

Speech of welcome
by the Head of College, Professor Don Markwell, at the
Admission Ceremony
St Mark's College, Adelaide
Thursday 18 February 2021

A very warm welcome to St Mark's College, and to this Admission Ceremony.

We are very grateful to Uncle Rod O'Brien and Uncle Micky O'Brien for the Welcome to Country and for the Smoking Ceremony. We at St Mark's acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional Country of the Kurna people of the Adelaide Plain and pay respect to Elders past, present, and emerging.

We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land, and we acknowledge that these are of continuing importance to the Kurna people living today.

It is my pleasure to welcome our new students, parents and other family members to St Mark's. We are delighted that you are here. I hope that parents and other family members will stay for the barbecue after this ceremony. In the meantime, I hope you won't mind if I speak directly to our new students – the newest members of St Mark's College.

In welcoming our new students to St Mark's, I am welcoming you to a college – a residential academic *community* – in which you will be both supported and challenged. You will be supported and challenged by your fellow students; by our outstanding student leaders, including our Assistant Deans, College Club Committee, Residential Advisers, Academic Coordinators, and others; and by our immensely talented and dedicated staff - such as our Dean, Mr Stuart Meldrum, our Director of Learning, Dr Rachel Buxton, and others whom you will meet tomorrow.

Later in this ceremony, after the College Club President, Sophie Ludbrook, has also welcomed you, Dr Buxton will read the name of each of our new students – every one a valued new member of our community. As you come up, I will welcome you personally – though unfortunately in this time of COVID not shaking your hand – and then you are asked to join the Dean at the table here to your right and to sign the College's Roll of Members – the same book that has been signed by students on entering this College since our founding in 1925.

In signing the Roll of Members, you agree to uphold the values of the College – values which include living with integrity and with consideration and respect for others, pursuing academic excellence, and serving others both here and in the wider community. These are values summed up in our College motto, which translates as “excellence reaches for the stars”. As an Anglican institution, our values are also beautifully encapsulated in our College prayer and hymn, which we will use in our Commencement Service on Saturday week in the Cathedral which overlooks these tennis courts. I regret that because of COVID restrictions we are not able to invite family members to the Commencement Service this year.

Here at St Mark's, our new students will be supported in good times and in bad; as you work to do your best in your academic studies and in preparing for your later careers; as you take part in sporting, cultural, social and other activities; as you contribute to the great St Mark's tradition of community service, wonderfully led by our students' Charitable Foundation; as from time to time you struggle with difficult matters, as all of us sometimes do; and as you find that the friendships you make here will be some of the deepest and most enduring of your life – including with students of other subjects and backgrounds whom you would probably never otherwise meet.

St Mark's is a community, and the pandemic through which we are living – with the many challenges of lockdowns, quarantine, and restrictions - has shown us yet again the value of community – the value of people connecting with other people, COVID-safely of course, and of knowing that you belong in a community in which you are valued. In welcoming you to St Mark's, I am welcoming you to such a community.

This is a community committed to supporting you in achieving your full potential in your studies – studies that will bring all the benefits of higher education, including through opening doors of career opportunity that would otherwise be locked, and I hope including personal fulfilment.

Your academic success matters, and making good use of your time is a key to achieving your best. On the Facebook page for St Mark's First Years over the last couple of weeks, there have been profiles of various student leaders. Asked for tips for new students, the recurring theme of the advice of student leaders is the importance of planning and managing your time, of being organised, of getting started early with your work, and of keeping on top of your work rather than letting it get on top of you. This is great advice from our student leaders.

They – our student leaders – know from their own experience that, through careful management of time, it is possible to do well in studies and much else besides at the same time. Last year, over half the marks secured by St Mark's students were High Distinctions or Distinctions – an outstanding achievement – achieved at the same time as we won the High Table Cup for inter-college sporting and other competition, had an impressive record of community service, and, notwithstanding the pandemic, had a lot of fun. It *can* be done.

Planning and managing your time is also one of the keys to making wise use of the freedom which you will have as a university and college student. It can be challenging to make the transition to greater freedom about how to use your time, and you need to think carefully about it.

One of the challenges can be about choices regarding drinking. Every student 18 or over is, of course, entitled to choose to drink – or to choose not to drink. No one should ever pressure you to drink, or to drink more than you want. It is worth knowing the important fact that almost every behavioural problem that ever arises in the College (and problems do arise, through lack of consideration and respect for others) arises in the context of individuals making unwise choices about how much to drink.

Please don't be *that* person. Instead, learn to make wise use of your freedom.

Today you join a community in which you will belong and be valued throughout your time in residence here. But you are also joining a community in which you will belong and be valued

for the rest of your life. Today you become a member of this College – a Collegian – and when you go out of residence, you will become an Old Collegian. On this, the day on which you first become officially a member of the College, that may seem a long way off, but it is not too early to say that I hope that, when you eventually become an Old Collegian, you will stay connected with St Mark's over many decades to come.

Because under pandemic conditions we cannot all fit into the dining hall, where we would normally hold this ceremony, we are meeting today on these tennis courts. Around us are buildings all of which only exist because members of the St Mark's community of past generations and indeed present generations have given generously to build them. Every student of this College is, in this and other ways, the beneficiary of the generosity of others.

It is my hope that, being grateful for the generosity of others and for the opportunities which St Mark's gives you, you will as an Old Collegian in years to come do all you can to hand on these opportunities to future generations, and hand them on even better.

But today you are at the *beginning* of your exciting and rewarding journey as a member of this College.

I could not be more delighted to welcome you to the College, and to wish you all the best for the life-changing opportunities that lie ahead.

And now to join me in welcoming you, I have pleasure in inviting our College Club President, Sophie Ludbrook, to speak. Sophie is a third-year medical student, a Hawker Scholar, and one of our highest achieving students, and was last year the President of our Charitable Foundation.

Ladies and gentlemen – Sophie Ludbrook.