



## **2016 Presentation Night address by Jim Laussen.**

Chair of the College Board, Mr Mark Ruff and Mrs Michelle Ruff, members of the College Board, distinguished guests, parents, friends and most particularly my staff and students it is a pleasure to be with you all in this amazing space that is the Melbourne Town Hall.

It was pointed out to me earlier today that the colour scheme here tonight was appropriate this week. Of course, my response was that they are our colours, what are you talking about? You will guess that the person who spoke to me was a doggies supporter and so yes, I think that we are happy for that team to have won this week and to share our colours with them.

Although smaller in number than we are used to on Presentation Night, we trust that you are enjoying an evening that has a greater focus on the more senior of the students of Overnewton College.

I am sure that you would join me in congratulating our College Captains for the extraordinary job they are doing in hosting this night. I know that they have bright futures ahead of them and we are grateful to them not only for their leadership this evening but also for the manner in which they have led the College as College Captains over the past 12 months. Thank you.

Earlier this year, I had the privilege of studying at Harvard University for a week with a group of eleven Independent School Principals from Melbourne. Harvard has again been ranked the world's number one university...no mean feat when you think that there are some 26,000 universities around the world assessed for such rankings. University of Melbourne and Monash University are ranked in the Top 100....so they are also ranking well.

During that week, Dr Richard Weissbourd the Director of the Human Development and Psychology Faculty and senior lecturer in education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education addressed us.

He shared with us some recent research of Harvard students and their parents. The research showed that parents were proud of their children if they achieved good grades that set them up for a good future. Students were also concerned about their achievement, as well as their happiness.

What surprised and saddened him was what was missing in this research. And that was parents being pleased if their children were growing up to become concerned about the needs of others or the common good or just becoming good people.

Dr Weissbourd expressed his concern that the concept of being caring for caring's sake; caring for others and caring for the environment were being lost.

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**Principal, Mr James Laussen, M. Ed. Admin., B. Ed. Env. Sci., M.A.C.E**



Making Caring Common is a new approach to university entrance where community mindedness, commitment to family, ethical engagement and capacity, and genuine prolonged community service were placed as being extremely important attributes for acceptance into university. By placing such attributes at the core of college selection criteria, Harvard, and all of the Ivy League schools that have signed on to this model are forcing a change.

We should be caring for caring's sake not because of what we are going to get out of it.

I am sure that none of our students take a Sunday School class, or work at the Sunshine Harvester School, or coach a sporting team, or work in a soup kitchen, or go to Chibobo only because they will get the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award or a Senior School community service certificate. However, I do want to question how we acknowledge community service to ensure that it is being undertaken for noble reasons rather than because of an award or a line on a university application.

The work we have been doing on the new strategic plan this year has highlighted the core values that we hold dear as a College. By far the greatest of these is our commitment to the idea of a community. In fact the consultant we used to guide the strategic planning process was incredibly impressed by how strong community is at Overnewton.

“We rise by lifting others”...how can it not be an inspiring, humbling and motivating thing to belong to a community such as ours that is so unique in its commitment to the education of the children of this College as well as each other.

Mariam Jalloul, at the Harvard commencement ceremony in May was one of the invited graduating speakers. She spoke about the Widener Library – a library you will have seen in such films as *The Social Network* and *Legally Blonde*, and I believe that *Indiana Jones* rode his motorbike through the rows of shelves as he was chased by some evil person or other.

Harry Widener, after which the library is named embarked on a book collecting expedition in 1912 because of his love of books but he never returned to Boston as he perished on the Titanic. His mother later gave \$2 million to Harvard to build a library in his name. The one stipulation was that the library could never be altered externally neither outwards nor upward.

As the book collection has grown over the last 100 years, the only solution was to build floors under the library. In fact there are now five floors under the library that extend under part of the surrounding yard as well.

Ms Jalloul said in her speech: “The glory of the Widener Library is not in its towering pillars but in its depth”. She went on to say that the world will often reduce us to the sum of our external achievements but, just like the Widener Library, they are what the world sees but not what the world needs. The world needs people who speak tender thoughts, who leave the world better off than when they entered it and who are people of depth of character.



“We rise by lifting others”....our theme’s emphasis is on the importance of lifting others, not what we will get out of it.....i.e. caring for caring’s sake so that we become better people for it and become a far stronger community.

We have two staff leaving us this year; staff who leave us a better place. Pauline Rogan joined us in 2003 and has been a significant part of the growth in LOTE and our partnership with our sister school in Bremen. Her commitment and passion to support the pastoral needs of our students has been invaluable. Rev Kim joined us in 2010. Joining us as the College Senior Chaplain and a member of the College Leadership Team, her unwavering commitment to building a community that is welcoming and supportive of people of all faiths and none, as well as providing endless opportunities for students, staff and parents to engage in dialogue about their own spiritual journey, have been superlative. Rev Kim’s wisdom and compassion and intelligence have provided a model for chaplaincy that has added to our strength as a community. Both of these staff will leave the school a better place than it was when they arrived and I would ask you to join with me in thanking them and wishing them well for their next adventures.

Year 12s, as you move on from us, and to the rest of the student body, as you grow with us, my encouragement to all of you is that you continue to build on the strong foundations that you have been given, primarily through your parents and families but also through the partnerships that your families and you share with your school.

May the strength of our community and the importance of faith and family be things that you take with you so that you too leave the world a better place than when you entered it and so that by lifting others you too rise as compassionate, tender and proud members of the communities to which you belong and join.

Yes, achieving to your best is crucial, that goes without saying. But I love hearing the many many accolades that come to me about the caring, giving and kind ways of Overnewton students both past and present.

May this continue to be what inspires and motivates us as a community so that caring continues to be common here too.