



ROSTREVOR
COLLEGE

2020 Parent Vote of Thanks

Delivered by Andrew Dnistriansky

HIS ROSTREVOR



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Good evening Principal, Mr Brian Schumacher, staff members of Rostrevor College, invited guests and, most importantly, the graduating cohort of 2020.

I was extremely honoured to be asked by the College to deliver this year's rite of passage speech on this memorable evening when we honour our year 12 graduating students and express our thanks to the College for the contribution that they have made over the years towards the educational, co-curricular, adolescent and spiritual development of our sons.

Twenty-eight years ago in 1992 I similarly graduated from this wonderful College and like Gianni Bergamin this year, I was fortunate enough to lead the school as head prefect – so there is an abundance of red and black within me and I can closely relate to how this year's graduating cohort is feeling and the many emotions that may be running through their minds this evening.

When approached by Mr Ranaldo to present tonight, I asked him what he would like me to address. His response was “your speech should comprise a vote of thanks to the College from a parent's perspective and from your own personal experiences with your son Matthew” who forms a part of this year's graduating class. Both as an old scholar and parent of the College, there are many fond experiences of the College that I can share with you. Some of my greatest memories as a student of the College include the following:

- The yearly traditional inter-col football matches against Sacred Heart. The power of that long standing rivalry was incredible in how it bonded our teammates together, reinforced our sense of unity and enhanced the values of teamwork and leadership.
- Another amazing experience was being a member of the 1991 undefeated first eighteen football team which was crowned champions of Australia after defeating St. Bernards College, Essendon at the Western Oval in Melbourne as a curtain raiser to an AFL Crows match.
- In 1990 I was fortunate enough to tour New Zealand with the College first eleven cricket team as a year 10 student where we played various catholic Colleges across both islands. Whilst there is an aspect of that tour that I would like to erase from my memory, that being run out for what is known as a diamond duck on a wet Wellington wicket on the first delivery of the morning without facing a ball, it was that very event that gave birth to my nickname which has stuck with my old scholar contemporaries to this day. It was only the last long weekend in September this year that a dozen or so of the New Zealand touring party celebrated the thirty year reunion of that trip which we spent at Port Elliott over a couple of nights reminiscing about the tour.
- And perhaps my greatest memory of the College, aside from its teachers, their individual personalities and idiosyncrasies and how they helped shape our lives, is the tremendous friendships that were forged with our classmates – lifelong friendships. Indeed, my current closest circle of friends are dominated by those who I graduated with, so much so that they have become godparents of my children and best man and groomsmen at my wedding.



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Let's now wind the clock forward 28 years. So, what do I now see? Well, as a starting point, I observe perhaps one of the strongest and most tight knitted graduating cohorts that I have ever seen. This observation exemplifies your defining this year as the year of camaraderie. Your strong bond and support for each other has been highlighted in many ways this year. Here are just a few examples:

- Unfortunately, my son Matthew injured his shoulder playing football this year requiring surgery and resulting in his inability to return to competitive football for a period of six months. Matthew's classmates appreciated how difficult this was for him given his love of football. Within approximately two hours of Matthew returning home following his discharge from hospital, approximately 15 of his College class mates visited him at home to check on his wellbeing and to offer their support. I can honestly say, that brought a tear to my eye and will be something Matthew will remember forever.
- I am a regular supporter of the Rostrevor Old Collegians football team. All but a handful of that team are former graduates of the College. Notwithstanding many members of the Old Collegians football team being substantially older than this year's graduating class, I frequently observe on Saturday afternoons a significant number of this year's year 12 cohort cheering on the Old Collegians – having already formed a bond with the Old Collegian community.
- You are a very social group of young men. Frequently there is a strong gathering on a Saturday night of the year 12 cohort at one of their homes. A couple of those have been hosted at my home and it has been great to see the boys sitting around the fire, having a barbecue together, sharing a joke, and engaging in the usual banter of one another.
- You all have your own individual memorable experiences at the College which have acted as a catalyst for the strengthening of your camaraderie. I was fortunate enough to travel to Sri Lanka in 2018 as a touring parent for the First 11 cricket tour which was spectacularly run by Mr Bill Trewartha and Mr Matthew Footner. That tour was certainly one of the highlights of Matthew's days at Rostrevor. To experience another culture and to play cricket in extremely trying conditions with ones mates was a priceless experience. What impressed me most about that tour was, despite there being an age difference of some three years between some of the boys, they bonded and gelled superbly. There was no hesitation on the part of the year 12's to treat as their equal the year 10's and the respect and inclusiveness that the boys extended to the travelling parents and teachers was tremendous. Other graduates in this evening's audience will no doubt have fond memories of their participation in the 2019 music trip to America, the 2019 Inter-Col 4-3 soccer victory over Sacred Heart after being 3-0 down at halftime, the powerful and thought provoking College retreats which allowed you time to reflect and deepen your spirituality, your attendance on the annual College "Unfair Days", momentous debating victories, free time shared by the Boarders in the Common Room, achieving a strong GPA or making your own red wine with Mr Nitschke in Agricultural Science sourced from the fertile soil of the College – just to mention a few of your schooling experiences.



