**Year 12 Graduation 2012**

**Charles Gauci**

Welcome special guests, parents, teachers and Year 12.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge that we meet tonight on the lands of the Wiradjuri people. I pay my respects to Elders past and present. I also extend that respect to all Aboriginal people present tonight.

*“No house should ever be on a hill or on anything. It should be of the hill,* ***belonging*** *to it. Hill and house should live together each the happier for the other.”* (Frank Lloyd Wright)

Belonging is a powerful concept. It can elicit guilt, love, anger, frustration and pride to name a few emotions. Tonight you truly become ex-students of Cowra High, but I like to think part of you will always belong to our school, and it will always belong to you. It is my hope that we have given you the academic training to follow your career paths into the future, but more importantly my hope is that we have added to your moral fibre in such a way that you will contribute to the world in a far deeper way than just economic returns.

Our school motto ‘*Saviour Cest Pouvior’* (Knowledge Is Power) could easily be re-written as Knowledge is Responsibility. As the future of our society, you will take on roles as our leaders, our nurses, our engineers, our shop assistants, dare I say our teachers, and a multitude of other vital roles. We all hope that in these roles you will perform to an outstanding standard, but we also hope that you will embrace the responsibility of being real members of our society. As a school, we have given you the foundations to act in the moral way to benefit not only yourself, but your fellow human beings. So remember, rather than being on the hill, be of the hill. Embrace our society and make it a better place for all to live in.

Many of you will spend the next few months or years exploring who you truly are, and what is truly important in your life. I will say, this is how it should be. I don’t think any mature adult can say they have not grown since leaving high school. So don’t stress if you still don’t know what you will do with yourself, or if the plans you make now end up being different to the reality that confronts you. Rather than despair, embrace the world we live in.

There is an old saying about taking the time to smell the roses. Don’t just smell them, marvel at the vibrancy of their colour, silkiness of their touch and wonder of their existence. The world is full of such miracles and at times your life will become so full that it can become easy to forget this fact. If you can live a life that reflects the values you believe in, you will always have balance and contentment.

Today is the backpack, where you have collected everything necessary for the adventure of your lives. You have the supplies, the provisions and even the compass. You have had a ‘taster’ of life but that compass can point anywhere. As Mark Twain once said *“Sail away from the safe harbour. Explore, dream and discover.”*

Your families are proud of you. Your friends are proud. Your parents, with some relief, I imagine, are congratulating themselves too. Your teachers and mentors have inspired you. They might even have cajoled you from time to time. But they did not do it for themselves. They gave you the skills for ‘life-long learning’. That is truly a gift worth having. We all hope you make the best of it. Today you will start your adult life. From now on you will be responsible for what you do. From this day onward **– ‘*You can no longer blame your teachers or******parents’***. You have earned the right to be **‘the *know-it-alls you have always aspired to be’.*** Your achievements will be your own, as will your failures. Have no doubt about it that you will fail sometimes, that's human nature. It is how you overcome those failures that will mark your character. It is said that being defeated is a temporary condition, but giving up is what makes it permanent. You now have the opportunity to appreciate the gifts you have been given. Some of you have extraordinary talents of course, but each one of you has something special to offer the world. Above all enjoy this special occasion. It is one that you will, quite rightly, remember all your lives. Ten or twenty years on I hope you will look at your yearbook or the photos taken today and be glad of the decisions you took then.

I will finish with a very apt comment from the great observer of human nature, Dr Seuss, *“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You're on your own. And you know what you know. And* ***YOU*** *are the one who'll decide where to go...”*

**Contributor details**

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Charles has been Principal of Cowra High School since 2011, currently on secondment as Employee Performance and Development Coordinator for Teacher Performance Management and Improvement in Rural South and West. Charles has been a member of the SPC Executive since 2016 with the portfolios of Assets/Maintenance/Cleaning, Rural and Remote Education and Aurora College. He enjoys spending time cycling, both human-powered and petrol-powered.