Parents, members of the PARED Board, Tangara staff and students.

The 2015 school year is at an end. I am honoured to have led the Tangara family through another wonderful year.

2015 in Review

Tangara’s talents in the performing arts were showcased tonight. The range and standard of the performances are testament to Tangara’s vibrant musical culture. The creative highlight of 2015 was, of course, our *Aladdin* musical, a true singing, dancing and acting spectacular.

In the sporting arena our philosophy is to offer the girls a range of opportunities for participation, fun and personal development: touch football, tennis, futsul, swimming, cross country, athletics, gymnastics, basketball and netball.

Our sporting competitions provide the girls with pathways to the highest levels of sporting representation. This year Tangara students made it all the way through to state level championships in cross country and athletics.

In Netball and Basketball, Tangara teams were well represented in the Grand Finals. In Netball there were victories for the under 11s and Old Girls teams. Across the two Basketball seasons Tangara achieved three Grand Final victories. I thank the many parents for their hard work which makes these two clubs thrive and for their vital contribution to building teamwork and friendships which are integral to the Tangara spirit.

In debating our girls competed against the best talent from independent schools across the state. In ISDA Debating, four teams made it through to the final play-offs, with the Year 10s narrowly defeated in the Semi-Final. In the Archdale competition, 5 teams forged through to the Quarter Finals and our 8Bs to the Semis. An outstanding effort.

Our dynamic Mock Trial competition was a great success. Tangara’s energetic performances notched up a string of impressive wins, and we finished among the top 16 schools in NSW. Again, a wonderful achievement.
Service is essential to the Tangara ethos. Through serving others our girls develop generosity, leadership skills and broaden their vision of the world. Our Year 10s completed the year with a project to assist the elderly and disabled in the Blue Mountains. Other classes worked with Vinnies, Operation Christmas Child, Bear Cottage and Youth Off the Streets. Next month ten of our Year 12s and three teachers will travel to a farm school in the Philippines where they will discover their hidden talents in laying cement and painting, as well as teaching first aid and arts and craft. They will also visit nursing homes, orphanages and hospitals with students from Tangara’s sister school in Manila.

2015 has also been a year of intense work and collaboration by staff from across the School, finalising our new Strategic Plan. As we strive towards 2020, we will have a clearly defined action plan which embeds excellence, innovation and continuous improvement in everything we do. I look forward to presenting it to you at the next Key Parent Function.

The year finished with the Twilight Christmas Market. The talent and creativity of so many families ensured it was a spectacular success. More than the funds raised for our Multi-Purpose Hall, the success was in the smiles, the friendship and the generosity: Twilight brought Tangara together as a big, happy family. Thank you to everyone who contributed.

**Academic Achievement**

Academically, this was a very proud year for Tangara. There were the outstanding HSC results from the Class of 2014. The other oft-cited measure, Naplan, was also impressive. On every indicator for literacy and numeracy, across Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, Tangara’s average was way above the state. Measured against the more demanding standard of independent schools, Tangara’s average was, for the most part, above independent schools across NSW. This is a fantastic achievement.

Tonight we have recognised the students who achieved personal academic success in 2015. I warmly congratulate each and every one of you. And I congratulate the Class of 2015. Already a number of girls have achieved early entry into courses such as Speech Pathology, Medical Science, Arts/Social Work, Communications, Early Childhood Studies, and Counselling.

Academic success can’t be measured just in results. There is also the success of those students who didn’t make it up to the stage tonight, but gave their personal best. This is the true mark of excellence. We are very proud of you.

**Parent Engagement in Education**

There’s a lot of talk about parent engagement in education. Research links it with better academic outcomes, increased school attendance, higher graduation rates, improved behaviour and better emotional well-being.¹ One

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¹ See, for example, Dr Lance Emerson, Josh Fear, Dr Stacey Fox, Emma Sanders, *Parental Engagement in Learning and Schooling: Lessons from Research*, Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Canberra, 2012.
research body even says that ‘boosting parental engagement is the missing link in the education reform agenda’ and the future of Australia. Those are strong words indeed.

Parent engagement means more than volunteering and attending school events, although these are important. Researchers and policy makers talk about the need for a partnership between the school and parents. A partnership where the school knows and understands each family; where the school supports parents with education about parenting skills and child development. Other research highlights the need for true collaboration in decision making and exchange of information between school and home.

Whilst researchers and policy makers talk, Tangara actually walks the talk, and has done for more than 30 years. The ongoing input offered to parents at Key Parent Functions; the personal attention offered to each child and family; and the collaboration between parents, tutors and teachers via the Tutorial System are the hallmarks of parent engagement par excellence.

However, it so easy to take all this for granted. For the sake of our children we must not. So, in 2016, what about a personal education reform agenda? What can you and I do? For my part as Principal, I am committed to building a true partnership with every single parent at Tangara. Our teachers and tutors are striving to do the same.

As we look towards 2016, I ask all our parents, from the newest parents to the veterans: please think about your personal commitment to a strong and active partnership with the school. Experience tells us it is key to your child’s future happiness.

Above all, are you convinced that our partnership is not just about educating students, but about forming persons?

**It’s Character that Counts**

It’s right that tonight we celebrate academic success, as long as we remember that the happiness of our children and the future of Australia depend on much, much more. Does anyone really think that the secret to fulfilment is high Naplan results or a great ATAR?

Here is the other missing link in the education reform agenda, the one that researchers and policy makers don’t talk about: character. The civilisation of justice, peace, goodness and truth will be forged by women and men who’ve got what it really takes: fortitude, generosity, perseverance, sincerity, integrity and many other heroic qualities, and above all love.

This is what Tangara is about: parents and the school working together to form these women: women of character who will be leaders in their families, in their professions, in society and one day, not too far away, leaders in Parliament.

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It is a great joy for me to see that more and more parents are coming to Tangara with this vision. This year our Open Days have seen record attendance. Enrolments are growing. Our precious school is alive and thriving.

Thank you to the entire Tangara staff for your dedication: those in administration, IT, and maintenance. Our tutors, teachers and chaplains. A special thank you to our Music staff for their hard work tonight.

Thank you parents and girls for an exceptional year. Thank you also to the staff of PARED, and the PARED Chairman, Mr Gary Doherty, and the Directors for your unfailing encouragement and support.

As we begin the Christmas season, may I finish with these words to the baby. They are from the 11th century, by St Bernard of Clairvaux:

You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love. Caress us with your tiny hands, embrace us with your tiny arms, and pierce our hearts with your soft, sweet cries.

I wish everyone a happy holiday and a most blessed Christmas.

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