

Emma: Good morning Sr. Mary, Mr. Di Camillo, Ms. Neil, staff, students and family members,

Welcome to the Biderap Dry Season, a time when Bowat (tussock grass) grows tall and dry, and Female Common Brown butterflies dance between flowers.

To our new staff and students—I'm Emma, and I'm Eloise. We're honored to be your Justice Captains for 2025. Social justice is at the heart of who we are, and we can't wait to share this passion with you through the initiatives and ideas ahead.

Eloise: We want to begin by redefining what social justice truly means. It's often reduced to a simple desire to prevent suffering—but while that's a significant part of it, we believe it's so much more. Social justice is about community. It's about finding like-minded people who share your values and, together, using your collective strength to create meaningful change in the world. As we have been fortunate enough to learn over the past few years, mercy is a habit of the heart, and it is one that we feel deeply aligned with. One thing we know about habits is that once they are made, they are hard to lose, and this has certainly been true of our own experiences.

Emma: Naturally, we couldn't give this speech without sharing a few of the projects we have been planning for the year ahead. As the Academy has successfully been doing for many years, Term 1 entails Project Compassion, where every Mentor Group will fundraise in support of Caritas Australia. Beyond that, we are hopeful to repeat Anti-Slavery Day, which took place for the first time in 2024, stand in solidarity with women across the world with our March for Women, celebrate International Women's Day on the 8th of March, and of course acknowledge NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week. There will be many more exciting events taking place throughout the year, so stay tuned and be sure to read the Compass notices that will be published as they occur. We ask you all to remember that these causes are not only relevant during the day or week that they are widely recognised, but are happening to disadvantaged communities every single day.

Eloise: We are living through an era of immense political upheaval, where challenges like poverty, discrimination, and violence continue to weigh heavily on society. This can be incredibly daunting to approach but yet this doesn't change the fact that these issues desperately need the strength, numbers and resources of privileged individuals like us who attend such a supportive school, we are so fortunate to have a voice that is only amplified by our school community when so many live each day without being heard at all. So this year we ask you to step out of your comfort zone, stay informed on the injustices of our world that are happening right before our eyes, and take the first step towards becoming a pilgrim of hope.

Emma: In saying this remember to guide each other with sensitivity and bravery. The students and staff sitting around you are all seeing the injustices faced worldwide, and it is not a bad thing for many of us to feel scared or anxious by the uncertainty of world politics. But this anxiety does not have to be something that limits you. Reconstruct it—it is a sign that you care, so take advantage of that anxiety and respond to it. *You can do so much, You can pave the way for others less fortunate than you.*

Eloise: To conclude, In 2025, Justice Group meetings will be held every Thursday in WLS21, and as always, new members are welcome to join us and contribute all of your meaningful ideas. Year 7s, we hope to see many of you in our weekly meetings—there is so much value in your words and your minds, and we would love for you to be a part of something that has been so rewarding for all past and current Justice Group members.

As we step into this year, know that change doesn't happen overnight, and it does not happen alone. It happens when people like us decide that injustice is not something we are willing to accept. It happens when we choose to speak, to stand, and to act—and remember that discomfort is necessary, and a gift, so embrace it!

Thank you!