**Year 12 Graduation 2018**

**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 young people. 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. I extend my respect to all Aboriginal people present tonight.

Year 12, I start tonight with a heartfelt THANK YOU. It is always a privilege to feel as though I have made a small contribution to the future of young people. With such a small group this feeling was even more intensely felt, a feeling I know I share with all the staff of Cowra High. [Names of four students], you have been the voice of the student body throughout the year and you always did it with integrity and good humour - even when forced to making small talk with an old bloke. It has truly been an honour and a pleasure. Year 12, I have always and continue to be very proud of each of you.

When I prepare for these nights I spend much time thinking about what message I would like to give to the graduating class. I’m always very conscious of the fact that it will be my last message and I want it to be something that looks towards the future rather than the past. As such I decided to try something different tonight. I am going to start by showing you a short video clip. Some might have seen this, but I think it will still highlight the message I want to share.

<https://youtu.be/PluaPvhkIMU> (interview with Hugh Jackman and workshop session on the song ‘From Now On’ from *The Greatest Showman*)

Now why did I choose this clip? There are quite a few reasons, including how entertaining it is in itself, but for me and I hope for you Year 12, the main theme is the importance of passion in life. As you saw, Hugh was clearly told not to sing, but his passion for the project and performing took over and despite suffering pain, by the end of the experience he is elated.

Year 12, I challenge you to find your passion and follow it. The path won’t always be clear, nor easy, but the joy and satisfaction of being involved in that which drives you and brings out the song in you, will transcend all the sacrifice. I hope you will see this beyond only relating to your careers. Passion takes many forms. It can be career oriented, but can also be family, cultural, sporting or community focused. Regardless of the form it takes, when you are doing something that you are passionate about, you know you will not have regrets. Life will be full of satisfaction and in the end, who can ask for more than a life full of deep satisfaction?

So in closing, I leave you with a thought from Nelson Mandela, a man of great passion and vision.

*“There is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.”*

**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.