**Year 12 Graduation 2017**

**Charles Gauci**

Welcome special guests, parents, teachers and Year 12.

Tonight we meet on the lands of the Wiradjuri people to celebrate the successes of our children. In paying my respects to Elders past and present, I also reach out to our future Elders in the audience tonight. Education is the key to improving the outcomes for all people, and the positive effect for Aboriginal people as a whole cannot be underestimated. As the largest number of Aboriginal students to ever graduate from Cowra High, take what you have achieved and build on it into the future. I extend my respect to all Aboriginal people present tonight.

Year 12, congratulations! In front of me, ladies and gentlemen, are an incredible group of young men and women who have been inspirational and instrumental in moving Cowra High School forward.

I often tell the students of our school how proud I am of them, and how proud I am to be their Principal. Tonight exemplifies the reason for that pride. I also take this opportunity to speak of [Names of four students]. For almost 12 months I would meet with our captains Friday for morning tea whenever my schedule allowed it. These morning teas were a great pleasure. Not only did I have the privilege of getting to know these fine leaders in greater depth, I also had the great benefit of having the insight and voice of the student body on hand. Year 12, your captains have been a strong and loud voice for you. I thank them for their dedication and service, as should you.

What is the message I want to give our students as they move from the protected life of school to life where you are expected to step up and start making decisions for yourself? There are a number of thoughts I want to share, with the help of that well-known observer of human society, Dr Seuss.

So, as you start your journey of independence, you will see many faults in the world and many situations that need to get better. I point you to the great doctor, *“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not.”* Before anything is going to get better, you need to care enough to act. Don’t ever think that as an ordinary individual you can’t change anything in the world. That’s wrong, every time you care enough to help a lost person find their way or you accept someone different is a valuable member of our society, or you stand up for someone more vulnerable then you, you have made a real difference to our world and it will get better.

Rather than feel as though life is something full of responsibility and pressure, remember you are still young. As well as stepping up and making the world better, you should also embrace all that it has to offer. Life is truly special and full of joy, so once again to Seuss, *“If you never did you should. These things are fun. And fun is good.”* Whether you head off to university, or take on that new job or apprenticeship, take the opportunity to try new things for the shear fun of it. With all the dark and terrible things in the world, remember to look for the joy that can be found every day and, in particular, in exploring new experiences.

You have now completed your secondary education. For some of you, it will be a step to further education, whether university or TAFE. For others it might be the end of formal education for some time. Yet it is imperative that all of you remember that regardless of your current destination, learning does not end today. It is still the key to your future. We have tried to instil a love of reading and Seuss also sees the importance of this, *“The more that you read. The more things you will know. The more that you learn. The more places you’ll go.”* Reading has started you on a journey, whether one of fantasy or fact. You will continue on this journey if you never stop reading and live with our school motto in your heart, ‘Knowledge is Power’ – but never surrender that power.

Tonight you stand eager for the future about which you have dreamt of for so long. Tonight is the time for you to look around, to thank those whose guidance and support and advice has meant that you can enjoy the triumph that you so richly deserve. It is a reflection on your family and your teachers that you stand so tall today.

Finally, as you take the next steps towards your future, whatever that future might hold, remember we will always be here to guide and celebrate with you. You are always welcome at Cowra High.

**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.