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Returning more closely now to my theme for tonight – a rite of passage. A dictionary definition provides that a rite of passage is a ceremony or ritual of the passage which occurs when an individual leaves one group to enter another. It involves a significant change of status in society. Scholars consider graduation to be a rite of passage – a celebration of many years of hard work. Although tonight formalizes your graduation from the College, your Rostrevor community journey does not end here as you enter the next phase of your life. Your experiences at Rostrevor will influence the direction that your future paths will take and will provide you with the foundation and tools to confront the challenges that lie ahead. When giving my final address to the College in 1992 I made the following remarks:

“This evening marks the end of an era for some 150 matriculation students. The closing sentences to end another chapter of our lives were written only a matter of days ago. We must now move on to write our future chapters in order to continue our book, our life story. Before an author engages in adding another chapter to his story he pauses, places his pen down, brainstorms and reflects on the past events of his developing story. In order to write the future chapters the author relies on what was written in the past. We who leave Rostrevor this year will have our future chapters influenced by what Rostrevor has given us and taught us. To write our future, we must understand our past, like the author writing his book. It is Rostrevor that gives me great confidence as I prepare to confront the unpredictable future.”

As to the next chapter of your life from a study or work perspective, not everyone will obtain their first University course preference or their first desired employment role. Whilst that may cause some initial disappointment, don't be discouraged by that. There are opportunities for you to ultimately enter your desired course or employment through back door courses or avenues. Life has a strange way of navigating your future and opening up new doors that you may not currently see. For example, from a very young age, I always aspired to study medicine. I narrowly missed out on that in my year 12 and pursued a career as a lawyer instead. Looking back now, the legal profession has been kind to me.

I encourage this year's graduates to keep ties with the wider College community. The College has, for years, had an exceptionally strong old collegian community. Get involved with ROC's football, soccer or cricket, tap into the Rostrevor network as an avenue for securing work experience or employment and, if you have the opportunity, send your sons back to Rostrevor one day. From my perspective, it has been just as fulfilling being a parent of the College as it was being a student of the College. I frequently joke with my wife that I'm going to miss the day to day life of the College now that Matthew has graduated and that I'm ready to adopt a year 8 student so that I can enjoy another five years at the College.

There is one final story I wish to share with you before acknowledging the teachers of the College and farewelling this year's graduates, which story perhaps best sums up for me the strong spirit and bond that the Rostrevor community shares. Several years ago the ROC's won the A1 football grand final and celebrations that night were held at the Alma Hotel. Matthew attended the Alma with me for a few hours and one of my close friends who I graduated with at Rostrevor, Paul Arnfield, was



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also present. Matthew and Paul already knew each other quite well and during the evening Paul put his arm around Matthew and said, what do you see Matty. Matthew said, there's a guy there drinking a beer. Paul replied, look closer. Matthew replied there's a guy over there eating a chicken parmy. Paul replied look even closer and with that Paul said can't you see the 70 year old Rostrevor old collegian talking over there to the 21 year old Rostrevor football player. Can't you see that former Rostrevor teacher talking to that former 30 year old Rostrevor student? Can't you see those two Rostrevor parents engaging in an enjoyable conversation? And with that, the penny dropped for Matthew as to how strong and special the Rostrevor community bond is. I encourage this year's graduates to embrace that bond in the years ahead.

To the teachers of the College, on behalf of the parent group, I sincerely thank you for all the time that you have invested into our son's over the years, the guidance you have provided to them and the dedication you have applied to facilitate the success of our young men. It is easy to forget that, apart from parents, teachers are perhaps the next adults in line who spend the most time with our sons. As such, the teachers have a significant influence in the development of our sons at a very important time in their lives. We thank you for the valuable part that you have played in the journey of our sons to date.

As you are no doubt all aware, Mr Schumacher is departing the College as Principal at the conclusion of this year. On behalf of the College community, I would like to thank Mr Schumacher for his significant contribution to the College and his outstanding leadership. We wish you well in your new role and although we are saddened to see you depart, we are comforted to know that your new role will still see you overseeing certain operations of the College. In farewelling Mr Schumacher, I would also like to congratulate and welcome Mr Ranaldo in his role of Principal of the College in 2021 and we wish him well in leading the College next year.

In closing, I wish to congratulate this year's graduates of the College. You are a fine group of young men.

Good luck with the next chapter of your lives.

Go out there and make your mark on the world.

Be brave, take calculated risks and back your judgement.

And most importantly;

- Keep singing the choomalaka
- Keep singing the Rostrevor song
- Keep the Rostrevor community spirit alive
- Keep living the ideals of Edmund Ignatius Rice
- And keep being men for others

Thank you.