



**PENRITH ACADEMIC SELECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL**

# TOWERS 14

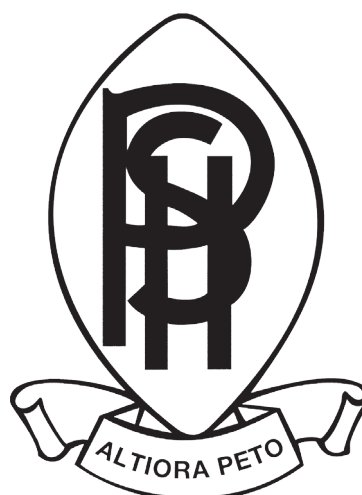
PENRITH ACADEMIC SELECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL: TOWERS 2014



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SELECTIVE HIGH SCHOOL



## RELIEVING PRINCIPAL *KRISTINE MACPHAIL*

Penrith HS is a really good place to spend your time in education, whether you are a student, a teacher or a member of the support staff – all contribute to make this a vibrant place to learn. In part, the collaborative nature of the school has meant that 2014 has been another exceptional year. The level of commitment is noticeable, both in the classrooms and also outside class in the many activities staff and students are involved.

The long list of individual and school achievements in 2014 began with a celebration of the HSC results of the Class of 2013. Notable, were the ten top 10 places in the state and the fact that this was the strongest cohort performance in the school's history. It wasn't long though, before our current students began to shine: a year 7 student winning an Australia wide essay competition about the ANZACS; a group of Year 10 students winning an Australian song writing prize, as a result of the school's first Musicians in Residence program and a year 12 student winning the Art Gallery of NSW essay competition. A student who deserves particular recognition is Yating Huang - this unassuming young woman won the ICAS medal for Mathematics, when she came first in this very difficult exam competition, open to students in NSW and the ACT.

This year, many students took advantage of overseas excursions to Japan and Italy, increasing their cultural knowledge and improving their language skills. The trip to Japan has been running for many years and students had a terrific time visiting a Japanese school, dressing in traditional costume and, of course, visiting Tokyo Disneyland. The excursion to Italy was a first and was so successful that students are already expressing interest in another trip to this exciting country. This year, the students were able to experience many aspects of Italy – its history, culture, traditions and, of course, food.

The sporting prowess of the school is always healthy and this is borne out by the strong participation of students in all carnivals, teams and individual events at school, zone, region and state levels. The ethos at Penrith is to have a go and to always give of your best – this outstanding teamwork and commitment has resulted in many opportunities for students to participate at an elite level. Special mention must be made of Maxwell Duignan's achievements in Rowing and Marley Young's accomplishments in Athletics. At 16, Max is the U/19 State Champion in the Single Scull and he won his Head of the River race by a massive 30 seconds. Marley Young leaves PHS with a CHS gold medal in Shot Put. Marley holds every school, zone, region and state record for this event for the last 4 years. Both Max and Marley are great examples of students who balance their academic and sporting demands to achieve their personal best in both areas of endeavour.

The SRC, this year, has really increased its profile and commitment to serving the students and the community. Multicultural Day was a standout event, where the school celebrated its diversity and harmony. A debt of gratitude goes to our School Captain, Grace Shalders for her inspirational leadership of the inaugural PHS Relay for Life team. They did a wonderful job raising money for cancer research and showing the local community the calibre of our commitment to significant world issues. Students are keen to see this volunteering effort continued next year.

John C Maxwell said that "Leadership is not about titles, positions, or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another." and being one of the four captains was never about the badges and formal ceremonies, it was about our peers and what they stood for. If there is one thing that all four captains are proudest of during our term, it is that all our endeavours were shaped by the perpetuation of the student voice. There is a certain feeling of pride that comes with the knowledge that hundreds of your peers have entrusted you with their representation and welfare at school, a knowledge that is both empowering and humbling. As leaders you receive many opportunities that tempt to isolate you from the general student body, but as captains we decided the day we were elected that we would lead by action and not position. My term as vice-captain alongside JR, Grace and Jonas was the foundation of my best experiences in my high school life, and we were all driven to share that with our peers. Being the captains of a cohort as intelligent, cohesive and kind as the classes of 2014 was an honour to say the least, and amidst the organisation of so many events like Quad Schools, Political Summit and forums it was the camaraderie of the student body that remains the highlight of our term. I maintain the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers and that has always been the strength of PHS, abundant with tomorrow's leaders. As captain, one of the greatest privileges is getting to know a vast majority of the amazing people that do unknowingly surround us every day, on the pilgrimage from the station to school, in the canteen line and in classrooms. There is a tendency to overlook something when it is in abundance, and being captain helped realise the greatness in which we are all so immersed and impervious to at times. Being captain has done more for us than any captain could ever give back, but we hope that we have made some kind of change or had some kind of influence, even a minute one on even one student. Because then we have done something worth writing about. It has been the most pleasure, serving as Penrith High's captains of 2014 and will always be something we hold close to our hearts.

-Valerina Sureshkumar (Vice Captain)