

Welcome to all our Year 6 graduates, our special guests, the Federal Member for Cunningham, Ms Alison Byrne, Mr Paul Scully State Member for Wollongong, Mr David Lamb, Director of Educational Leadership, Mr Scott Frazier Principal of Keira High School, students, parents, friends and members of staff.

In my reflections as I prepared this speech, I was struck by how many different personas I present to the world and how the perceptions of the people I meet each day are coloured by the context in which they see me and how I respond to those various situations to address the needs of each person. Generally, that thought would lead into a reflection on what I provide to each of you, but I would like to invert that thought and talk about what all of you give to me.

I will give you a couple of examples.

As our school continues to grow, and the time demands on staff become more and more frenetic, the opportunities for me to engage freely and often with community members are less frequent. However, they do still occur and I treasure each one of them; Last week I had a rare outing when I was co-opted as bus driver for our Community Hub mothers on their excursion to Symbio Wildlife Park. I took my laptop and a couple of hundred reports to read, and set up office under one of the shelters where I could act as food guardian to ward off the marauding cockatoos! While I didn't get to see many other animals, I enjoyed my outdoor office. However, the highlight of my day (apart from the amazing lunch those mothers provided!) was the trip home. Not long after we left the park, a beautiful voice rang out accompanied by stamping feet and handclaps; others joined in and soon the whole bus was alive with joyful singing, laughing and clapping – all in home language. I do not know who that first singer was, I could not interpret the words, but the joy that filled that bus for the entire journey home was palpable and it was an absolute privilege to be part of that journey.

However, I gain in other ways too. As a public school, we not only accept any child into our school, we welcome them. This sometimes means that we have students who are coming here who have had some very challenging experiences in their past – they might be carrying some pretty hard stuff in that little backpack, and as a school, we recognise that those kids may need some quite special adjustments made to support them as they make their way in their new school. One of the things that I really enjoy is building relationships with the parents and carers of those students, and sharing in their joy when their child makes friends, real friends who don't judge them for what is in that backpack. One of my most treasured memories is of a Year 5 boy who came up to me in the playground and said Mr Cosier, I love this school, I have friends here and I have never had friends before. Ever.

That is what you do here. All of you. You as parents and carers, you, the school staff members, and you, the students of our school, and I would like to acknowledge what an absolute privilege it is to work with you all, in what is a remarkable school.

Today, in this remarkable school, we are celebrating the achievements of many of our students, recognising them for excelling in various academic, sporting, and other fields of endeavour. I salute you all, and congratulate you on your achievements and the contributions that you have made, in class, in the playground or in any other way to our

school. This ceremony today is our Excellence Assembly, where we recognise your excellence, where we acknowledge the important part that **you** play in making this school of ours the wonderful welcoming, supportive learning environment that it is. It is also my chance to publicly thank you and to tell you that your efforts are appreciated, and to share your achievements with your parents, your classmates and our school community. So thank you, and well done. We are immensely proud of all of you!

But this assembly also marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another for our most senior students, our outgoing Year 6.

Congratulations. Completing your Primary education is a great achievement, and I know that you are going to move on to even greater achievements in the future. I have no doubt that all of you are going to make very significant contributions to the world out there.

It is amazing to see the transformation of you all, in the 2, 3, 4 or more years that I have known you. I'm not just talking about the beautifully groomed, stylishly uniformed young people that I see here before me now! I mean the changes that I have witnessed as I have watched you grow and mature into fine young adults, ready to take on the challenges of high school. Ready to move into the future – your future!

As teachers, we are very aware of the impact we have on children's lives, of how important a factor we are in children's attitudes to learning. It is a role we take very seriously, and I know that all of the year 6 students here before me will acknowledge how important, and how effective our teachers have been. You have been very fortunate to have such wonderful, caring people around you. These are the people who are part of the memories you will always have. So, on your behalf, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of your teachers over the last seven years, not just at Wollongong Public School, but at a range of schools, not only in our state and country, but also internationally. I would like to express **my** appreciation for the hard work of all the members of staff here at Wollongong Public School who have all contributed toward your successful education.

Some of the members of staff here today have been with you every step of the way. We have been there with you as you have experienced highs and lows. We have seen you all grow up. We have a share in the young adults you are now. We have all had an input, large or small, into your education and into your lives! Remember the people who have helped you through the years and make sure you thank them before you leave. It is only a small act for you, but it means a lot to those you give it to.

You have all worked hard to get to this moment. You have learned a great deal, not only facts and knowledge, but also some of life's lessons. You have learned how to socialise with others, how to interact with members of staff, how to get on with other students, how to work with others, even though they may not be your favourite person.

Some of the things you have learned whilst at primary school cannot be put into words. You may not even know what you've learned until a moment in time, a place, a person or a situation requires you to act or react in a certain way. Only then will you remember that you were lucky enough to be part of our community at Wollongong Public School and that's how you knew the right thing to do.

At Wollongong Public School you have completed a good preparation for a bright future. You have achieved your goal, and now you are ready to begin another chapter of your lives. A chapter called high school. It may be more complicated. It is bound to have some complications and obstacles as well as exciting times.

Remember what you have learned from our school and at home. Stay true to yourselves. Set yourselves goals and aim high in whatever you choose to do! Enjoy every day, have fun, make friends and be a true friend. Look past the superficial, and find the real people hidden inside; Be the best person you can possibly be.

Finally, the most important advice I can give you – remember to look at the world each day as if you have never seen it before; it is a place of wonder, and no matter what you look like, no matter who you are, you form an important part of that wonder; you are wonderful.

I wish each and every one of you all the very best for the future.

Harold Cosier

Principal

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