

## Speech by Avril Zhao – 2026 GATE & Scholarship Winner

Good evening, everybody. My name is Avril Zhao, and I am currently a Year 7 student at St. Hilda's Anglican School for Girls, though I would not be if it were not for Northshore. But before I begin my long ramble-bear with me- I would like to take a moment to congratulate all of you here tonight. I am sure all of you have worked long and hard to end up here, and you have all done immensely well.

When I was a mere child, I did ballet here on the Rossmoyne campus when I saw a poster advertising the GATE retest opportunity for, I assume, Year 9's. So, little me looked at my mother and blurted, 'What's GATE?' She shrugged and replied, 'A test for big kids to get into good schools.' And I said, with the solemnity of a four-year-old's little heart, 'I want to do GATE.' So, I did.

My parents enrolled me in Northshore in Year 2, and, it must be said; I despised it. I mean, what eight-year-old wants to sit in a classroom for three hours straight on *Sunday* of all days? But the sweet nectar of success, of that first Good Student Award with my name on it, changed me. I began working harder, finishing faster, procrastinating- hey, where did that come from? The point is here, Northshore pushed me, and slowly, surely, I learned to enjoy it.

At first, the hard work and effort the Northshore team put into their materials was not apparent to me. But GATE preparation season hit, and it really began to shine. I realised just how useful the content was, how focused it was on the areas that really mattered. It did not beat around the bush; it did not coddle you. It honed in the skills you possessed and taught you just what you needed. Everything- the trophies, the certificates, the grades you saw climbing on every report- honed that undying *thirst* for knowledge.

I studied hard, just as everyone, and achieved not only acceptance to Perth Modern School but one of, if not the top score in the St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls General Excellence Scholarship, earning a 50% discount from school fees.

I would like to thank my family for supporting me through this era in my life. I would also like to thank the Northshore staff for not only putting up with me- yes, I must admit that I was one of their major headache creators- but also for leading not only hundreds, if not thousands of others before, after and including me through this treacherous path that is education. They were a major stepping stone through the path of us young people to seizing our futures and making change.

And, though I am sure we are all tired of hearing my voice now (I am too), I would like to share a quote from Mahatma Gandhi with all of you. One that I believe relates very well to the journey Northshore dedicates themselves to leading us through- "Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

Thank you for your time. -Avril