**Year 12 Graduation 2014**

**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.

There are many positives in my role as Principal. One of my biggest pleasures comes from the opportunity to be involved with the best young people in the school. As a consequence this entails spending time with Year 12, for each and every one of you is a school leader. Whether you like the thought or you find it daunting, you have all been role models for the rest of the school all year. I can reassure you, all of you have carried out this role exceptionally well and as a result, you have in fact helped many junior students make the positive choices that will help them succeed in school.

Specifically I would like to acknowledge [Name of student]’s exceptional achievement in Dance. We have known [Name] to be a highly talented dancer, to be nominated for HSC Call Back, which highlighted how good she actually is. Similarly, [Name of student]’s accomplishments in making the State CHS Hockey team was outstanding.

I also want to thank the school captains: [Names of four students]. Everyone in this room will intimately understand the pressures and time constraints that the HSC year imposes, yet these people were able to manage all these normal issues and still carry out their leadership roles to an exceptional level. Not only were they great advocates for the student body and the school, they managed to represent the school on countless occasions, be involved in community events such as the Break Out commemorations, travel overseas to represent Australia in a Science forum, perform in dramatic and musical events and participate in the Camden exchange. They have set the bar extremely high for the 2015 captains and it has been an utmost pleasure working with each throughout the year.

A couple of weeks ago I was travelling to Molong and listening to Eva Cox, sociologist and activist, on the ABC conversation hour. She spoke of the optimism of the 50s, 60s and 70s. She saw those generations as active in wanting to make the world a better place. She said that this drive has been lost and seemed to hint that the following generations haven’t had the same desire. I then thought of my teenage years. You see I was a teenager in the late 70s and early 80s. Youth unemployment was skyrocketing – we didn’t think we would ever get jobs. The Cold War was very hot and we wondered if we needed to get a job because there probably wouldn’t be a world tomorrow and if there was, AIDS was going to get everyone anyway. So I thought, did we drop the ball, have we made the world a better place? I’ve decided that is a question that deserves to be answered by future generations, for they will be the ones to inherit what we leave.

As **you** take that massive step of moving on from high school, you might well ask the same questions to those that have been asked by so many in the past. **Is there any point?** Terrorism seems to be everywhere, Ebola is spreading throughout Africa and beyond, wars seem to end just to start again somewhere else.

My message is: These are the very reasons you **must** always bother, why the need to care and make a difference is as vital now as ever before. You are our future and our hope. Whether our generations verbalise this or we do what often comes easier, complaining about the apathy of the generations that follow, we actually do believe you will make a difference. Some of you will leave tonight already with a future path set before you, others will wake up tomorrow still with no idea where you will be next year, while others will have dreams which will require many hurdles and many barriers to be traversed before you can see the light. Whenever it will be that you see your path ahead, and you start down it towards your ultimate goal, I challenge you to stop and reflect. Ask yourself the hard question and answer yourself honestly, because it is your answer that you truly live with. Am I going to leave this world a better place for those who follow?

Please don’t believe this means you must be another Gandhi, Mandela or Van Gogh. We may have such in our midst, but such people are the exceptions and if the world required such to be made a better place, it would truly be in dire straits. It is the lives we all live which have the power to make the world a truly better place. It’s the person who opens their heart to the neighbour in need, the tradie who makes sure every job done is done to the highest quality possible, it’s the citizen who considers the good of the society above their own good on election day, it’s the parent who gives the time and effort to raise a **good** person. Regardless of where your path leads, if you are true to yourself, regardless of the dark times and the walls built to bar your way, you will always walk with a spring in your step, for you will know you are making the world a better place for those who follow.

I leave you with a favourite poem, one many will already know well, but I believe it is very relevant and will continue to be throughout your life.

***The Road Not Taken (Robert Frost)***

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,*

*And sorry I could not travel both*

*And be one traveler, long I stood*

*And looked down one as far as I could*

*To where it bent in the undergrowth; 5*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,*

*And having perhaps the better claim,*

*Because it was grassy and wanted wear;*

*Though as for that the passing there*

*Had worn them really about the same, 10*

*And both that morning equally lay*

*In leaves no step had trodden black.*

*Oh, I kept the first for another day!*

*Yet knowing how way leads on to way,*

*I doubted if I should ever come back. 15*

*I shall be telling this with a sigh*

*Somewhere ages and ages hence:*

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—*

*I took the one less traveled by,*

*And that has made all the difference.*

Whichever path you tread, may it always be fair and full of joy.

**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.