Year 12 Graduation **2006 – a TV series theme**

**Terry O’Brien**

The students have heard me many times tell them that they are the stars on our school badge – and if you look closely at the tree on your program you will see that the stars have little heads and are indeed representative of our students.

Today Year 12 2006 you are our *shooting stars* – about to shoot off into the great unknown. The students have also heard me say many times, *"Shoot for the moon, because if you miss, you will end up among the stars.”* Today I would like to continue this star metaphor but *this time*, liken our students to *TV stars*. I see you all as the stars of a long-lasting television series. It is a very popular series, far more popular than Desperate Housewives or Lost. This series in which you are the stars is reality television, and it began in 1994. Why 1994? 1994 was the year most of you started school.

To put this in a context, let me tell you some of the things that happened in 1994. 1994 began with the Black Christmas bushfires. The Prime Minister of Australia was Paul Keating. In 1994 telephone numbers changed to eight digits. The third runway opened at Sydney Airport. Top Australian films were Priscilla Queen of the Desert and Muriel's Wedding. In sport Australia won its first ever Winter Olympics medal, NSW won State of Origin and the Canberra Raiders beat the Canterbury Bulldogs 36-12 in the Grand Final. Overseas, impeached president of the USA Richard Nixon died, the Channel Tunnel opened between England and France, South Africa held its first ever multi-racial elections and Nelson Mandela was elected president. Israel signed an accord with Palestine and Serbia pounded Sarajevo, the IRA declared a ceasefire in Ireland, massacres took place in Rwanda and Kurt Cobain suicided.

In Science the web browser, Netscape Navigator was released, and The White House in Washington launched its first ever webpage. Commercial sites were set up on this new invention called ‘The Internet’ and mass marketing campaigns introduced the term spam to our vocabularies. The first cloning of calves from cells took place. Brazil won the World Cup on penalties after a nil all draw with Italy.

Last but not least, the stars of the graduating HSC year of 2006 started kindergarten and the first part of the reality TV series called Educating You began.

In 2001 the series won a Golden Logie when these students started Year 7, because they were the first Year 7 to enrol in the newly-formed Georges River College. Parents and students were then fortunate to be able to experience four years of outstanding middle school education, with a specialisation and focus on younger adolescents and their academic and pastoral care needs. In 2005 the mini-series won yet another gold Logie when they moved to film on a new location – that of Oatley Senior Campus with its unique breadth of curriculum, specific young adult environment and a focus on providing excellent post-school outcomes for older adolescents.

This is a *very* popular TV series and its ratings are high. Advertisers (a.k.a. enrolments) are knocking the door down to get in and we have to turn some away. I will now pause for a short advertisement for public education, for Georges River College is indeed public education at its best. Why, why indeed, go elsewhere? I ask every parent and student here, that if you are happy with the education provided at GRC at all its campuses, that you tell at least three people in your local community, as it is through word of mouth that schools' reputations grow best.

Now back to the show. This TV series has the best behind-the-camera support team, directors and producers, camera technicians and acting coaches. They are otherwise known as teachers and as the HSC 2006 series draws to its cliffhanger ending, they are feeling very sad to say goodbye to such a great cast. Oh Year 12, we will miss you individually so very much.

Now here's another commercial break, as I take this opportunity to tell Year 12 that if they want an interesting and worthy profession, I strongly recommend teaching to you and indeed, in over 30 years of working in education, I have never ever had two days the same and I don't know how many careers can say that. As well I get to work with young people who are as wonderful and lovely and funny and friendly and delightful as those here in the Sydney Town Hall today.

Year 12, the last episode of the current series is about to be filmed. It’s called Survivor HSC and you all get to be voted off the island. Over the next few weeks you have to finish learning your final lines ready for the final HSC performance, and indeed it is a cliff hanger as we don't know yet what the ending will be before we break for the summer.

Next year a new series begins. It’s called The Rest of Your Life. And it’s going to be a wonderful series too.

So ladies and gentlemen, in front of you are the stars of the show – Year 12 2006.

**Contributor details**

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Terry was Principal at Penshurst Girls High School then Oatley Senior Campus of Georges River College, as well as Policy Leader for the Digital Education Revolution one-to-one laptop program. ​ Since retiring, she and two other colleagues formed SPICE Educational Evaluations working directly with principals. She also volunteers teaching English as a second language in her local community.

Year 12 I wish you goodbye and I wish you well, not just for the HSC but for happy and interesting, healthy and productive lives as the future for this great country Australia and I now ... I have a question that I want to ask you and also Year 11 to answer very loudly and tell the audience here today: What's the best school in the best city in the best country in the world!

Thank you.