**HEADMASTER'S PRIZEGIVING SPEECH 2025**

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, Archbishop Sir David Moxon, trustees, fellows, staff, parents, friends of our School, and most importantly, the young people who sit before me today representing the vitality and courage of a generation ready to lead, it is my privilege to present the 66th Headmaster's Report for St Paul's Collegiate School.

I love educational environments. Every year there is building in progress; the building upon students' academic knowledge, the building of new physical spaces, the building of deepening cultural connection, the building of one's character, the list goes on. So, it seems appropriate today to share some of the building highlights at St Paul's throughout 2025. These include:

**The building upon students' academic knowledge.** This has included the continuation of our unapologetic focus on teachers teaching, an increased emphasis on academic tracking to ensure that ultimately the overwhelming majority of students gain University Entrance so that all pathways are open to them beyond our gates (regardless of the next step that they may wish to take), the continuation of Year 9 specialist literacy and numeracy classes for 75% of our most junior students to ensure gaps in understanding and application can be addressed early, and the successful second full year of the St Paul's Diploma at Year 11 (providing explicit curriculum content and rigorous assessment mechanisms). All the meanwhile we have championed the proposed nationwide secondary school assessment changes, as we stand for a robust and aspirational education system.

**The building of new or refurbished physical spaces**. This has included the almost completed $15m project The Hive, the Sargood Boarding House extension and refurbishment works, the activation of Puutahi (the Tihoi Staff Offices and Visitor Centre), the new Textile Technology workshop, two new-build Harington Boarding staff townhouses. These projects have occurred alongside the early commencement of 2026 property works, including two additional toilet block facilities, additional Harington Day common room space (on the current School Shop footprint), a new 20-bed Harington Boarding complex and the Harington Boarding common room extension, to name but a few.

**The building of further capabilities in teaching.** This has included ensuring teaching staff members get off campus to visit other educational providers (so that they can observe, learn and bring back into our setting examples of great practice), the development of an Artificial Intelligence policy, procedures and practice (which will assist not only in operational efficiency and resource creation, but also in the embedding of a critical thinking emphasis within courses and units of work), and expert professional development training, especially in the sphere of enhancing student pastoral support strategies across staff members.

**The building of momentum as we plan for the introduction of Year 9 girls next year.** This has included hiring outstanding new staff (of note we have been interviewing since June this year in readiness to ensure we appoint the best and brightest), the targeted professional development for teachers focused on effective strategies for supporting younger-aged female students, the reviewing of our orientation experience and wider enrolment processes, and the refinement of our junior courses (and

where appropriate modifying course options to ensure our junior school programmes offer a variety of subjects across each curriculum strand).

We have continued:

- **Building even greater visibility of our steadfast expectations and aspirations -** through the School's refreshed vision and values. In particular I wish to note the call to both contemplation and action contained within the messaging of the weekly Chaplain's Pen (such reflections are crucial at a time where we are all saturated by a society that promotes individualism and self-importance).
- **Building students' passions via extracurricular experiences -** through compulsory sport, music, cultural activities, the performing arts.
- **Building awareness of the realities and needs facing others within our community -** through hugely successful Charity Days and Fundraising Initiatives (with over $100k raised this year alone), and an active, voluntary service, mission and outreach offering for all interested students.
- **Building resilience -** through the Tihoi Venture School programme, compulsory House competition participation, regular tests and examinations.
- **Building a passion for landscapes beyond the horizon -** through domestic and international education outside the classroom opportunities.

And importantly, **the building of young people full of hope and conviction.** This has included our students regularly sharing in large group contexts their stories, their wisdom, their respective calls to action. As examples of this student-led inspiration, I will forever remember Matilda Miller's address at the Harington Day House Dinner when in reference to the future she eloquently shared the sentiment "there are seats for you at tables you have never seen, doors you haven't opened yet, and so many opportunities that are waiting for you to grab them." And who could forget the courage of Toby Bowler during a Pride Week Assembly address when he implored us all to realise "The difference is really made when we treat everyone with empathy, no matter how different they are to us." These student-led moments matter, for the lives of our young people are constantly being built and shaped by the experience and guidance of those who have walked before them.

In short, we have been busy building in 2025.

The colloquial expression "Rome wasn't built in a day" continues to be widely used in modern society, inferring building anything of substance takes time, and by default typically relies on the efforts of many. I now wish to express gratitude to the many individuals who have contributed deeply and meaningfully to our journey of building people, places and programmes across 2025.

