



Principal's Address at 2019 Presentation Night

Esteemed guests, staff, families and, most importantly, students, Good Evening. It is a joy to be here this evening, if a little earlier than we usually hold this night, and to share with you once again.

Before I deliver my message for this year, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful preparation that has gone into this evening; overseen by Mr Alessandrini who leads a large group of staff, as well as the incredible number of musicians, performers and speakers who will continue to take to the stage during the night. Tonight comes as the culmination of an enormous time of incredible performances with the Arts Music Festival and I know that most of our performers have been working hard for quite some time now. Whilst it was not our preference to add this night to your calendar, I am extremely grateful to all of you.

Always, it is a challenge to come up with a clever and, hopefully, interesting way in which to deliver my annual message. Although I must say that this is a challenge that I enjoy.

The first inkling of an idea came to me at the annual Anglican Schools Conference earlier in the year where a key note speaker used a food analogy to talk about the unique characteristics of Anglican Schools; it is that analogy that I will use myself this evening.

Over recent years, I have shared many stories about the magpie family that inhabits our home at the beach. As you all know we love this family of magpies and the various idiosyncrasies that they share with us.

One of the stories that I have not shared with you, however, is about one of the vices that I enjoy at the beach. Ordinarily, I am not a person who eats fast food or junk food as I prefer nothing more than a good old healthy Aussie BBQ when I am relaxing.

But I must confess that one of my favourite indulgences is to go to Jetty Road Pizza in Rosebud and buy a family sized super seafood delight pizza with extra scallops, prawns and mussels. My metabolism allows this indulgence only once every couple of months.....but there is nothing better.....and if there are left over slices for breakfast the following morning that is an additional treat.

I am the only one in my family who loves the super seafood delight pizza. Lucy prefers margarita where you can see the tomato and mozzarella, occasionally with prosciutto; Sarah prefers prosciutto and rocket; and Bev prefers pineapple and salami not ham. Clearly, we all like different things and, not surprisingly, we often get our pizzas half and half so that we can share the base.

I listened to the speaker at the conference I mentioned earlier compare Anglican schools to pizza and thought that it was a perfect analogy for Overnewton too.

When I think of the six schools across our two campuses, it is easy to think that each school is but one slice of a six slice pizza add our two out of school hours programs and there is the perfect eight slice version.

Given the size and age of Overnewton, we have some incredibly diverse offerings available from which our students can choose their academic pathways as well as their learning beyond the classroom through broad co-curricular offerings. Each of these offerings is as diverse as the variety of toppings that we can order on a pizza.

Some of those toppings and therefore activities offered are pretty standard things. Maths, English Science, Music, both varieties of football, netball, public speaking, debating, musicals, all quite standard fare when it comes down to it.

And if you want to add some variety to those toppings, we can include futsal, European handball, CLIL mandarin, THRASS, philosophy, Chibobo, Galiwinku, St Lukes food bank, big bands, stringlings, Improvoganza, and still the incredible list of additional things goes on.

But these are the things that are add ons to our pizza. The things that we can pick and choose. The pieces we can take out.

But all pizzas share three common elements: a dough base, tomato sauce or paste and cheese. These three are found in all pizzas. And this is where the speaker at my conference drew the final analogy to Anglican Schools.

When I think of the common base that we have at Overnewton, it is our four values: community, respect, excellence and learning all based on our Christian foundation. These values must be at the core of everything that we do, every aspect of our College life.

Being Anglican and making a unique commitment to our community is like the sauce that is spread across the base of our pizza. These also are essential elements of the Overnewton way.

And as we continue to hear from each of our five student MC's this evening, we are reminded that our theme of choosing kindness is not a piece of the pizza that we eat and then it is finished. Choosing kindness is like the cheese that should infuse every activity and every action that we make. I am pleased to have students and staff talk about how much they have liked this year's theme and how important it has been to them.

Let me make one last comment about pizzas. And, given we are in Australia, I need to be slightly controversial.

I wonder how many of you are aware of the many hundreds of memes that you can find on social media devoted entirely to the debate about whether there should be pineapple on pizza? There is almost a northern hemisphere/southern hemisphere divide around the contention. It would be fair to say that the majority of the stridently anti pineapple memes come out of the United States.

One of the safest comments I can read that gives you an idea of the energy around this topic goes: "there are two types of people, people who like pineapple on their pizza and normal people". I think you get the idea.

Now I must confess that I like pineapple on my pizza from time to time and I am happy to court controversy if that is what that means.

When I think about the controversial toppings on the Overnewton Pizza – I am reminded of the incredibly brave decisions that are made to ensure that we continue to be the inclusive community central to our

mission statement. We make these brave decisions because we know that fundamentally they are right and make the College a safe and productive place of learning for our students.

