

ADDRESS BY  
HER EXCELLENCY MS QUENTIN BRYCE AC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**OPENING OF SENIOR SCHOOL SCIENCE AND SPORT COMPLEX AT QUEENWOOD  
SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**  
MOSMAN, NSW  
31 AUGUST 2010

Ladies and gentlemen, I am really delighted to join you here this afternoon:

for the opening of your senior school's new science and sport complex

and to acknowledge Queenwood's:

fine intellectual, cultural and pastoral example

your belief in excellence and human potential, self-responsibility and empathy

your commitment to Christian values, scholarship, community and service  
and your distinguished leadership and standing over the past 85 years in the education, development and  
nurture of young women and girls.

Last Sunday I was in Adelaide watching the tri-nation netball test series match between Australia's  
Diamonds  
and New Zealand's Silver Ferns.

It was an exhilarating contest  
of skill, mental toughness,  
fitness and finesse  
between the cream of the world's netballers.

Throughout my earlier career working for women's rights across all areas of society I've been a keen  
follower and advocate  
of women's progress and achievements  
in sport -  
as players, coaches, administrators  
and executives.

Today, female athletes are achieving a standard of performance  
never before witnessed by the world.

But their gains were for a long time hard won.

Women had to negotiate a system that worked strenuously against them, especially in the sports that  
made them sweat or look unwomanly.

The founder of the first modern Olympics held in 1896, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, voiced his  
opposition to women competing in the Games on the basis that:

⋯it would be indecent, vulgar, injurious to health, and masculinising for women to compete.

He felt that rather than seek records for herself, a woman's greatest achievement was to encourage her sons to excel.

And so women were banned.

But only once.

Thankfully, thereafter, the Baron didn't succeed in getting his way.

And now, well over a century on, we have a generation of women in sport determined to see that they are fairly represented on the field, around the board table and on our screens.

I looked at those sensational Diamonds and Silver Ferns go head to head on the weekend, and reflected on what outstanding role models they are, on and off the court.

Sportswomen have a remarkable capacity to influence the lives and aspirations of Australian girls and women in positive ways.

They help us develop strength, agility and a sense of teamwork.

They show us strategic thinking, goal setting, discipline and self confidence:

the very qualities women need to succeed in school, business and life

and certainly consistent with the ethos of Queenwood School.

And, another piece of advice from the former captain of the Australian Netball team, Liz Ellis:

If you don't make a mistake, you don't make a discovery

The prize these women are fighting for in this Trans-Tasman competition is the Constellation Cup, which of course suggests some wonderful imagery of bold, shining stars.

So with Liz Ellis's urging for discovery and dazzling constellations in mind,

I can't help but think of another occasion

I was so fortunate to be part of.

A few months ago, I presented this year's Stellar Scholarships:

to 12 young women in public schools in New South Wales

who have excelled in their secondary science studies.

These are young women with stellar discovery clearly in their sights!

I talked to them:

about cherishing the opportunities they'd earned

about the sense of privilege and awe I felt when I invested our Nobel Laureate, Professor Elizabeth Blackburn with the Companion of the Order of Australia

and about my own girlhood memories of the first young woman from my little country town who went to The University of Queensland to study science in the 1940s

how we marvelled at the very idea of it,

how we went on to admire all those pioneering women scientists who forged paths never before taken and who paved the way for women today to step up to the plate on an equal footing with men to address the challenges of our planet.

Young women, these are your stories too, now and in your lifetimes ahead.

They are why you are here.

And they are why your school leaders and governors, your teachers, your parents, the whole community of Queenwood School, have made this new complex happen for you.

Every individual gets her own dose in life of triumph and hardship, jubilation and disappointment.

And I've no doubt that those stellar netballers and science scholars will have had volumes of each.

I also suspect that, when they look back on their experiences, they look more at how than what:

how they dealt with the good and the terrible times

how they could have done it better

how their mistakes led to their discoveries.

Young women, I think that's what your time at Queenwood is about too.

Cherish the opportunity.

And make everything you can of this spectacular science and sport complex.