**Year 12 Graduation 2013**

**Kim Chapman**

Well year 12, it’s time to reflect and to think about the future. Yesterday I was wishing you a Yabba Dabba Doo future. Today we will wish you the best a little more formally.

I remember the opening ceremony for RHHS, with you as the first year 7 at that opening assembly, and I am also reminded every day of the opportunities we have at RHHS. I remember your bright and shiny faces, full of enthusiasm and delight, and although those looks may have grown and developed over the years, and as young adults developing your maturity you try to hide it from us, I can still see that bright and shiny cherub.

Some of you have joined us on the journey over the last six years, and each of you has found your own place in the year group. There have been different experiences and opportunities for each of you. You have all chosen your own pathway by participating in sport, dance, music, debating or whatever opportunity came your way.

Some of you decided to travel to China, and on that trip I learned all the gossip from the girls. [Names of three students] told me what was really happening in the school, plus I discovered that [Name of student] is a true gentleman.

In my office I have the school opening photo with [Names of three students], me and a couple of politicians, so I get reminded of this year group every day. Some of you have been part of a herd, others have chosen to roam alone. I still have a copy of [Name of student]’s artwork – her take on the Last Supper with teachers’ heads superimposed – and I also remember the first time she sang on assembly.

There are so many stories I could tell … but first I would like to acknowledge your student leaders:

* [Name of student] - What a model student, knows he has to understand the work (not just rote learn it), very focused on his studies.
* [Name of student] - What a gentleman that has shown inner strength and confidence from day one.
* [Name of student] - The focused student, led the campaign for the school cap from the fishing hat (I don't think I have forgiven you for that yet).
* [Name of student] - The lovely confident creative artist.

A great combination of leaders that have been fantastic role models in the school.

Some students would not know where my office is, others have a well-worn path, others had a stronger relationship with [Name of teacher], who is here today to see you graduate (she couldn’t stay away).

Some have breezed through school, others have had some significant struggles both at home and school, but we are here today to celebrate your achievements, and each one of you should feel proud of your achievements so far.

But now the time has come to leave the security of school. You will still have your family and friends to support you but what of your future? Where will you be in 10 or even 20 years’ time? What does your future hold? I decided to look back over the last six years and see what major events have happened in the world. I'm not talking about [Name of student] visiting my office over uniform again, or how many first places [Name of student] gained on celebration night, but what has been significant in the world?

I am going to talk about a few people, each of them have acknowledged the role of family and friends in their lives, each have acknowledged the hard work required, each has had some level of personal suffering and although we might know their names, they were just ordinary people once, people like you.

Imagine it is 1968. One man that could have been sitting in your position might have been Robin Williams. I wonder if he thought he was going to become such a successful comedian and star of such things a Mork and Mindy, Good Morning Vietnam, Dead Poets Society and Mrs Doubtfire? His skills in writing and acting are well known, but what he did for the world was to create pleasure and laughter and he challenged our thinking in some areas, and put a spotlight on mental health and how we support people. When he passed away this year it gave us the opportunity to reflect on and consider the impact of the creative arts on our lives and what it gives to society.

Another person I want to mention had a very famous life, and it probably didn't start the way it should have, but he ended up world famous and a definite leader. Imagine it is 1935 and the person next to you is Nelson Mandela. Do you think he knew he was going to become a world figure when he was your age? He has left a great legacy and two quotes from him I think are important to reflect on:

* *“It always seems impossible until it is done.”*
* *“A fundamental concern for others in our individual and community lives would go a long way in making the world the better place we so passionately dream of.”*

Imagine we have now progressed to 1947 when another person was graduating from high school. His words and actions impacted on the entire world but I doubt he knew that would happen when he was 17 or 18. This person was an Aerospace engineer, naval aviator and pilot, university professor, Korean War veteran and space walker. His most famous quote is:

* *“This is one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”*

Neil Armstrong became the face of the team that led the space race. The whole world opened up and the world became one of possibilities, of people asking the question “What if?”

But the last person I want to mention is probably someone who has had the greatest impact on your lives. In 1972 Steve Jobs would have been sitting where you are. What an impact he has had on the world through his involvement in the personal computer revolution, Pixar animation (e.g. Toy Story) and the development of the iMac, iPad, iPod and iPhone. With such an impact on the world (good or bad), sometimes I think we are still catching up with the impact of his work.

Some of his quotes are important for us all to think about:

* *“Sometimes life is going to hit you in the head with a brick. Don't lose faith.”*
* *“If you don't love something you are not going to go the extra mile, work the extra weekend, or challenge the status quo as much as possible.”*
* *“We are here to put a dint in the universe, otherwise why else even be here?”*

Robin Williams, Nelson Mandela, Neil Armstrong and Steve Jobs – all were once sitting in a place like you today. But they have all had an impact on our lives in a very positive way, and sadly they have all passed away while you have been completing high school. There is room out there for you to make your mark and archive your dreams, you just have to want to and be brave.

There are going to be opportunities to achieve, it might not be on the world stage but it might be in your local community. I hope that sitting in the year 12 group there are those of you that are going to make a difference to our society in whatever field you choose. I hope that I will be hearing about your achievements. I hope that you take our school slogan ‘Dare to Excel’ from the school environment into your future local community, national or global environment. What impact will you have? What will we be saying about you in 10 or 20 years’ time?

It does not matter what field of endeavour you go into. I want you to dare to excel by following your dreams and the paths that life will take you on, and know, like the people I have mentioned today, things rarely go to plan and the one constant is to have good people around you to support and care for you, like your family and friends.

So this is the last challenge I set for you, dream big, work hard and make a difference.

Finally, this is our first year 12 that has completed six years at RHHS. I thank you for your contribution and congratulate you on your achievements so far, and on behalf of the school community wish you the best for your future.

**Contributor details**

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Kim was Principal of Windsor High School from 2003-2008 and in 2009 she became the founding Principal of Rouse Hill High School. Currently Kim is a Member of the SPC Executive with responsibility for School Learning and Improvement, Student Learning and Assessment and Reporting. Her two current interests include investigating ways for teachers to measure their impact in the classroom leading to improved practice and exploring how Self-Determination Theory can be used in school to increase student motivation.​