

Fr Leno, distinguished and invited guests, families and students.

I always look forward to this address, because it is a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon the successes of the year and to remind every member of our school community that none of this meaningful without our students. The annual Awards Night is an occasion to recognise excellence and distinction in academia, the religious life of the school, cultural pursuits, achievements in sport and service to the community. This is a special Awards Night in our 140th year.

The awards presented to students this evening is the most formal way we acknowledge students' achievements and their contribution to our school community. Many of you will be aware that we recognise the good work of students within and beyond the classroom, whether this be with a Mercy award, special presentations at assemblies, features in our newsletter and on our social networking sites.

The presentation tonight is a good measure of student and more broadly, school success over a year. However, there are others and I take this opportunity to highlight these for you.

Our students' performance on NAPLAN continues to confirm that our school is one of the highest performing schools in this district and across the diocese of Toowoomba. In Years 5, 7 and 9, students have made excellent gains across the areas of reading, writing, spelling, grammar and punctuation and numeracy. While there have been high gains across all year levels, Year 9 is a particular stand-out year level, with the School achieving well-above the state and national means in all areas. Furthermore, as the graph on the screen now shows, the gains these students have made in the intervening years in 2013 and 2014 remain significantly above the average gain of the State of Queensland. In Reading specifically, the gains are double those shown here. The reasons for this are multi-layered. The first is that our School offers students a rigorous curriculum which is facilitated by skilled and committed teachers. Each teacher, from Prep through to Year 9 has contributed to these results. We know that the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the strongest factor in student achievement. These results support the assertions of that research. Secondly, St Joseph's School has an environment where students feel safe, are supported and can commit their best to achieve their potential. Thirdly, we have supportive parents and families who understand the value of education and encourage their children to high achievement. It is for these reasons that our school was listed in the top 300 schools in Australia as a 'high gain' performer in NAPLAN.

In addition to results from standardised tests, our school-based results show that 95 percent of students in Years 7-10 achieved between a Standard A and C, with 43 percent of these students receiving between a Standard A and B. This success extends into the Primary Campus with 97% of

students achieving between a Standard A and C. Our students' results in both Primary and Secondary are internally and externally moderated to ensure that teachers' judgements are accurate. In addition, a number of our students performed exceptionally well in various academic competitions, most notably Travis Murphy who achieved in the top 5 percent of participants in the Maths Olympiad, Eliza Telfer, Taryn McCosker and Taylor Organ achieving in the top 5 percent of participants and Hannah Widderick achieving in the top 2 percent of participants all in the Maths Games competition. The Maths Olympiad and Maths Games are both national competitions. Finally, our Year 5&6 Maths Team Challenge team won the Granite Belt competition and our Year 4/5 teams came 1st, 2nd and 4th in the Warwick competition. Our team which won consisted of all girls, which defies some of the research around girls' achievement and interest in Mathematics.

As we look forward to our Year 12 results (perhaps not as much as the Year 12 students themselves), it is worthwhile noting our most recent history of performance. Last year, 28% of our OP eligible students achieved an OP between 1-5, and 80% of our students achieved an OP between 1-15. Indeed, in a 2014 rank order of best performing schools in student OP achievement, our school ranked 43 out of 326 Queensland schools across all sectors. Furthermore, all of our students who applied for a tertiary place received an offer.

In addition to our OP success, we continue to grow the cohort of students undertaking School-based apprenticeships and traineeships. We currently have 19 students undertaking training, which has been a focus by the School for a number of years. While Certificate I & II course completions look good on publicly available league tables, many of these qualifications are meaningless in real world workplaces. St Joseph's School prefers to invest its energy and finances into training which actually leads to sustainable employment and is responsive to the skills needs of the contemporary workforce. For many of our Year 9 and 10 students, the use of the Trade Training Centre has ignited an interest in trade-related careers.

Our School leaders will detail for you how we continue to live out our Catholic identity through the School's Mercy Values, but it will come as no surprise to families and friends of our school that we continue to be the leading school in the area of community engagement. Our relationship with the Stanthorpe chapter of St Vincent de Paul, Granite Belt Support Services, CDS, Carramar, Stanthorpe Nursing home, the Lions Club, Rotary Club, the Stanthorpe Food Bank, the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal, Caritas Australia and Catholic Missions provide our students with invaluable opportunities for community service and a tangible expression of Jesus's call to reach out to the poor, marginalised and disenfranchised of our world.

Schools only function well when we have cooperative students and excellent staff. I want to acknowledge the quality Catholic educational leadership offered by the school's Executive Leadership Team: Mr David Fleming, Mrs Megan Mahoney and Mrs Linda Perrett, and to all our teachers and education support staff who provide students with a level of expertise which enables students to achieve their best. I also thank the school ancillary and administrative support staff for their ongoing work as the "face of the school", and I offer my gratitude to my professional assistant, Mrs Angie Sims for her energy, commitment and ongoing loyalty to me and our school.

Our parents play a key role at St Joseph's School, and the School Board and P&F are the peak parent bodies who assist me with strategic decision-making, honest reflection and regular sage advice on all matters St Joseph's School. I particularly thank our Chair of the School Board, Mr Chris Haynes and President of the P&F, Mr Peter Alldridge for their continuing commitment to our School, and to all parents who support our school in so many ways. This was certainly evident during our School Fete on Saturday, where so many members of school community came together to cooperatively contribute so magnanimously to what, in conclusion, was an excellent day and a great success.

I also want to acknowledge and thank my wife Michelle who supports me in my role as Principal, and not the least by enduring over 50 nights of my absence for school-related business, as well as her adept navigation of the complexities of being a spouse of a school principal.

Having taught in a number of schools across Queensland, I often reflect with my colleagues how fortunate we are to be in this School. From experiences teaching in the classroom, going away on school camps, excursions and sporting trips, to just the simple, incidental interactions, the conclusion is always the same: our students are fantastic young people, who love their school, are happy to be here, are always respectful and who, in the most significant ways, make this school the excellent place it is.