

## Speaking skills honed through SNZ prove useful in court

Harriet Willis uses the skills developed through Speech and Drama on a daily basis.

*Harriet Willis is a Court lawyer in Lower Hutt, Wellington. She deals mostly with criminal defence and family law, working with custody disputes, Oranga Tamariki, protection orders and relationship property.*

*She completed her Advanced ASB Diploma in Teaching, Speech Communication and Rhetoric.*

*Emma Carpenter reached out to her to ask her about her experience with Speech NZ, how she came to get started, and what impact it has had on her life.*

"I started Speech and Drama at high school. My friends had been doing it since primary school so I caught up quickly so that I could be in their class. We all finished our teaching diplomas in our first year of university.

Since I finished my teaching diploma, I completed my law degree, become a qualified lawyer and have been practising and appearing in court for over two years."



**"I use the speaking and performance skills that Speech and Drama helped to develop every day in Court, in meetings, and around the office."**

- Harriet Willis

### **What was it that encouraged you to undertake the Teaching diploma?**

"I wanted to take Speech and Drama as far as I could - I started the diploma in my last year of high school so it made sense to keep going with it. I also thought it would be useful to have a qualification that I could use in the future."

### **How do you feel that your experience and qualifications through SNZ helped you to stand out from your peers?**

"Having a qualification always helps you to stand out, as it's an easy way of showing your skills in that area."

### **What are some of the ways the programme has benefited you? What doors has it opened/what confidence has it given you, etc?**

"I use the speaking and performance skills that Speech and Drama helped to develop every day in Court, in meetings and around the office. In particular, it helped with pacing and being aware of how I am speaking. I feel that Speech and Drama helped give me confidence to slow down and not be afraid of my own voice and ideas. The impromptu speaking and drama also helped me practice thinking on my feet and giving it a go. Regularly practising speaking in front of a smaller group was a good stepping stone, compared with doing a speech in front of the whole class once a year in English.

### **What are the most important aspects of the course, in your opinion?**

"It was a great way to be exposed to a range of literature and become familiar with it. High school in particular can be busy, and it is difficult to read in your own time, let alone experience poetry and plays performed live. If I hadn't done Speech and Drama my knowledge of authors, both New Zealand and overseas, would be much more limited."

### **How do you think Speech NZ programmes and other "extra-curricular" activities fit in with education today?**

"Speech and Drama helped a lot with my other subjects, especially English and Drama. Speech lessons can also be a good alternative to taking those subjects if you want to learn the skills or are interested in them but can't fit them into your schedule otherwise. At the time, I sometimes got "FOMO" (fear of missing out) from taking time out of my normal classes, but in hindsight, the extracurricular activities are the classes I remembered the best."

### **Do you have any tips or advice for candidates considering doing their ASB or Advanced ASB?**

"Be prepared! The more you can read ahead of time the better. This will help you to be confident in what you're talking about - I am a chronic procrastinator so I know this is easier said than done."

---

*We are so thrilled with this success story – congratulations on your achievements Harriet!*

*If you have a success story you would like to share with us, or know of someone who does, please get in touch with the National office at 04 498 9660 or [info@speechnz.co.nz](mailto:info@speechnz.co.nz)*