



**CLAYFIELD COLLEGE 75TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER
TOAST TO THE SCHOOL
SATURDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2006**

JUSTICE MARGARET WILSON

Good evening, everyone.

What a joyous occasion this is! The room is filled with past pupils of Clayfield College. We have been drawn to this celebration of its 75th anniversary by the quasi-filial bond each of us has to the school. The night belongs to Clayfield College, to the men and women who gave it life, nurtured it, and brought it to its present position as one of Queensland's leading schools, and of course to its past and present students who are its very reason for being.

In reflecting on what I might say this evening, I have browsed through a history of the school prepared by the Old Girls' Association in 1973, and a history of the Presbyterian and Methodist Schools' Association's first 75 years published in 1994. I was struck by the foresight and courage of those who founded the PMSA in 1917 (during World War I). They did so in order to acquire and run two existing schools – the Brisbane High School for Girls (later to become known as Somerville House) and Clayfield College (then a boys' school known as Rudd's School). Almost immediately upon the formation of the association and the acquisition of the schools, the PMSA Council set about the relocation of the girls' school from a house on Wickham Terrace to its present location at South Brisbane and then the relocation of the boys' school, Brisbane Boys College, to Toowong.

BBC was scheduled to open at its Toowong campus in 1931, and as that time approached there was much vexed discussion about what was to be done with the Clayfield property. Undaunted by the hard economic times (it was the height of the Depression), the PMSA Council resolved to establish Clayfield College as a primary and kindergarten school which would be an adjunct to Somerville House. Miss Nancy Ashburn was appointed as the Mistress-in-Charge, with oversight by Miss Jarrett and Miss Harker, the Co-Principals of Somerville House.

Clayfield Junior School, as it was referred to by the PMSA Council, opened on 9 February 1931 with an enrolment of 9 pupils – 6 girls and 3 boys. Three years later, the PMSA Council agreed that Clayfield should expand into secondary education, and Miss Ashburn was officially appointed as Headmistress of Clayfield College in her own right.

In 1939 the boarding school commenced with “six boarders, and two others taking a hot meal at midday”. Clayfield College’s first swimming pool opened that year, too. Enrolments had climbed steadily, and by 1940 there were 124 pupils – 112 day pupils (of whom 11 were boys) and 12 boarders.

By the standards of today, the early years were marked by unsophisticated austerity. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Somerville House was taken over for use by the United States military, and its pupils were distributed among 3 locations in Brisbane and Stanthorpe. Clayfield College was inspected by the authorities to see if it would be suitable for use as a hospital – but it escaped that fate, because the school still did not have electricity!

How things have changed since those dark days! Total enrolment now stands at 911 – 498 in the senior school and 413 in the junior school. One quarter of those in the junior school are boys. There are 80 boarders.

And those who began the school 75 years ago could not have imagined its present physical facilities – the Nancy Ashburn Library, the Science Block, the Special Teaching Complex, the Music Centre, the Fine Arts Complex, the Chapel, the Ida Kennedy Building housing physical education facilities (which was formerly the Savoy Theatre and then a ten pin bowling alley), the present swimming pool, the Boarding House (which was formerly Turrawan Hospital), the Junior School precinct and so much more.

Impressive as those facilities are, and necessary as they are in a contemporary educational institution, they are not the essence of Clayfield College. That lies in its core Christian values of practical concern for the well being of fellow human beings and respect for the unique attributes of every individual. These values have been exemplified by the three fine women who have led the school over the last 75 years, Miss Ashburn, Miss Kennedy and Mrs Hauff - very different in their outward personae, each very much a woman of her own time rising to the challenges confronting her, every one of them a dedicated and effective leader who has left her indelible mark upon the school. My association with Clayfield College has spanned the three eras, and it has been my privilege to have known them all.

The large attendance here this evening is a reflection of the affection, respect and gratitude which past pupils feel for the school. There we were guided along educational paths which took us to the threshold of the adult world, we formed enduring friendships, and we relished the opportunity to let our individual lights shine.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me enormous pleasure to propose a toast to the school. Would you rise and charge your glasses.

To Clayfield College.