



## **SENATOR DEBORAH O'NEILL ENCOURAGES MERCY GIRLS TO BE BOLD FOR CHANGE!**

On Wednesday March 8, Senator Deborah O'Neill, Shadow Assistant Minister for Innovation and the Shadow Assistant Minister for Mental Health spoke at a special lunchtime International Women's Day event at Our Lady of Mercy College Parramatta.



Mercy Girls, Sisters of Mercy and OLMC parents all joined with staff and students to hear Senator O'Neill speak about the need to 'be bold for change.' Senator O'Neil delivered her inspirational talk in the College's Edith Angel Hall where she encouraged Mercy Girls to be bold, back themselves and step forward; "If you don't, a bloke will and chances are he is no more qualified than you!"

It is still very important, according to Deborah O'Neil, that we celebrate and mark International Women's Day in 2017: "We still don't have gender equity. There are still many fields where women are underrepresented and it's simply a waste of talent and capacity - we can do better!"

OLMC Parramatta Head Girl, DunyaVasic, said that, at a school like OLMC, it feels like International Women's Day every day! "The way in which we are educated and exposed to a world of opportunities gives us hope, confidence and belief in our abilities - to the point that we can truly say that we feel the possibilities for us are endless.

This is a testimony to the College's 128 years of devotion to girls' education. Senator O'Neil agrees that Catholic girls' schools like OLMC Parramatta have been empowering women for hundreds of years: "So many schools led by religious orders have inspired many generations to fulfil their talents and share them with the world."

Principal Stephen Walsh says he is passionate about encouraging the community to embrace the theme for International Women's Day 2017: "It's so important that women are part of decision making especially as they have such an understanding of community needs. Some of the statistics are particularly telling: Globally, only 47% of women have an account at a formal financial institution. Less than 20% of landholders around the world are women. Women make up just 23% of national parliaments worldwide. These need to change and we need to be bold in order to effect that change."

International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8 is an important opportunity to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women because visibility and awareness help drive positive change for women.