

Good Evening & Welcome to our Year 6 graduation ceremony for 2021

I would like to also acknowledge the traditional owners of this land – the Yalukit Willam Clan of the Boon Wurrung. I pay my respect to their Elders, both past and present and acknowledge and uphold their continuing relationship to this land."

This graduation is a very special event and tonight is about the wonderful students sitting in the front rows, not me, so I will keep this speech very short.

Today is one of those great occasions when we get to stop and celebrate something special.

It's time to reflect on the seven great years of school that is coming to an end.

It is also a time to look forward and think about what is still to come – to the incredible opportunities that lie ahead as you move off to secondary school, facing a future full of exciting possibilities.

Most importantly, it's a time to be in the present and celebrate the moment we are living in right now. Whatever has happened in the past and whatever great things are in your future. This is a milestone to be recognised and celebrated. Well done to you all.

Welcome and thanks to our fantastic SKiPPS community

The Parents, grandparents, siblings, relatives and friends of our graduating students – I am sure this graduation is the one of many proud events that you attend in the coming years to celebrate your child's wonderful achievements.

I want to thank you for bringing your children to our school and trusting them with us everyday. I want to thank you for raising such an amazing group of people. Parents being so involved in their child's life leads them to more opportunities for success. This group of Year 6 have shown so many positive qualities and we know that this all starts at home.

Whilst tonight is all about the achievement of our Year 6 students, it is also your achievement. Getting them here has been hard work in more ways than one and especially during the last couple of years when you were required to get more involved in your child's schooling than any of us could have imagined.

Our Year 6s couldn't have made it here without your constant support and understanding.

Welcome and thanks to SKiPPS staff members past and present – it is a sign of the strength of our community that so many of you have chosen to spend an evening and travel here to mark this event.

Tonight is not just about our Grade 5/6 team who have taught these students in 2021 but about the collective effort of you all.

Many of you have been lucky enough to be the class teachers, specialist teachers, principals or Education support staff working directly with these students at some point over the last seven years.

From Foundation with Emma and Tim through to this year with Joe, Mel, Luke and Amy, there is a small army of dedicated and highly skilled professionals who have helped our students to get where they are today – graduating with pride and looking forward to a bright future.

Everyone at SKiPPS believe in always doing what is best for the students. Your kindness and caring for students as whole people is the reason that we have seen the students blossom into leaders.

This graduation is also your achievement.

Most of all welcome to our students in the front two rows.

All of you are lovely, considerate, funny, intelligent, confident and articulate individuals who we are proud of and happy to send off to a wide range of different secondary schools next year safe in the knowledge you will represent yourselves and our School with distinction

What a year. It would be easy to look back on the disruption of the last two years and to feel sadness, frustration or disappointment.

And there have been things that have been missed. Activities, events and opportunities that have just not been possible.

But to dwell on this would be to miss the point.

I'm not sure who said it but a favourite quote of mine is this

- *Challenges are what makes life interesting. Overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.*

If this is the case then the last 2 years have probably been more interesting than we would have liked. They have provided you with more challenges than 12 year olds would normally have to deal with.

This is no bad thing – the way you have risen to tackle and overcome these challenges by demonstrating the school values of resilience, creativity and enthusiasm have been truly impressive.

You have been true leaders of our school during this year and we are proud of you for this. You **have** overcome all of the challenges that have been thrown at you and this **is** meaningful – spending so long apart from your teachers and friends and figuring out how to manage has given you resilience and an independence you are probably not aware of and that can't be underestimated.

Overcoming adversity as you have done can be an advantage and it can be an opportunity. Learning how to manage yourself is probably one of the hardest, most important things to do in life. It's your reaction to adversity that determines your story and gives your life meaning.

Looking to the future and the new challenges that will make your life interesting next year and beyond at secondary school, the experiences of 2020 and 2021 will be valuable tools to help you overcome and make your time there meaningful.

All that you have learned you will use for years to come. Here at SKiPPS you have developed the foundations upon which the continuation of your lives will be built,

My challenge to you all is to grab this opportunity with both hands – you have the most exciting and possibility-filled years of your life coming up and you have everything you need to grab this opportunity with both hands and take advantage of all that lies ahead.

- Take risks.
- Make mistakes
- Try new things
- Don't be embarrassed or ashamed.
- Don't miss out on new experiences by trying to look cool or worrying what your friends will think

As the novelist Neil Gaiman said

*“Go and make interesting mistakes,
make amazing mistakes,
make glorious and fantastic mistakes.
Break rules.
Leave the world more interesting for your being here.”*

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the SKiPPS Graduating class of 2021.