Firstly, to our parents, proud whaanau who support and believe in an educational foundation firmly grounded in faith and whanaunatanga; thank you for your trust in our staff, thank you for giving us the honour of building alongside your treasured sons and daughters.

To the leaving class of 2025, I want you to know that I sat in this Whare Karakia yesterday afternoon, and as our Chamber Choir performed 'The Celtic Blessing, May The Road Rise Up to Meet You' during the Leavers' Service, I sat in my chair and I cried. This is not common for me. As the choir so beautifully sang the words "Until we meet again, May God hold you, May God hold you, May God hold you, In the palm of his hand" tears ran down my face. I was overwhelmed. Overwhelmed not by the imminent departure of Tilly, the School cat (who the Hardman family are stealing from us), but rather by the departure of you as a Year 13 cohort. The mixture of your connectivity, humour, vulnerability and hope, I have only ever personally experienced to the same intensity from one other departing class in

20+ years of education. So, thank you; I pray that God may hold each of you as you set out to lead lives of phenomenal contribution and impact.

To Head Girl, Georgia Roberts, Head Boy, Roy Zhu, Deputy Head Girl, Annie Stokes, and Deputy Head Boy, William Peoples, please know that while I would obviously never acknowledge it in public, each of you are incredibly talented, hard-working and fun young adults who are living like the wholehearted in the arena. I have truly cherished our time together and have delighted in watching you grow.

To construct lives that truly matter we need to be guided by master builders. Thank you to the wonderful humans who form the St Paul's staff; dedicated and enthusiastic individuals who across all facets of school life seek to position the building blocks in place so our young people can flourish. At the start of this year, I challenged you as a team, and as individuals, to 'do things that scare you'. I have watched on, observing countless examples of this challenge being accepted. So, thank you; thank you for living out Marianne Williamson's attestation that "as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same."

To the members of the School's Senior Leadership Team, including my dear friend and Executive Assistant, Miss Jennifer Purvis, my heartfelt appreciation for your collective, unwavering commitment and energy to the Kaupapa we are advancing. It is with an abundance of conviction, humour, and grace you are leading this community through change. Each of you are the architects and the laborers. Thank you for fighting for the things that matter.

Importantly, the conclusion of this school year marks the departure of the much-loved Mr Craig Hardman after 19 years of devoted, passionate and selfless service to St Paul's, as he takes on his well-deserved appointment as Rector of Lindisfarne College in the Hawkes Bay. At yesterday's Final Headmaster's Assembly, Mr Hardman addressed the school and in his concluding remarks he signed off by saying, "Thank you for the memories, the laughter, the lessons. I've loved being part of this school . . . This is not a place of busyness; this is a place of magic and opportunities." Well sir, I speak on behalf of us all in echoing straight back to you the following - thank you for being part of our memories, thank you for your laughter, thank you for the lessons you have taught us; we have loved having you as part of this school. You are the magic; you have created so so many opportunities. We will remain forever grateful to, and for, you.

To the trustees of the Waikato Anglican College Trust Board - please know how much your stewardship of both the present and the future is seen and deeply valued. Thank you for your critique, counsel and commitment to our great school. To the Board Chairman, Mr Andrew Johnson, it was five years ago we first met. You told me why this community was so special; yet you humbly failed to mention the enormous contribution of time and heart you provide to enhance the environment and its people. Thank you for your continued presence and passion.

To the directors of the St Paul's Foundation, led by the generous and thoughtful Mr John Jackson, to our Collegians Association Executive and future-focused President Mr Ryan McCarthy (class of 1997), and to our committed Parents' Association members, led by Mrs Tomasina Antunovich, please know that all successful building sites require a combination of contractors expertly executing their specialised functions all at the same time. Thank you for your collective effort and belief.

To Hayley, my wife, as we continue to build our own family and treasured memories and moments, thank you for allowing the St Paul's family to share me at the same time. You remain the best Site Manager I know. I love you.

As we, the St Paul's community, near the conclusion of 'Project 2025', I stand before you as the proud son of a father who was a builder. And while memories of his unfinished jobs around the family home remained vivid long after his passing, the recalling of his delayed 'works in progress' explanations continue to remind me even today that we are all unfinished, incomplete, flawed, constructed on foundations we faithfully hope and pray will weather storms and sunshine alike in the times ahead. Critically though, God has already given us all everything we will ever need, so we should march on with sketch pads, hammers and chisels to build lives that truly matter.

Over the weeks ahead as the unpredictability of spring gives way to the warm embrace of summer, I wish all members of our St Paul's whaanau countless moments of both stillness and energy-filled family fun. Let us seek to expand photo albums of memories built on faith, hope and love.

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.