

2017 HSC HIGH ACHIEVERS ASSEMBLY

STEWART ROSS – COLLEGE DUX 2016

Good afternoon/morning College Principal Mr Couani, members of the official party, staff, parents and boys. It is my pleasure to address the school body here today and a great privilege to accept the honour of being named the College Dux for 2016. I firmly believe that it is only through the support of those around me that I was able to reach my full potential. Balance and communication were two key aspects of my life that really allowed me to succeed last year. It was a balance of study, music, a social life (much to the surprise of many) and down time along with effective communication with peers and teachers that allowed me to get the most out of my final year.

I would now like to thank the teachers that were particularly instrumental in shaping my final year at high school. Yes, for you Ms Bates that pun was intended. Thank you for a lively Music 2 course. I think I say this on behalf on the musicians of the class of 2016, thank you for making our final year so entertaining! The very dedicated Performing Arts Department has definitely ensured that I will have a lifelong skill, hobby and love of playing the violin and music in general. The many early morning music ensembles were definitely the anacrusis or upbeat to my school day.

Thank you Mr de Silva for teaching me what soon became my favourite subject as the year progressed. Thank you most of all for nurturing my love of physics and encouraging me to go beyond the classroom and learn that little bit more. I don't think I'll ever forget to maintain a 3m exclusion zone from the X-Ray tubes. It is this love of Physics that has led me to pursue further study in this area through an Engineering course at University. Thank you also Ms Mowle, even though she isn't here, to whom I dedicate my inspiration of pursuing physics and science in general.

Thank you Mr Ticli for the endless 'dank' memes that you sent our way, which certainly took the pressure off what was not a basic Chemistry syllabus. No it wasn't my favourite subject, but I probably had the most fun in the classroom learning from the 'master' of chemistry himself. I must also thank my preliminary Chemistry teacher Ms Kugananthan, who taught me the basics of Chemistry and also introduced us to every school kid's favourite game, Kahoot.

Thank you Mr Charlton for being an intellectually stimulating Maths teacher but always one we could have a laugh with. You encouraged me to strive for the best marks in such a demanding course and it was immensely rewarding, even if I do get a weird look from people saying that I thoroughly enjoyed the Mathematics Extension 2 course.

Thank you Mr Webster for passing on your love of English literature which pushed me outside my comfort zone. I am immensely thankful for this, even if I never really did like writing essays and can't say I'll be reading poetry again any time in the near future. I am ever grateful that in teaching us you were, as Shakespeare puts it in his play Julius Caesar, "as constant as the Northern Star".

Now have I forgotten anyone, I don't think so. Oh yes, how could we all forget the lovable Mr Batchelor. Yes, sir, that is how you make a good joke. Emphasis on the good. It was no coincidence that last year was my favourite year at this College under the tutelage of the Emperor himself. I thank you on behalf of the class of 2016 for making our final year such a memorable one. Thank you also for an enjoyable SOR class and providing constant guidance to me and the rest of my classmates.

I give my thanks to the College leadership team, especially Mr Couani for providing me with the opportunities to strive to do better, to achieve more and to above all, enjoy my time here at St Pius. Thank you Mr Russo for running the Mentor Mentee program and being an inspiration to us all. Thank you to all my previous form masters, Mr Yue, Mr Stollery, Mr Hopley, Mr Pawlak and Mr Batchelor and to all my past teachers.

I know my parents are here in the audience today and I want to thank you both personally for the total support that you gave me which allowed me to pursue my schooling life to the full. Thank you for the endless pieces of study advice, the many early morning car trips to music rehearsals and much to the envy of other peers, truly wonderful baked goods. Thank you Mum and Dad for always telling me that all I needed to do in life was a personal best. This is the best one so far. As many of you know, I was fortunate enough to complete my 13 years of schooling with my brother, who also happens to be my best mate, well most of the time. Thank you Matt for being a person of unique opportunity, in that we pushed each other along, which brought out the best in us. Whether it was dinner table arguments about European history that I would inevitably lose or just random questions that I was unsure about, I am truly thankful for having such a close friend and mate, even though we didn't always show it.

To the close friends I have in my year group and indeed the many in years below, thank you for making me feel welcome in any classroom, in the school yard or just having a chat with.

Let me ask you a question. What do the following things have in common? Thanking friends, political speeches, telephones, handshakes, a simple conversation or a smile in the corridor. Their commonality underpins the fabric of modern society. Big call right? Communication is often overlooked as just something you do and not much thought is given to it. So why is communication so essential? In what many are labelling now as the information age, communication, regardless of its form, at the most basic level is the transmission of information. There are many different ways of doing so. It is actually crucial in life to communicate to those around you effectively. Effective communication is a real life skill, not just in year 12.

Boys, sorry to break it to you, but we need to work a little harder. Even though we think a grunt or nod may suffice, it doesn't really cut the mustard. Effective communication is vital to mental health and fostering relationships with those around you. I don't want you to miss hear me however, as I am told on countless occasions that I always need to improve when it comes to communicating, but the reason I chose to talk about this today is that it needs to be heard. Whether it is having a chat on the phone to your best mate, writing an email to your Grandma, asking a friend how they are feeling, convincing Mr Ticli you really do know what Le Chatlier's Principle is or just asking question, it all comes down to communicating effectively in a timely manner.

As humans we want to belong. Apologies to all who tire of hearing this but it really means a lot. Who we talk to and how we talk to them can mean the world of difference to each and every one of us. The world I am seeing evolve around me has both exciting and worrisome implications for the future. What will mean a world of difference to all of those around us is if we communicate and foster close and meaningful relationships. We all want to feel the comfort of a friend to talk to. I was able to foster some meaningful relationships through my various extra-curricular activities for example, which definitely made all my years at school more enjoyable.

Every good PDHPE student will remember, a balanced life is key. This is what also made a huge difference to my time here at St Pius. Music and Drama often have a misunderstood role on the brain's development through high school and beyond. They stimulate the brain like no other activity, forcing us to make decisions and actions very quickly on the spot. It really is a mental workout for the brain, and in fact both sides of the brain are used simultaneously. The truly wonderful performing arts program created these opportunities for me here at this

College such as the Senior Percussion Ensemble who we heard from today. It is the senior ensembles that inspire the younger musicians at this college to develop a passion for music. I found that being the Performing Arts Captain allowed me to become a role model for the younger students and these opportunities have strengthened my capability as a leader. Music for me was also a break from the hours of study that I did each night. How easy was it for me to just forget about the next dot point and become lost in the floating melodies of Prokofiev. Don't miss hear me, I enjoyed studying, especially for maths and physics, but music formed part of my valuable down time that I still continue to cherish today.

It was also my faith as a Christian that spurred me on during my HSC year. One particular quote from my church minister John Dickson really stands out for me. "What you think lies at the heart of reality shapes what you think is an authentic human life." (x2) As a Christian, I believe and many of you believe that God is the ultimate centre and creator of the universe. Put simply, among many things, God is love. How better to shape a loving authentic human life of loving others than by communicating with others around us. If it is one thing I have learnt this year, loving others as mates, brothers, friends, family, students and fellow men of St Pius is one of the most rewarding things you can do in life. Communicating with those around you to achieve this sense of mateship is what I have found to be most important.

In finishing, I will share a quote from Les Brown that I believe can apply to each person in the audience today, regardless of their circumstances or stage in life: "*Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss you'll land among the stars*". May we all use the gifts God has given us to strive to be the best we can be, shoot for the moon and help those around us to do so as well.

Fide Et Labore.

Stewart Ross
College Dux 2016