

Year 12 Graduation - Principal's remarks

It takes a village to raise a child.

Class of 2026, so many of the key members of your village are here with us tonight:

- Parents and family members
- GOAL mentors and teachers
- Friends

As I thought about what I wanted to share with you this evening, my mind kept returning to these people. The people who have walked alongside you, cheered you on, picked you up when you stumbled, and know you better than almost anyone else.

And so, I want to take you back to where the story began for so many of you: **the year 2008.**

In that year, around 184 million, 800 thousand babies were born around the world.

The most special 153 of them are here at the centre of our celebration tonight... including with a few who arrived either side of New Year's Eve.

Life in 2008 was quite different.

The iPhone and Netflix were only one year old.

Facebook was two years old.

MySpace was at its peak, attracting around 115 million users each month. For some perspective, that many users have scrolled Instagram while we've been having dinner tonight.

Many of your teachers were still students themselves... and a few were still in primary school.

Shows like *The Biggest Loser*, *So You Think You Can Dance Australia*, *Home and Away*, and *Kath & Kim* were must-watch television each week.

Kevin Rudd was Prime Minister and would be followed by another six prime ministers over the next eighteen years; perhaps an early indication that rapid change would become a defining feature of our future.

Looking back, 2008 sits right on the boundary between two eras.

Old enough that many people still lived largely offline.

New enough that smartphones and social media were beginning to transform almost every aspect of daily life.

And for your families, it marked a very important transformation: from life before you arrived, to life after you landed.

As I prepared for tonight, I found myself taking a trip back through the cultural highlights of 2008.

What wisdom, I wondered, might be hidden among the pop-culture treasures of your birth year?

I started with the music.

Flo Rida's *Low* was the biggest song of the year.

I looked up the lyrics, hoping to uncover some profound life lesson to share with you tonight. Here's the opening verse:

*Shawty had them Apple Bottom jeans (Jeans), boots with the fur (With the fur)
The whole club was lookin' at her
She hit the flo' (She hit the flo'), next thing you know
Shawty got low-low-low-low-low-low-low-low
Them baggy sweat pants and the Reeboks with the straps (With the straps)
She turned around and gave that ...*

Hmmmmm ...

To the surprise of no, it turns out that out that Flo Rida and I have very little in common!

Music wasn't proving particularly helpful, and so next, I turned to the movies. Surely Hollywood could provide some timeless wisdom.

The highest-grossing film of 2008 was *The Dark Knight*. I asked ChatGPT for a summary and it told me that in *The Dark Knight*:

"Batman battles the Joker's escalating terror while Harvey Dent's tragic fall from hero to villain demonstrates how even the brightest symbols can be shattered by corruption and loss, captured by Dent's lament that "You either die a hero or live long enough to see yourself become the villain"

Yeah... nah.

That doesn't seem to fit with our CORE value of optimism.

So I moved on.

What about television?

Surely TV would save me.

According to my research, the breakout series of 2008 was *Breaking Bad*.

For those who are unfamiliar, it's about a high school chemistry teacher who partners with a former student to manufacture methamphetamine, and who slowly descends into criminality and moral collapse.

BEST Team, don't get any ideas ... we are absolutely **not** introducing a new Chem Specialism next year.

At that point, I was forced to accept a simple truth: Pop culture was a bust.

But, of course, I had been looking for inspiration in the wrong place all along.

Because my inspiration, our inspiration, is already here in this room.

Tonight, we've heard GOAL mentors reflect on their GOAL families.

We've watched footage celebrating the joy, laughter and adventures of the year.

We've listened to our outstanding college captains share their memories, gratitude and insights.

And throughout all of those reflections, a common theme kept emerging.

The power of the relationships you built along the way.

The friendships forged through shared experiences.

The connections that grew stronger through challenges, celebrations, setbacks and successes.

Beautiful reflections of who you are.

In their assembly speeches, our remarkable captains reflected on their time in our community and what it felt like to stand on the threshold of something new.

Judah remembered arriving at Beaumaris for the very first time. He spoke of the excitement, the awe, and yes, being just a little bit scared as he walked through our gates. But he also spoke about what happened next: how this community wrapped itself around him, supported him, and helped him to become the person he is today.

Imogen reflected on everything this school has been for her and for the Class of 2026. She celebrated the way this place has shaped you, even as you have shaped it. She spoke of her sadness that this chapter is ending and shared that she, too, feels a little scared about what comes next and what is being left behind.

But of course, you're not leaving us behind.

You're taking us with you.

The values you've learned here. The friendships you've formed. The experiences that have defined you. The sense of community that comes from being one of us.

These travel with you. They become part of who you are. Seeds that you will carry into every workplace, university, apprenticeship, community and family you become part of. Seeds that will grow into the world you help create and the future you help design.

I think that spirit is beautifully captured in the mosaic you have created as your legacy for the Steve Pearce Senior Centre.

It is a work of art full of meaning. A reflection of who we are, what you have given this college and where you are heading next.

Just as hundreds of individual pieces have come together to create something far more beautiful than any one could achieve alone, the image of the wave reminds us that you are not solitary drops of water moving independently through the world.

You are a great body of water.

A cresting wave.

A force shaped by those who have travelled with you, and now surging forward toward countless horizons and distant shores.

So what can I leave you with tonight that might have some meaning for the journey ahead?

Well, I'm going to take you back to 2008 one last time.

This time, to a university lecture theatre where a professor named Randy Pausch was preparing to deliver what universities traditionally call a "last lecture" to graduating students.

For Randy and his students, however, there was a gravity to the occasion that was almost beyond words.

Randy had been diagnosed with terminal cancer and knew he had only a short time left to live.

Yet the message he chose to share was not one of sadness. It was a series of simple, hopeful lessons about living a life of joy, purpose and meaning.

And so tonight, I want to share a few of those lessons with you.

- **Be curious.** Never lose your appetite for learning. The joy of discovering, growing and becoming gives life meaning.
- **Help others realise their dreams.** Some of life's most satisfying successes come from helping someone else succeed and celebrating that success alongside them. A rising tide lifts all boats. If we commit ourselves to lifting those around us, imagine how far we might all travel together.
- **Practise gratitude.** Thanking people, appreciating them and acknowledging their impact is one of the simplest yet most powerful gifts we can give.
- **Look for the best in people.** Sometimes it takes a little longer to emerge, but it is almost always worth our patience and perseverance.
- **Value time more than money.** Time is the most precious resource any of us possesses. We cannot earn more of it, buy more of it or make more of it. We can only choose how we spend it.
- **Leave behind a legacy of love and values.** At the end of our journey, these are the things that endure.

At our final assembly, I told you that schools are hothouses for growing extraordinary people who go on to do extraordinary things.

That path is one I am confident you will walk.

And I also said that schools are hothouses for growing people who do the most important ordinary things.

Being a decent human being.

Being kind.

Loving your family and friends.

Contributing to your community.

Welcoming those who feel left out.

Standing alongside those who need support.

Making sure nobody is left behind.

And, day by day, making the world a little better than you found it.

As you graduate from Beaumaris Secondary College, the parents, carers, teachers, mentors and friends gathered here tonight, the people who have travelled beside you, the villagers who have helped raise you, know what real happiness is.

Real happiness is seeing the young people before us and recognising who you have become.

Real happiness is knowing that you have grown into outstanding young adults.

And real happiness is recognising that, above all else, you have become very good humans indeed.

Nothing in life can make the heart prouder than this.

Year 12s... Class of 2026...

Congratulations.

And here's to you. 🍷🍷