**Presentation Night 2018**

**Andrew Turvey**

***Editor’s note****: Andrew advises that each presentation night he tries to address a specific issue relevant to his school community. This year it’s about the role that various reality TV shows play in promoting disharmony, disloyalty, nastiness and intolerance between people.*

Welcome to presentation night 2018 and another year’s end to ten months of learning, challenge, failure and success. We continue to work hard assisting your child achieve success by encouraging and empowering them to achieve. We do this by building within them resilience and giving them the tools to fail and then try again until success is achieved. We continue to teach that success comes from initial failure and each failure is one step closer to success. Success also comes from within and it is not dependant on factors outside of your control, or silly reasons like whether or not you are going to have the same teacher as last year or the year before. We also believe that all students are capable of success and we will provide the tools for them to achieve their own success.

Unlike previous years when our HSC results have not been released until the day after presentation night, this year we are one week behind this release so we can celebrate student effort that has been rewarded with some amazing results in the HSC. Karabar has achieved two listings in the all-round achievers list, which is incredibly prestigious as it recognises students who have achieved results in the highest band possible for at least 10 units of their HSC courses. Congratulations to [names of three students] for this outstanding result, placing Karabar as the highest school listing in the whole of the Canberra region – inclusive of the ACT private schools that do the NSW HSC.

We also recognise our excellent student results in the ATAR, where numerous students have achieved ATAR scores in the mid-80s and above 90, right through to our stand-out achiever [name of student] achieving a 99.55 out of a maximum potential score of 99.95. [Name of student], we recognise your success, congratulate you and are proud to have you becoming one of the Karabar alumni.

At this stage we also recognise our teaching staff who have assisted these students reach this level. Whether you were a teacher in preschool or primary school, a teacher in year 7 or year 12, we recognise you all and thank you for your commitment to these students’ education. We also especially recognise the teachers who assisted students get to the Distinguished Achievers List (the top band possible in each subject), honouring the fact that we had four teachers with two or more distinguished achievers in their class, with a special recognition to our stand-out performer [name of teacher] who scored eight results at this level.

Last year I said that during presentation night I would no longer be farewelling staff leaving the school, but this was possibly a little premature when we have some long-standing members of staff leaving Karabar’s immediate family in 2018. You remain as members of our extended family but no longer will we see your enthusiasm and passion on a daily basis.

I thank, honour and pay tribute to our teaching staff, and to our casual and temporary staff who have left the school or are leaving after the end of this week [names of five staff]. I also thank permanent staff who are leaving us this week or who have left throughout the year [names of five staff]. We wish you all the best in your new pursuits.

I also honour long-term staff members, including [name of teacher] who took leave at the end of last year and has decided that he has enjoyed the other side of work life and is not returning in 2019, and [name of teacher] who left us at the end of term three after 35 years of service to Karabar High School, who we farewelled at the year 12 graduation.

Tonight we also pass on our thanks to a pocket rocket whose enthusiasm, care and compassion for students could never be extinguished. Her commitment to the school has been unquestionable and her willingness to speak up on issues that she felt were worthy of speaking up for (even challenging her Principal on some issues) leaves a legacy of respect. After 34 years of service to Karabar [name of teacher] will bid us farewell. I personally thank you [name of teacher] for your work and commitment to achieving the best for all, and I invite you to come back to cross-country carnivals where you can continue to demonstrate that age is no barrier, by still defeating most students around the gruelling Googong Dam course.

Those who have been to a presentation night where I have been Principal know that I like to take this opportunity to truly demonstrate the true meaning of being an educator. I want to challenge thinking, to question and ultimately have you as the audience walk away from this evening, obviously proud of your children but also engaging in conversations about topics which you may not have spent time thinking about or at least been challenged on.

My aim is never to convince you to agree with the comments I make, for after all, some comments I make in these speeches are not things I am deeply committed to – they are simply about commencing conversations for us to reflect on, to think about where we are at and hopefully, together determine a better way forward. After all, as Albert Einstein is quoted to have said: “The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” We must change our thinking if we are to solve the issues we face as a community and as a society as a whole.

