



Principal's Address at 2020 Presentation Night

Good evening everyone. Although dearly I would love to be with all of you in person, I am grateful that you have allowed us into your homes tonight and, as a special opportunity for our Year 12 students and their families, the Coburg Drive In... I don't think that any of us could ever have anticipated that such a location would have been used for this event. But that has been the tenor of 2020 in many respects – we have had to be agile in all of our planning.

I am sure that we have all read many memes and posts on social media about this year. One of my favourites was the one that asked, 'Are you a glass half full or glass half empty person?' The person who posted the meme concluded the post by saying that they were just grateful to have a glass – a response that still seems glass half full to me.

As your Principal, I believe that you want me to be a person who sees the best in every situation and, most importantly, the best in every member of our community.

Therefore, I will not be spending time bemoaning the year we have had and dwelling on the things that were not able to occur. Whilst it is possible to feel sorry for our graduating Year 12 students, I am equally devastated that our Year 9 students did not get to experience Canowindra with all of the uniqueness that comes in that year, or our Preps who missed so much face to face time in a year where the foundations of literacy and numeracy are so important or in fact any of the year levels that spent far too much time Learning from Home and not enjoying each other's company and that of their teachers.

I would much rather focus on the future and a future that is still ours to shape.

It would be easy to put our thinking about the future on hold based on the year we have had. But I believe that this is the very time when we need to really grab hold of our actions, thinking and planning, to continue shaping the future we want.

At Overnewton, clearly, we have a new future that we are shaping with the changes to our campuses that will occur in January 2021. The success of those changes is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that Overnewton continues to thrive well into the future.

But it is not just for the immediate future we should be planning. Reflecting on those things that we have missed this year and the people that been pivotal in planning the world wide response we can seek some direction.

I encourage those of you who are thinking about working in sciences and mathematics to pursue those so that you might be part of future solutions to world health events. For those of you with a love of history, you know already that the best way to prepare for the future is to learn from the past – so keep learning from past events both current and in the long past so that you are well armed to help shape our futures through your involvement in politics, policy writing, or just influencing societal thinking; and we need the story writers and artists who will continue to inspire us through their use of beautiful language, imagery and story-telling. Given the global

events of the year, we need also to continue with a study of a second or third language so that we might be able to most effectively communicate with people from around the world as we shape our futures.

But it is not just in our core areas that we need people.

We have desperately missed access to the performing arts and sport this year, either as participants or spectators. What will we learn from this year that we will use to shape a future where we can still enjoy those pursuits?

It would be easy to sit back and wait for others to help us get through the next couple of years. However, if we are to shape the best future for ourselves, our community and our country, each of us has to believe that the future is ours to shape and act upon it.

In helping to shape every students' future this year, I believe that teachers have never been asked to work harder nor more creatively than they have before. Their adaptability and genuine desire to provide what was best for every student they taught, whilst teaching in styles and through platforms that none of us were trained to do, have been phenomenal. Supported by an amazing group of Education Support Staff who have also had to be incredibly flexible and step outside their comfort zones, I could not be more proud nor more grateful to the wonderfully committed staff of this school.

But I know that this has been a year where parents have been asked to engage in their children's learning in ways for which they are not trained nor been asked to do before. I applaud all of you for what you have done this year too. I trust that in the uncertainty you experienced there were moments of sheer joy with your children as well – a joy that we, as educators, experience as a normal part of our jobs on a daily basis.

I am grateful to our College Board for their unwavering support of the actions required of us this year whilst continuing to plan for the future direction and sustainability of the College. Their work this year has been pivotal in ensuring a strong future for Overnewton.

In closing this evening, I would like to share with you the comments I made at the Class of 2020's final assembly where I encouraged them with words that many of you will have heard from me before, and words that are relevant for all of us.

It is not the stuff that happens to you that determines the person you are and will become, it is the way that you respond to what happens to you.

Therefore, in this COVID year, I encourage you not to let your disappointments about what you believe you have missed this year turn into anger or resentment.

I would encourage you to reflect positively on what you have been able to do, the connections that you have still been able to make, and to be grateful for things that you have still achieved

It is through this approach that the future you shape will be extraordinary and it will be a joy to hear about what you all Overnewton students achieve as they strive to shape their future.

May God continue to bless all of you.