experience will occur over a 12-week period, with a programme heavily orientated towards outdoor educational activities. A significant volume of academic classroom teaching currently delivered on the Tihoi campus (across the current 18-week Tihoi in-campus programme) will be reassigned to the teaching staff on the Hamilton campus.

Year 10 girls will experience an independently designed girls' outdoor education experience, scheduled across a maximum 12-week window, consisting of 72 female students. The nature of this programme may not necessarily consist of a full 12-week duration, as its unique design will be determined by our expert team of Tihoi outdoor instructors, educationalists, and an advisory group of former Tihoi Directors.

We want the community to know that in getting to this significant milestone in our School's history, we have engaged with all living former Headmasters, all previous Directors of the Tihoi Venture School back to its formation, and a number of our influential contributors to our School's story over many decades. Each have been gracious with their time, insights and encouragement. Of special note, it has been energising to witness the enthusiasm, and receive the support, of current Tihoi Director Mr Peter Evans (who is present here today) and the previous Directors of the Tihoi campus who have viewed the upcoming changes as a chance to maximise the boys learning experience, while awakening the opportunity for young girls to benefit from the tremendous formative experience the unique setting offers. What we have all agreed upon is that key aspects of the current Tihoi outdoor experiences, such as activity rotations, house and parent tramps, solo experiences, and end of programme expeditions will remain cornerstones of the future programmes, each achievable within a 12-week period.

In preparedness for enrolling Year 9 girls to join our school community in 2026, our staff team will be canvassing widely on some of the operational choices yet to be discussed and determined. We look forward to asking for and receiving student and whaanau perspectives on certain implementation options as and when appropriate over the next year.

Critically, we will remain committed to delivering learning opportunities for all students that are focused on developing the character of each young person, in environments that are engaging, challenging and supportive.

Today is also an opportunity for reflection; reflection on our Philosophy, Places, Programmes, and People in 2024, and thus I wish to turn to an aspect of our **'Philosophy'**. This year the School embarked upon discussing, distilling and confirming a revised Vision and Values framework to guide our approach over the School's next chapter. Ultimately three words accurately articulated our focus; namely a vision centred on "Cultivating Educated Contributors". "Cultivating" because the critical role of our staff team is to mentor and push the young men and women we are privileged to have in our school community, in partnership with the tremendous support they receive from home. "Educated" because we champion robust and rigorous curriculum content and assessment, taught by specialist teachers in classroom environments where an average teacher to student ratio is 1:20 or less recognising the absolute importance of high-quality teaching and learning experiences. "Contributors" because we want our students to understand they are part of something bigger than themselves, and that using their knowledge, time and talents in the service of others is crucial for influencing and leading a society we all aspire to live within. As we look towards 2025, we are excited to further unpack this vision and our chosen values with the School community.

While the manner in which St Paul's staff teach and lead remains centred on high expectations, promoting a culture where seeking excellence is cool and aspirational, the School's Board and Senior Leadership Team are acutely aware that a continual investment in high-quality facilities is vital. In other words, enhancing our **'Places'.** Consequently, throughout 2024 we have advanced the School's Master Property Plans for both our Hamilton and Tihoi Venture School campuses, including but not limited to the construction of Tuuaapapa 'The Terrace' (our new outdoor dining space), an internal and external refurbishment of the D-Block classrooms, a Harington Boarding wing refurbishment, a Power infrastructure project to provide for increased future capacity, five additionally renovated classrooms, and the almost completed new Tihoi Staff Office and Reception building. Importantly, we are presently activating the next stages of the Master Campus Property Plan with the construction phase of 'The Hive' commencing this December, with this multi-functional complex expected to open in early 2026.

The Hive is a $15 million state-of-the-art facility which features a health and wellness centre for students, a one-stop shop for parents and Collegians, and will connect to an upgraded boarding house, Sargood. The Hive will play a crucial role in the school's vision of offering a premier environment that supports student learning and well-being, while also providing a central space for parents and Collegians to connect with the school; it will be our front door so to speak.

