

**'TERTIARY DEGREE IMPORTANT IN BUSINESS CAREER:  
BUSINESSWOMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST'**

"People seeking a career in business - or any career - should educate themselves as widely as possible and not specifically for their favoured career."

That was the message from prominent businesswoman and philanthropist Mrs Janet Holmes à Court AC (student 1955-1960) (pictured), in delivering the annual Perth Modernian Society Oration for 2013 to senior students of Perth Modern School and guests.



"It is really easy in life if you can choose something you're passionate about," Mrs Holmes à Court said. "It's awful to think of people like my father, who went off to work, totally loyal to the company he worked for, but not enjoying it at all."

"When you're thinking of a career, find something you absolutely love and do it," she said.

The address was an opportunity for Mrs Holmes à Court to reminisce about her days at the school – a very different era to that of today.

She remarked on the effect Australia's migration programs had had on the community.

"Such was the influx from countries all over the globe that we now have this wonderful mixture of people in our community, but also in our school," she said. "Much more so than we had in our time. The students from migrant families in the 1950s had very different backgrounds and came from very different economic circumstances. Once they had settled here, they came from many different areas – some from as far away as Glen Forrest, others from Fremantle. Possibly this does not seem as far away as some of you today, but in those days, it was quite a journey to get to school," she said.

Mrs Holmes à Court talked about the school customs of the day, including the absolute segregation of the sexes for the first three years of their lives at PMS. *(Photo rights shows Janet demonstrating afterwards how tunic lengths were checked in her schooldays at Mod)*



Other memories included domestic science, learning to iron clothes with a flat iron, heated on a gas range, learning only two languages – French and German – and music, though most of the music we learnt was through private piano lessons after school.

"We had something called 'scripture', for which we divided into denominations."

From PMS, most people went on to university and 53% of the girls from Mrs Holmes à Court's year became school teachers. "That is an incredible change from today," she said. "Supposedly, we were the cream of the crop and 53% of us became school teachers."

"Nowadays, if you took the top 100 students graduating from high school, I doubt that you'd find 53% choosing education as a career. That is really quite a shame, because teaching is an incredibly rewarding occupation and profession."

Mrs Holmes à Court said she learnt there were smarter people than her and she had to work extremely hard to keep up. It was a good lesson in life. She said she also learnt humility, how to be independent, to strive for excellence, the value of moving out of my comfort zone and the value of friends.

She said there a few things she didn't learn, including the joy of mixing with people from different cultures, the joy of being part of an orchestra or the joy of participating in a play.

After taking questions from the audience, a vote of thanks was moved, and Janet joined students and guests for morning tea in the Refectory – see photos below.



Janet with Perth Modernian Society President Peter Farr, Vice President Annemie McAuliffe and Sphinx Society student members



Morning tea – Mrs Jillian Thompson (nee Farr) (1952-1956) with Sphinx Society student members