

Mr McMillan – Principal

Mrs Sparrow – Chair, Board of Trustees

College Staff, Parents and Friends AND Students of Year 12

I would like to thank you for the invitation to speak to you tonight and participate in acknowledging Year 12's achievements of 2009. Academically, Year 12 is a very important and challenging year and I sincerely wish you the best of outcomes from your impending examinations.

In some respects this is a sad occasion for Julie and I as this will be our last official engagement with Ashburton College, as parents. When Mark completes his exams we will have had 16 consecutive years as parents of Ashburton College students. I would like to take this opportunity to repeat what I said a few weeks ago at the official opening of the new Science Block.

We are privileged to say that our children have been students at Ashburton College. Teaching is a very challenging profession, but over those years we have been grateful for the excellent quality of teaching and I applaud the staff's commitment and professionalism. When you students leave Ashburton College, you are as prepared and as capable of achieving as anyone. We as a community are sometimes a little shy in promoting this fact. As Mayor I do so un-reservedly!"

As your Year 12 draws to a close many of you will still be undecided on what direction you would like to take in the future. You will be asked "what will you be doing after you finish school". My advice to you is to make that decision in your own time and be prepared to change if the need arises.

I can well remember the day when we were about to take our Brigit down to Dunedin where she was to enrol at Otago University in Health Sciences — and then when we were about to leave she declared that she really would prefer to study Law.

Some frantic work on the phone secured appointments that afternoon to enrol in Law / Commerce which she duly completed. Another example relates to the son of professional parents who was probably expected to follow in the family tradition — not that he was pressured to do so by his parents, but it was assumed that he would. He declared, with their blessing, that he wanted to obtain a trade and after some experimentation he settled on an apprenticeship the next year.

Life is so much more complicated than in my day as a student, for example, and the opportunities open to you — so enormous that to be expected to know exactly where you will be in 5 or 10 years time is just not realistic. Be patient and set achievable expectations and I am sure you will achieve in whatever direction you set yourself.

Golf dominates the O'Malley household at the moment, in fact it has done so for a couple of years and if you stop to consider this for a moment, your school career can be compared to a game of golf.

No matter who you are, there is always a degree of nervousness when beginning a competitive round — just like you would have been a little apprehensive when commencing Year 9 in January 2006. As the round progresses / or school year — you become more relaxed and gain more confidence, but there are always obstacles or hazards to be negotiated. A pre-determined game plan or course management is essential if you are to succeed, as is Club selection and the ability to handle any mistakes along the way. In golf a 250m drive counts the same as a small putt. That drive may be 50 metres off line but you have the opportunity to recover if not with the next shot, then certainly with the next, provided you allow clear thinking to dictate your actions.

In using the golf analogy, your scholastic career is nearing the 15<sup>th</sup> and final hole and the most critical phase of the round.

You will by now have experienced some of the obstacles that life in general throws before us.

But coming down the “home straight” there is again that tinge of apprehension and the potential to lose focus / concentration. Missing a short putt can be costly in more ways than one. It is usually the result of a lapse in concentration and can never be recovered. (Danny Lee Under 23’s 2008).

Judge Andrew Beacroft, Chief Youth Court Judge, who is a passionate advocate for our youth, speaks often about the capability of our young people to make sound decisions. The frontal portion of our brain is not fully developed until our early 20’s. This area is responsible for decision making, ie **common sense**! Throw in the ready availability of alcohol, drugs, high power cars and generational changes in attitude to discipline, then is it any wonder we have the scale of issues he faces daily in his Courtroom.

As you move on towards that magical mark of 18 and all that means in our modern society, please stick to your game plan, please make sensible choices and please do not lose focus in order that you can perform to your full potential.

The next 12 months will be among the most exciting of your lives. You will be called upon to be your school’s leaders — welcome the challenge and the opportunities before you. You are our most precious resources, treasure that fact just as you would if you had the opportunity to win a big tournament by sinking a small putt.

Year 12 students, parents, friends and staff — thank you all for your contribution to College life and may you all enjoy a productive and restful holiday season and an even more momentous 2010.