The physcial walls we construct will never transition into being robust and dynamic learning centres where academic knowledge atainment and skill acquisition is bountiful without the right **'Programmes'.** Throughout 2024, in its second iteration, our staff have further embedded the changes made to our Year 9 and 10 Junior School courses and masterclass options commenced back in late 2022. Moreover, this year has seen the successful implementation of the first year of the St Paul's Year 11 Diploma. The development of the St Paul's Diploma had recognised the need to exercise even greater educational independence in order to ensure our future Year 11 courses in particular were robust and rigorous enough to best prepare students for success at NCEA Level 2 and beyond. This year our expert specialist teachers sought to deliver engaging and challenging courses at this critical learning pathway stage, combining a variety of traditional testing, collaborative tasks, portfolio work, and soon to be completed formal examinations. These assessments were designed to ensure our Year 11 students remained both extrinsically motivated and internally driven, possessing an awareness of the need to discover and understand more deeply, to consequently be able to transfer their academic

knowledge into meaningful critical thinking and other higher-order thinking domains. We are incredibly proud of the progress of these programmes of study.

And to our **'People'.** As our year draws to a close, I wish to acknowledge our Year 13 leavers, the class of 2024, who have been passionate contributors and proud ambassadors of our School. Your Year 13 Leavers' gift to the School is aptly symbolic of your cohort; a collection of wonderfully colourful characters who have lit up our place, for which we are very grateful. To Head Boy Will Hadley, Head Girl Sadie Williams, Deputy Head Boy Liam Inman, and Deputy Head Girl Grace Potter, thank you for leading with a combination of calmness, conviction and care; you should be rightfully proud of your efforts and achievements.

To our school's loyal and committed staff, the challenge at the start of this academic year was to 'Chase Great'. I implored you to ascend higher in pursuit of being a daily example to the young people in our care that we are never the finished product, and that the continual quest to see more, in order to know more, so that we can be more, ultimately to give more, is a habitual process of embracing change and living with vulnerability. Thank you to each of you, teaching and support staff alike, for being you, and in doing so inspiring the young women and men of St Paul's to love, cherish and grow themselves.

To the members of the School's Senior Leadership Team, Messers Hardman, Welham, Coley, Hay, Mrs Miller, Mrs Bradford, Mrs Conaghan, and Reverend Rickman, thank you for bringing optimism when the task lists are long, humour when perspective is being lost, and friendship when leading is lonely. In particular, I wish to acknowledge Mr Craig Hardman's outstanding leadership as Acting Headmaster of the School during my absence in the middle of this year whilst completing a Woolf Fisher Fellowship experience in the UK and USA. He is a leader who acts with integrity and compassion; someone who strives daily to be the best version of himself so that others can do so in turn. Thank you, Craig. To Miss Jennifer Purvis, my Executive Assistant, an 'oracle' can be described as an individual known to provide wise counsel and deep insights for others. You certainly play that role for me and countless colleagues; our collective gratitude runs deep for you.

To the School Board, 2024 will be remembered as a calendar year when the decision was made to commence the significant capital building project 'The Hive', when a refreshed School Vision and Values project was ratified, and when the School's history will note the considered choice was confirmed to welcome Year 9 girls into our school community in 2026. Thank you for your stewardship in these discussions, and for your courage to lead and guide in pursuit of a future-focused St Paul's schooling experience that will allow all students to flourish. To the Board Chairman, Mr Andrew Johnson, thank you for not settling, for challenging us to explore new ways to raise the bar, and for your selfless support of me and our wider staff team.

To the directors of the St Paul's Foundation, led by the bubbly and motivated Mrs Megan Smith, to our Collegians Association Executive and their committed and highly supportive President Mr Ryan McCarthy (class of 1997), and to our loyal and engaged Parents' Association members, enthusiastically led by Mrs Tomasina Antunovich, please know your contributions in 2024 have been meaningful, significant and truly appreciated.

In closing, I wish to recognise the parents of our aakonga (our students) who make significant sacrifices to access a style of education we are incredibly proud of. Thank you for reminding your sons and daughters often about the need for haircuts and/or to meet our jewelry regulations, to complete their homework, to arrive on time, to attend that extracurricular training commitments, to be contributors. Our staff team appreciate the partnerships we are able to forge with such supportive St Paul's families.

To Hayley, my wife, my rock; thank you for being there at the end of the day to smile back at me, to occasionally sigh in unison with me, and for partnering with me daily as together we navigate the journey of leading this wonderful school. I love you.

Today is a brief moment, but a significant moment. Today we choose and champion that a St Paul's education should be available to both young men and women at all levels of their secondary schooling pathway. I applaud our Board today. I am damn proud of our people and our programmes, and I am damn excited about the new opportunities ahead to further our great school.

I wish you all many, many moments of happiness with loved ones as the summer nears; a time for laughter and long days reflecting on the blessing and privilege that 2024 has been.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa taatou katoa.