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*Anthony Farrell Dux Speech 2020*

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Good morning, Mr Ronchetti, students, teachers, parents, and distinguished guests. It is with immense privilege that I stand before you today, honoured to be representing the graduating year group from the 61st year of St Dominic's history, to share my journey and provide the advice that guided me to be the College Dux for 2020. I aim to inspire the fine young men of the college to always push for success, in not only academics, but every aspect of life.

In a year like no other, I would first like to congratulate all of those who stand beside me today. You must all be so proud of what you have achieved, especially faced with the adversities of COVID 19 on top of the already persistent challenges of year 12 studies. Through diligence and sustained effort, you have overcome the hurdles and are deservedly highlighted today as role models for inspiring students to look up to. Continue this form into your adult lives, bearing the ideals of college, to not just be a man of complacency, yet a gentleman with goals, passion, and determination.

I would like to mention that throughout my schooling I was never the smartest, the sportiest or the most well-behaved kid, yet I was always hardworking and determined to better myself. I remember sitting up on the mezzanine in year 7 listening to the Dux give his address wondering how it must feel to do so well. Wondering what it was like to be someone who others look up towards. I became determined and set myself the challenge to be in that same spot when I finished school. I knew the journey would be long and hard, so I set myself short term goals to keep me focussed and on track. Every year I dreamed of being awarded a major award at the annual awards night because I firmly believed that an accolade would symbolise a step closer towards my end goal. Despite continuing to represent the school in sport, complete my hours of social justice and receive a Principal's Award for straight A's in my subjects I always fell short of my goal. This constant failure pushed me to work harder the next year, yet I lost sight of the significance of my contributions and eventually deemed myself to be insignificant and unworthy. Towards the end of school I started to become very downhearted and felt as if my goal were an eternity away and each passing day would slip further and further out of reach. Thankfully, my teachers supported me and referred me to the school counsellor where I was able to get the help I needed and realised how much I had really accomplished and how proud I should be. During one session I received the best piece of advice I had ever been given, that "sometimes YOUR best isn't always THE best" and that's okay as long as what you put forward is your best work. By year 12 graduation I still never received a major award, and although disappointed at the time, I knew that I still had one more shot at achieving my goal, yet this time without the added pressure to feel as if I needed to succeed. I told myself that I would be happy with my marks as long as I remained diligent to my studies. I stand before you today as an example that anyone can achieve something if they put their mind to it. I learnt the difference between unhealthy and healthy behaviours towards achieving my goal. I learnt the value of patience and acceptance, two skills that will drive you anywhere you want to be in life. Failure shouldn't be the thing that defeats you, it should act as the tool that defines you, helps to sculpt you into a better man. It is only through failure that we become closer to achieving our goals. Yet it is up to the individual to harness the lesson in defeat and use that to build towards a bright future.

I would now like to thank the people who made it possible for me to be here, this could take a while.

To my dearest Mother, you are my reason 'why'. If anyone knows me, they automatically know that you are my rock in this world, the role model of my life, the one that taught me right from wrong.

You had so little when you were young yet gave us kids the opportunity of a lifetime at this great school so that we could have a bright future. Your continuing sacrifices as a single mother highlight your selflessness and compassion towards others. I take every day as an opportunity to try and make you proud and hopefully one day give you the life you deserve.

To my darling Sister, you were always there when mum couldn't be. From an early age you had to take so much responsibility in the family, and there's not a day that goes past that I don't cherish everything you do for us boys.

My Twin Brother Matthew, despite being a pain in my neck, you were always there to challenge me and force me out of my comfort zone. You are a true gentleman and should be incredibly happy with your results. You're going to have a tremendously bright future.

To all the boys of 2020, you always supported me and helped me to relax and keep my cool, to just enjoy life and not take yourself too seriously. In particular I'd like to thank Isiah for the prayers he blessed me with, Cooper for always being a worthy competitor and terrific leader of the school and James for all the laughs and memes.

To all the Staff at St Dominic's, I appreciate all of you for showing up each day and making it possible for this school to run, you truly are our greatest resource. I won't have time to name all of you but if we have ever had a chat in the yard or you've assisted me in thinking about my future, I thank you a lot.

To Mr Gerlach, the man with the perfect beard, thank you for all the work you put into to ensure that we were ready for the HSC year. Mr Levy, one of the real G's, your RAP rules will help all the boys in all aspects of life. It is an honour to be your final year group and I wish you good health in your retirement. Mr Ronchetti, I appreciate the direction you moved the school in, St Dominic's have done a fine job at turning boys into gentleman and your leadership was paramount to that success. I'll never undermine the importance of the bucket or go to a pub again without muttering to myself 'raise the bar'. Mr Turner, when I first walked past the school gates you were there to scare the living daylights out of us. Turns out you're actually a big softie. I was lucky enough to both start and finish my journey with you by my side, thank you for always believing in me, you really are a good bloke. To the King himself, Mr Passlow, you are the personification of school spirit. Surawski will always be the powerhouse with you at the War Cry. Mr Lal, thanks for teaching Western Sydney's biggest drillers all about the human body. That nutmeg on Gerlach is up there with the likes of Ronaldo, Messi, and Maradona. Ms McSweeney, I'm glad I never have to memorise another line of Shakespeare again. You helped me to constantly think outside the box and express my vulgar vernacular in a sophisticated way. To the Library ladies for always hooking it up, you all believed in me at times when I didn't. You have kept me motivated and well fed.

To Mr Hall, your unrivalled coaching ability gave us men a place to be boys and just have fun. Whether it was the friendly fire slide tackles or destroying Greg's in the ruck, you always found a way to make me short of breath. That trip to Brisbane was the highlight of my school experience and it's a real shame we couldn't be crowned kings in Adelaide. You were always down for a chat and highlighted the comradery of a Dommie's Boy.

To the PE boys, I still can't believe how well we did. Mr Borg's teaching ability combined with Mr Jansz' knowledge of the syllabus and ability to inspire the youth made for a deadly combination. Mr Peake and his secret weapons had nothing on our unconventional way of learning.

To Mrs Torpy, you are truly an amazing woman. Despite the fact that you weren't one of my senior teachers, you always offered to help out my brother and I when we were fed up with Shakespeare. You taught us to cut the balderdash in our writing and were also there when ever we needed a chat or make us remember how important our mother is.

Finally, to Ms Monteleone, I've never met a teacher more committed to the success of their students. For two straight years we never missed an arvo study session, you kept me focussed on my goal and also taught me many important lessons in life. You knew how badly I wanted that state ranking and thus were never satisfied with imperfection. You instilled a tremendous work ethic in me and ultimately guided me to attaining the third highest score in the state for Food Technology. I still can't believe you were going to kick me out of the course before I even started. You made every class enjoyable and even when I didn't want to come to school you knew I'd refuse to miss your lessons.

To finish off I'm going to keep the tradition and end on a quote to inspire all students in their learning. In the words of the great Neil deGrasse Tyson, "There is no greater education than one that is self-driven".