

Ladies and Gents,

Robynne and I have been Pittwater House parents for only six years. Wills, our eldest son, started in Year 7 in 2003 and I must admit that we were a little apprehensive at the thought of enrolling him. You see we had both been educated in the public school system some 35 years ago. I, in particular, needed more convincing of the value of the private schooling system, having been proud of the fact that despite attending what was considered the worst public high school in the State, the Year 12 graduates of 1973 had, on large, achieved success in many spheres of life.

Like many of you here tonight it is hard for us to accept that six years have passed so quickly. And, like many of you, we are proud of the achievements of our children as they have progressed through their years at Pittwater House. On one hand tonight I feel a sadness that my first experience at Pittwater House has come to an end - I must admit Mr Richard that there is a tinge of jubilation also, which only a parent of an HSC student will understand.

This morning at the Leaver's Service our children were praised for the contribution that they had made to the milieu of curricular and extra-curricular activity that defines the School's environment. And rightly so. They were encouraged in a rousing address by the Founder to maintain the integrity and principles espoused at the School and to go forth and contribute in improving the life of the communities that they will find themselves in. I can recall my own last day at school and recall our Principal issue similar encouragement - and I am sorry Mr Morgan but I suspect, as in my case, much of what was said will not sink in until much later. However Mr Morgan, I was much moved - and Reverend, while I appreciated the hallowed and spiritual nature of the occasion I was truly moved by the talent of the students who actively participated in the service and spent most of the hour with a smile on my face as I reflected on the combined talent before me.

But I put to you tonight that the talent that our children have shown has been nurtured in large part by the staff and administration of the School. It did not take me long in Wills' first year at the School to recognise that in the teaching staff at the School was one of the most talented groups of people that I have met in my life. It would seem that it is not enough for a teacher at Pittwater House to be the best at their chosen subject because as you look around you will see many multi-talented individuals who have spent their careers building a set of skills that have truly astounded me. What has defined my experience at the School has been the willingness of the staff to involve themselves in more than just teaching and the enthusiasm they show is infectious. There is in the staff at Pittwater House a real sense of caring which I don't recall receiving during my high school experience.

So tonight I wanted to say "thank you" to the staff for their tremendous contribution to my son's education and as you contemplate doing it all over again as the next generation of students pass through your care please understand that the contribution you have made to our children's future is sincerely appreciated. May you continue to influence many more young minds and empower them to achieve their innate talents.