

**Reflection on visit to Parliament of NSW and Government House.
Tom Ewels, 2023 SGCS School Captain**

On Thursday of week 6, Anabelle and I were fortunate enough to pay a visit to the Parliament of New South Wales and Government House, as part of the NSW Government's School Leadership Program. Given the many other deadlines and events that come with being in Year 12, I entered the day with little understanding of what would occur. In the end, however, the day proved to be one of the most memorable experiences of my school year.

The day began with a train ride to Martin Place, where we proceeded to the NSW parliament building. Anabelle and I were early, and thus had the time to walk around the foyer of the legislative assembly, admiring all the marvellous artworks and intricate architecture that adorned the years-old halls. After other school leaders from across the state arrived, we were ushered into a media room in which we were able to partake in a Q&A panel with a dozen members of the lower house – including the Premier himself! It was an extraordinary experience to hear leadership advice from the leaders of the state, and humorous when, in true political fashion, each politician (without fail) went over their designated time limit!

The group of school leaders was then led to viewing rooms, where we watched question time in the upper and lower house. It was intriguing to note the similarities and differences between the two houses. A point of particular interest was that, upon seeing the schools enter the room, both houses started on similar questions regarding student welfare and casualisation of the teaching workforce.

When the rest of the group left for the media room to learn more about how Parliament works, Anabelle and I were called away for a photo opportunity with The Honourable Chris Minns, the currently serving NSW Premier and representative of the Hurstville electorate. The meeting was short but memorable, and even now I reflect on how tremendous of a privilege it was to meet by all accounts the leader of NSW.

After lunch, the group proceeded to Government House, the residence of Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, the Governor of NSW. After a tour of the building's early 19th century architecture with intricately ornate halls and function spaces, we were privileged enough to meet the Governor herself, and partake in conversation with her regarding all matters from leadership, to meeting the Queen, to the decline of critical thinking in society – we even discussed the use of AI such as ChatGPT. The Governor presented herself as an incredibly strong individual and possessed a unique ability to listen to each student's input while offering a deliberately constructed and thoughtful response in return. The captivation she extended over her audience, with the many stories, she had to tell made me reluctant to depart at the end of the day.

Our time at the NSW Parliament building and Government House presented many memories that will stay with me for many years to come. However, I can say with certainty that the most impactful part of the day was in fact being able to socialise with leaders from other schools, learning about how life in Year 12 is going for them, and ultimately forming friendships that will extend well past the School Leadership Program. On the way home, we were both exhausted from the action-filled day we had undertaken, but also ecstatic at having met so many incredible people.