Brave decisions like the changes to our campuses instead of just continuing in the same old direction; our overt embracing of diversity; being bold in making decisions when it is the right thing to do; being socially inclusive; not being bound by the need to follow society's decrees about gender and gender diversity; being a community that embraces people of all faiths and no faiths and therefore standing up for the times religious freedom is used to hide discrimination; being prepared to make decisions where we choose the best person for a job or an award regardless of whether others think such positions should be shared equally amongst girls and boys, men and women.

I am proud to say that we are a community that is prepared to make these brave decisions and that we are all therefore members of a strong community of learners that will embrace the future rather than let things continue without question.

We are in a unique position because of the diversity of our community to walk in another's shoes, to have respectful and informed dialogues with people whose perspectives and world views are different to ours and to disagree well. I never stop believing that Overnewton students can make a difference in the world because I see them striving to do so every day.

My thanks go to all of the people assembled here tonight, board members, parents, wider family members, old collegians, our bankers and other supporters, my wonderful staff and, especially, our students, all of you play your part in this diverse community.

In concluding tonight, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge some significant people who are leaving our community this year.

After 31 years, Mrs Jenni McCullagh is retiring from her role as resource officer on the Keilor Campus. As a holder of so much knowledge and kindness to so many of our families, Jennie's impact has been profound and wide reaching. There would be few Keilor families who have not known Jenni, and experienced her creativity and love and devotion to many generations of Overnewton children.

Jan McNamara retires also after 30 years. Jan has filled many roles in her time at Overnewton, including as an exceptional PE and Health and Human Development teacher, Deputy Head of Senior School, acting Head of Senior School at one stage and, in most recent times, as a counsellor. Jan's inclusive and passionate approach to our students and leadership of many important pastoral initiatives have impacted many, many lives.

Our third retiree is Delma Wotherspoon who leaves us after 23 years. Delma has worked extensively in Learning Development and Support as both leader and member of the team of learning support staff. Her knowledge in this area and therefore support of so many students and families in what can be difficult conversations has been phenomenal.

After twenty years looking after our nourishment and physical well-being, Anne Quinn retires as our catering coordinator. As a founding parent of Overnewton, Annie's passion and commitment to ensuring that we have nothing but the best at every function across the College have been exemplary. She has led a very loyal team of parent helpers around her and for this we are most grateful.

Di Rufus is leaving us after a combination of ten years to take up a position at Ivanhoe Grammar and, after 8 years with us, Paul Toney will move to Loyola College. Both have been loyal members of our senior school in particular.

But I have two more staff to acknowledge and intentionally, I have left them to the end. After 20 years as Head of the Taylors Lakes Campus, Mr Gabe Alessandrini will leave the College at the end of the year. Gabe has seen his campus move from a dust bowl to a beautiful campus of lawns, an oval and soccer field, portable buildings to permanent purpose designed buildings of learning and recreation. But most significantly, he has built a beautiful team of staff around him who led by his gentle and compassionate nature have striven to serve nothing but the best learning of several generations of Taylors Lakes students. Gabe's three sons attended Overnewton and his wife, Maria, taught with us. They are a true Overnewton family.

And finally, our sole remaining founding member of staff, Mr Gary Fielding leaves us. Having worked at Overnewton from the time the College first opened with 314 students in 1987 on the Keilor Campus, Gary has taught Physics, Religious Studies, Mathematics and, most notably, Information Technology where he consistently helped his students achieve study scores above 45, with several 50s in there too. As Head of Staff for many years, Gary was responsible for the College calendar as well as replacing absent staff. Although students today do not see him in a classroom, they do each have a timetable that Gary is responsible for creating and ensuring that it is balanced, consistent and supports the best learning of every student. Like Gabe, Gary's three children all attended Overnewton and there will be students here tonight who were taught by his wife Wilma either in the Library or as a Home Room teacher in the Taylors Lakes Junior School. It was a delight to be able to honour Gary when he attended our Founders Day services as the guest speaker in June this year. Gary is a wonderful Christian man with a generous, gentle, kind, respectful, extremely humorous nature and he only sees the best in people. He is a person who embodies the Overnewton way and his influence in our community has been profound.

We farewell a combined 177 years of service to the College and ask you all to join me in thanking these staff.

In addition to the staff farewelled, this year, we farewell 84 families who leave us with the graduation of their last child from the College. I would like to thank all of you in particular for the legacy that you have established as members of this community.

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 become people who choose kindness as your first course of action.

May the strength of our community and the importance of faith and family be things that you take with you so that you leave the world a better place than when you entered it and you continue to serve as empowered, thoughtful, community-minded citizens.

And whenever you eat or see a pizza, remember the common aspects that you share as members of this community and continue to make those brave pineapple decisions.

Thank you.

Earlier this term, we were all wowed by the performances of the annual College musical. We are now to enjoy one of the items from the musical so please welcome to the stage the cast of Legally Blonde The Musical.