

# **Terry Griffiths – ABHS Principal**

## **Farewell Address: Presentation Night 2016**

Distinguished guests, award winners, teachers, students and parents, welcome to our annual celebration of the achievements of our students. Normally in my address I would highlight our main achievements for the year, but as this is my last Presentation Night speech, I am going to break with that tradition somewhat and just talk about the Asquith Boys High that I know and love after nearly 11 years as your principal.

We have indeed made a lot of progress over that time.

### **In the area of facilities**

First of all the school grounds – the oval area has seen the advent of several student- built facilities such as the fitness course, the outdoor deck and a number of gazebos. The water tanks have been added. There is the vegetable garden, the upgrade to the lower basketball courts, and the upper entrance area pathways project has begun (funded by the P&C). We have seen the installation of the security fence around the whole school and an entire new quadrangle.

Within the buildings – there is the gymnasium, the remodelling of the library, not one but two classroom kitchens, the hall upgrade (including the new hall kitchen). Then there is the advent of technology across the school: wireless network, an extra computer lab, interactive whiteboards in most standard classrooms, the trolleys with class sets of laptops. We have had the entire school given an external paint job and we are about to get a complete upgrade of two science labs, with plans drawn up to complete the other 3 labs.

### **In the area of curriculum**

There has been very significant growth and flexibility to meet the needs of our students. To our HSC curriculum we have added Hospitality, Food Technology, Earth and Environmental Science, Japanese and Chinese. In the junior curriculum subjects such as Horticulture, Philosophy, Photomedia and Textiles have been added. Highly skilled students now have the opportunity to study an accelerated curriculum, or a school-based apprenticeship. TAFE courses are now available to Year 10 students as well as seniors.

### **We have introduced many programs – specifically designed to meet the needs of boys**

These include:

- An effective Gifted And Talented program based around our Year 7 & 8 Enrichment classes.
- Habits of the Mind- based around the Year 7 (Personal Interest Program) and Year 8 electives.
- Our whole-school Literacy and Numeracy program.
- The well established Leadership continuum where leadership opportunities are tracked Years 7-12 – in addition to the existing peer tutors, peer mediators, prefects, sports captains, house captains and the SRC we have added Transition leaders, student mentors, Quicksmart tutors and more recently Maths Club tutors.
- Community involvement – To add to our long standing commitment to Legacy (once again state leader, over \$12,000), and the exceptional rate of participation in Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, our boys have become involved in many community activities such as the P & C Community Fun Day, Old Boys Club, Youth Forum, Youth Eco Forum, Shared Writing project with primary schools, activities with students from Clarke Rd Special School, the Premier's Sporting Challenge, involvement with local nursing homes, environmental activities such as Clean Up Aust, Clean4 shore and Bush Regeneration project. And there are many more worthy causes and community organisations that are supported by our students.
- Mervyn Brown Senior Academic Scholarship was introduced 5 years ago to compliment the existing creative arts scholarships.

- Then there are the new programs designed to specifically engage boys – we have developed an overnight camp experience for all Years 7 to 10, Barista Boys, Café Club, RAISE mentoring program, Year 12 mentoring program, Links to Learning, Toolbox Team, Breakfast Club, Kitchen Battles, to name a few.
- We have expanded the Band program to include an annual regional tour, our bi – annual charity concerts, and I'm delighted with the recent collaboration with the ABHS and AGHS concert band that you have already heard tonight.
- Our overseas tours, annual football tour broke new ground to places like China, Vietnam, Korea, Greece, and Turkey. Two language tours to Japan and History tour to Europe next year for the first time.
- In uniform we introduced a Senior Blazer – now entrenched in the school culture - has helped improve our image in the community, and the boys pride in our school. Indeed, our enrolment has increased about by about 30% in the last decade.

These upgraded facilities; curriculum and programs have led to very significant high achievement by our students across a range of fields.

## **Achievement**

Academically we consistently perform better than boys in other schools. In NAPLAN the growth rate, the rate of improvement from Year 7 to 9 is invariably 11-13% better than boys in similar schools, in our HSC results, for the bulk of our subjects, we regularly outperform the boys state mean, with spectacular results in many individual subjects. We now regularly have students with very high ATARS, and appearances on the Premiers All Rounders list, and an increase in Year 12 students gaining matriculation to university.

In the Creative arts – Asquith Boys students regularly feature in Art Express, Encore, Schools Spectacular, Art North Concert, State Choral Festival

STEM- in the NSW Uni Engineering Challenge (we regularly finish in the top 6 of 50 schools who enter this competition), Year 12 students have had their major work presented in In Tech showcase, and results and participation in the Aust Maths Comp, ESSA and VALID Science tests are very strong.

Citizenship – several ABHS students have had the honour of receiving Order Of Australia certificates for Community Service from the governor of NSW, other boys have received John Lincoln Youth Community Awards, Defense Force Scholarships, and an Asquith Boy was not only elected to the Youth Parliament, but elected the Premier of the Youth Parliament.

In sport- ABHS students regularly win regional Sports Blues, achieve state or national representation, or, indeed, Olympic representation.

But by far our greatest achievement, in my opinion, is the character of the boys that we turn out at the end of each Year 12.

## **Character of boys**

Of course they are literate, numerate and skilled in technology, but also independent thinkers, culturally aware, are tolerant of and celebrate diversity, they are aware of all sections of society because they have had the advantage of attending a comprehensive public school. Studies show a greater level of success at university, for instance, for students who attended such schools, because they have had a real education, not just closeted with like people (that is, people of the same religion, socio-economic class, ability, special talent). They are resilient, community minded, want to make a contribution, want to help others. I believe that they well equipped to make great employees, indeed employers and leaders, and far more importantly, great husbands and fathers. I am very proud of our boys.

## Public schools

They are products of public education. The system that takes students of all abilities and disabilities, the system that does not discriminate, that believes in equality and opportunity for all. Public education needs to be valued, to be respected and, to be well funded. It is too important not to be as it is the bedrock of egalitarian Australia, the bridge of economic mobility, the engine room of opportunity, indeed, it is the fountain of our democracy.

I'd like to thank the organisers of tonight's event – Ms Cathy Holder and her team, the School Council (this year led by Mr Rizwan Ali) and the P&C (this year led by Mrs Michelle Roscarel), for their unwavering support this year and indeed, every year. I'd like to thank our high calibre and hard-working teaching and non-teaching staff, our community is indeed blessed to have a staff that is so talented and committed to boys education , and our wonderful community for the support you have given me and the school during my tenure.

My successor has been appointed –Mr Bryce Grant, will take over at the beginning of next year. I wish him well and I know that you will give him the same support you gave me.

Congratulations to all out award winners tonight. ABHS is now 57 years strong, it will continue to thrive long into the future. And it has been my pleasure to be your principal.