It is our job as leaders, either in our fields of endeavour or within our communities, to push for people to be thinking at this next level. And the only way we can do this is by opening up the lines of communication – to challenge thought and to challenge current practice. However, as a society we also need to be wary that we do this the right way, as building hostility creates more division than harmony. Despite indicating that my speeches are not all about me and my beliefs, there is one thing I do feel strongly about and that is the need to respectfully communicate. After all, as Anthony D’Angelo said: “Without a sense of caring there can be no community.” And as Rollo May has stated: “Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy and mutual valuing.”

As a society we must monitor our communication with, to and between each other. We need to guard against the directions that reality television is taking us. At the advent of this genre we all enjoyed peering into other people’s lives, just enjoying seeing how the other lived. But over time, we have subtly been drawn into the notion that to get ahead in life we need to be nasty to each other, and to be scoring points to the cost of others. The genre has changed from an innocent voyeurism to backstabbing and nastiness, where we are losing our sense of tolerance and acceptance of others. We even have one of these shows encouraging participants to game play and to manipulate in order to survive to the next episode. To our Karabar family, and in particular our students, I encourage you to recognise that this is not the way we progress our society. As Tania Singer, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences has said: “A lack of compassion (and I will add understanding) is arguably the cause of humankind’s biggest failures.”

As a student of Karabar I would like to think that you will model that compassion and understanding – to not feel threatened when others bring something to the table that you do not possess yourself. Across society as a whole we must remember that working together we are more powerful than working individually. Educationally we know the students who collectively question and challenge in a way to gain greater understanding achieve better results as a cohort than those who work individually.

There are times when I sometimes question how or if we model this to our children. Do you actively seek out those who challenge or bring other skills to the table, or do you retreat into the reality television mode of attacking and undermining the very people who could lift the collective good if they were given the opportunity to add to the team? How much have we lost by role playing reality TV and by not following the Stephen Covey habit number 5 of seeking first to understand then to be understood?

After all, as William Arthur Ward has stated: “When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.” This is an adage well worth remembering in all aspects of our lives.

When we are able to live by this adage we can also move away from the desire to sanitise the world, whereby we try to make everybody equal. When we are comfortable in our skin we can genuinely celebrate talents of others without feeling inadequate ourselves. We encourage this uniqueness at Karabar and celebrate individual and group success without feeling inadequate ourselves or, as the reality TV world presents it, feeling threatened or the need to undermine.

At Karabar we celebrate differences and our rich cultural base, without feeling threatened or feeling as though this is disrespectful to anyone else. Tonight, as pre-formal entertainment, our Island Pride dance group warmed you up with an outstanding display of culture, and here at Karabar we are always happy to celebrate our cultural diversity. Last year we showcased our rich Aboriginal culture through our dance group performing our opening welcome and acknowledgment. Our Aboriginal Education Officer [name of AEO] and I have already discussed how she is going to take carriage of building on this in the New Year – to further showcase the rich history of the world’s oldest living population – and I look forward to seeing this work which [name of AEO] will coordinate.

So as I stand before you ready to sign off my 2018 address, I want to provide to you a beautiful quote that came out of the funeral for George W Bush from his long-time friend and former senator Alan Simpson. When talking about Bush’s love of a good joke and the beauty of humour, Senator Simpson stated that “Humour is the universal solvent against the abrasive elements of life” and that George Bush “never hated anyone … as he knew what his mother always knew: Hatred corrodes the container it’s carried in.”

So to our community I ask that you reject the manner in which reality television is portraying success.

Embrace good humour and a true respect for others whilst showing understanding acceptance and tolerance. Let’s embrace each meeting with the thought that we build ourselves and improve by learning about others and working in partnership – not by plotting their downfall and scheming against them.

To the extended Karabar family I thank you and wish you all the very best for a relaxing and joyous holiday period.

**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.​