**Farewell to Flo Kearney | Friday 7 February 2020**

**Morgan Parker Remarks**

**Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I’d like to especially welcome all of our Somerville House volunteers, Foundation members, Old girls, staff (past and present), and finally, my governance colleagues to this very special occasion to honour our 11th principal, Flo Kearney.**

**As I was reflecting on Flo’s time as principal, it got me thinking about the role of a 21st Century private school principal. And I’ve definitely concluded it must be one of the most demanding roles in the world.**

**- The expectations of principals are remarkably high, with a diverse array of stakeholders to manage, the inevitable comparisons to previous principals and other schools, and most of all an expectation that the you are always ‘on’ day and night.**

**- Being a private school principal in Queensland today has the added dimension of operating in a very challenging economic paradigm with government funding constantly under threat, and the affordability of fees at the front of everyone’s mind.**

**- It seems current day principals must possess both pedagogical and business expertise in equal measure.**

**- In a single day the range of issues they deal with, span almost every professional skill set, field of knowledge and human emotion. Routinely their attention must shift from the intimate details of an individual student matter, to financial spreadsheets, to big-picture advocacy and strategic vision in the matter of a heartbeat.**

**- They manage large, complicated businesses, and in doing so need to be a CEO, at the same time they are the head of the academic program, they are a manager of sometimes hundreds of staff, their nights and weekends are defined by school activities, board meetings, and co-curricular events.**

**- They set the tone and yes … every moment of every day, they are all-consumed by their school …. They are ‘the’ person everyone looks to …. They are the leader of our community.**

**- Well, ladies and gentlemen, Flo Kearney wrote the book on being a 21st Century principal.**

**- She was our leader for seven incredible years.**

**The years between 2011 and 2017 were some of the most productive in this school’s history.**

* Enrolments increased by a remarkable 245 students
* Whole new business was created … being the 88 student Pre-Prep program, which was offered for the first time in 2014
* She opened this Foundation Building in 2015 – which includes the Early Learning Centre, this Honour Room and sports courts above.
* Just two years later, with the generous support of people in this room tonight, Flo opened the Bauer Building in 2017 - including the state-of-the-art Boarding House and Junior School classrooms. Assets that will provide Somerville with resiliency for generations to come.
* And of course, Flo gave us a glimpse into the future with the strategic acquisition of the Dunn Rd Sports facility – an opportunity to essentially redefine the ‘holistic notion’ of girls’ education, by providing a proprietary venue for co-curricular activities.

**Flo’s professional standards are legendary. Her team took strategic and operational planning to new levels, she invested in technology to bring Somerville into the 21st century. She put ‘Teaching and Learning’ front and centre by elevating this core organisational capability to the senior executive team.**

**Beneath the surface and beyond the impressive statistics, something far more significant was happening whilst Flo was principal of this school … I’m talking about culture.**

**The best leaders tend to the people, and the people tend to the business, and Flo epitomised that mindset.**

**“Team Somerville” was her rallying call, a term that evolved into the “One Somerville” we all live by today.**

**You see, Flo was a leader that surrounded herself with the best people. Her leadership wasn’t about authority, it was about influence.**

**She galvanised a team of professionals around a shared vision. A vision rooted in a deep respect for the past, and an astute appreciation of our future …. All the while, guided by the school’s motto of ‘Honour before Honours’.**

**When Flo spoke of ‘team’ she didn’t just mean our Somerville staff. Flo always understood that Somerville isn’t just about the people on campus now.**

**It’s an institution that holds an important place in the hearts and minds of ten of thousands of people – former students, former parents, and former staff.**

**And as leader of that expansive community, she succeeded in bringing people on the journey, as evidenced in the strong Foundation, OGA and P&F engagement with the projects she championed. I think to fair to say, without that broader support many of Flo’s achievements wouldn’t have been realised. Now … it’s up to us, to preserve that legacy of working together.**

**Externally, Flo was our face, our ‘district diplomat’, positioning Somerville advantageously as the neighbourhood around us rapidly developed. During her time, Queensland made its largest-ever investment in Children’s healthcare just across road, Flo’s inventive response was to create ‘Under the Clock’ café. The success of Southbank Parklands as Brisbane’s premier tourist destination with its award-winning Grand Arbour became the inspiration for Flo and the team to deliver the landscaping project affectionately known as the “Great Wall of Somerville” with its stunning bougainvillea that frame the school’s frontage. These are but a sample of the many alliances Flo built with others in her time as principal. They provide an insight to what drives Flo Kearney and why she will be remembered as a leader with ambition, determination and purpose.**

**There is only one Somerville House, and there will only ever be one “Florence Kearney”. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.**