**Anzac Day 2018**

**Andrew Turvey**

Distinguished guests, staff and students, I welcome you to our Anzac Day assembly.

I personally struggle with the correct or right words to speak at an assembly like this. It is a very mixed set of emotions and a conflict of feelings when we discuss war and commemorate the sacrifices made within war. We live within a free society where we can celebrate difference. We also recognise the strengths which different cultures and religions can bring to our society, due to the sacrifices previous generations have made that have delivered us the society we live in. However, having said this, war is the true reflection of winners and losers. Whereas we can celebrate the freedoms we have from winning the multitude of wars we have been involved in, we as a mature society cannot but recognise that others have lost and their ways of life have changed due to their sacrifices through war.

I was honoured to attend an educational excursion to South Korea around this time last year, and to be able to see various significant places for Allied troops around the Korean conflict in the 1950s. I commemorated their victory at Kapyong Valley and got to see the area where Australian and New Zealand troops were forced to retreat as the North Korean troops advanced into South Korea. I also heard how our troops fought back, eventually forcing the North Koreans back and saving what would have been an unstoppable advance into South Korean territory. If not for the sacrifices made at this place, Seoul would have been open for invasion by the communist troops of the North.

As young people it is incredibly important to remember that war is not pretty, and to remember that this is not the video game Fortnite where you respawn and fight another day. Death is final and the horrors of war are unimaginable. There will be people in this hall today who have first-hand contact with the futile nature of war and conflict. Men and women from all nationalities, races and religions have been affected by war through the loss of a limb, the loss of a sense, the loss of life or just as bad, the loss of their mental capacity. We have young people in their 20s who cannot function as a normal citizen in today’s society due to their experiences in war.

On occasions like this, I ask all of those who sit in front of me today to seriously consider playing an active role in stopping the prevalence of war by learning tolerance and acceptance. As you all know, as a school we take a very firm stance on conflict in our grounds, and war is nothing more than a larger scale conflict or disagreement. When we argue with our peers in the playground and bring our disagreements to a head, when we lose control of our abilities to disagree with respect and compassion, and when we lash out physically we are replicating war on a very small scale. The desire to inflict pain and suffering on someone else because we are not willing to accept their point of view has no place in a tolerant society.

Today is not about celebrating war and it is not about glorifying what is unimaginable horror. Today is about paying tribute to those often naïve young men and women and to the troops who have gone to all corners of the world since this battle, defending our rights to live in a free and open society.

We thank those who have taken part in the ugliness of conflict for the legacy that they have given our country. We thank them for their demonstration of grit and determination in the face of adversity, and the spirit that they have left behind. We also thank them for their commitment and camaraderie, and our aim and endeavour should be to enjoy the freedoms given to us, the beauty of being able to have free thought and to honour other’s free thoughts and their rights to be different to us, as we move forward in our own lives that have been blessed by their actions and sacrifice.

**Contributor details**

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Andrew led Young High School from 2011-2014 and Karabar High School and Distance Education Centre from 2015 onwards. He joined the SPC Executive in 2014 and is currently a Deputy President, representing the SPC on the School Excellence Framework, Principals Classification, RAM and EPAC.  He is also working on the Reducing Administrative Burden and School Planning Matters groups. Outside of school Andrew enjoys spending time at the beach and with his family.​