



2016 DUX SPEECH

Across our group at any point, the general consensus was buoyancy, trying to stay afloat. We all took our turn in being down, but it lifts you when you see someone else in that state come out the other side. As a friend, you can help turn it round for him. Unity was the real stuff of Year Twelve. In the grip of struggle, it was support from the boys who stood by my side that got the best out of me. Sometimes we carried, sometimes we were carried, but mostly we functioned in the knowledge that the therapy of support was there whenever it was needed.

Today, as I recognise, acknowledge and thank people who helped me through Year 12, I do so on behalf of the Class of 2016. My personal experiences and the people I mention are part of my story, a story which was repeated for every boy, in every family, for all our friends and for all the staff and teachers who got us through.

First and forever, my family. Mum and Dad, I can never

thank you enough for what you did, what you gave, how your care is always expressed, whether it be spoken or silent. Kids talk about their parents so easily in this group of boys. Speak of Mum and Dad, and a smile and nod are received. They know it in their lives, like I know it in mine.

Dinu, thank you for your advice and thoughts. You've made this year more manageable for me, and I'm grateful to you for paving the way. Andy, what a joy you are to have around the house. Thank you for making me smile when I needed it. In moments of anxiety and hopelessness, the smallest things can turn your day around, and for that I thank you, Hasini. I looked at the simple sentence you wrote on my wall, saying, "I love you, Dee", every day. It gave me the courage and motivation to continue. My grandmother and grandfather are the people who work hard for me behind the scenes. Thank you for always supporting me.

"We boys, we're like no other. We ensure that we all pass together. Just to be in the company with you all makes it that much easier."

I hold the teachers of this school in the highest regard. To Ms Poulse, Mr McDonald and Mr Dexter, I will be forever grateful. Ms Apostolopoulos was new to the school, but how could anyone tell, with that calm assurance, that easy kindness? It took all year to spell your name, but your classes were instantly recognisable and enjoyable. Thank you for understanding the stress we went through, and baking cakes to help. Then there's the man himself, the crazy old man that walks, Mr McKail. You are, and will forever be, one of the most influential and intellectual people I've ever known. Thank you for all the lessons you've taught me, not just as a student, but as a man. Your knowledge and pure dedication to teaching astounds me, and although your goofy exterior fools some people, we all know in this College of your indispensable value. Thank you.

We boys, we're like no other. We ensure that we all pass together. Just to be in the company with you all, makes it that much easier.

I'd like to take this opportunity to mention two great men looking down on me, two men without whom I would not be here. Mr Anthony Johnston I have missed dreadfully. He found the spark of passion in me for Mathematics. His impact on me was like that of no other teacher. Mr Johnston, your wisdom, your skills and your dedication to this school and your teaching were inspiring. I hope you're having fun up there. The other great man is George Fernando, a man not known to most of you. This man taught me steely determination and resolve, strength and resilience. For me he connected achievement with self-respect. He is Dinu's grandfather, as he is Andy's and mine. He was a Brigadier General in the Sri Lankan Army, and luckily I saw the treasure he was while he was alive. He was not rich, nor was he privileged, but he was the richest and most privileged man possible in terms of humble human wealth of character. I'm

proud to be his grandson.

How did I make it through Year 12? Please don't take what I'm about to say as a lecture; it's simply some personal observations that you all know, which some of you haven't applied yet.

You will benefit from your own plan, and you will benefit if you stick to it. You need your own routines of study. If you see someone who is clearly succeeding, there is nothing wrong with getting your ideas and his together. And there's nothing wrong with receiving a bit more than you give, as long as you acknowledge and remember the debt. Pick someone to be competitive with, look ahead and know that it comes to an end in November. Act on your worries. Don't let them build up, because the more they linger in your head, the more damage they will do. Do something about them. However, in doing so, you must do the very opposite of isolating yourself. When you are in your room alone at 11pm or midnight, you need to know that there are

others in their own rooms, somewhere out there, going through exactly the same thing. Your mates are doing it with you. That will strengthen you, so program it into your thinking. Your family is on the other side of the wall of your room. You may be physically isolated, but you aren't alone. So many people invisible to you at your desk are right there with you. Remember that.

I'm fundamentally now, today, who I was in Year Seven. Salesian didn't make me who I am. What it did do was keep me within the bounds of who I was to become. In fact, I feel today that I exceeded my own expectations. I hope it happens again and again. I might put it this way. Salesian has exceeded MY expectations. And yet again, the judgement of my parents has been justified, because I simply arrived at this school, and they planned it.

Thank you, one and all.

Deeshan Ambawatta
2016 College Dux