

**Response by the Head of College, Professor Don Markwell AM,
to the Toast to the College
St Mark's College Centenary Gala Dinner
Adelaide Convention Centre
Saturday 15 March 2025**

On this 100th anniversary to the day of the opening of St Mark's, it is profoundly moving for me as Head of this College which we all love to respond to the excellent Toast proposed by Bruce DeBelle.

Bruce rightly referred with admiration to the founding Master, Sir Archibald Grenfell Price.

In December 1924, when Mr Archie Price was appointed to head a college that did not yet exist, sceptics expressed surprise that he would give up an excellent position as a school teacher to – I quote - “take on an enterprise that would certainly fail”.

Well, here we are, over one thousand of us, 100 years later, celebrating and proving the success and the impact for good of an enterprise that most certainly did not fail!

Instead, for precisely 100 years, this College has, through good times and bad, grown into what I believe is one of the gems – one of the jewels in the crown – of Australian higher education, offering its students one of the finest all-round university educational experiences available in this country – a values-based residential academic community in which to live, learn, and thrive.

In keeping with the vision, the values, and the high hopes of our founders, and thanks to the labours and the generosity of so many, including so many here tonight, St Mark's has been and is:

- an opener of life-changing opportunity for young people of potential from far and wide,
- a centre of academic excellence and of personal growth, shaping young adults for their future lives and careers,
- a training ground for teamwork, for leadership, and for service, and
- a fellowship of friends – a community in which countless lifelong friendships have been forged, so many of them reflected here tonight and across this weekend, with so many memories brought back and, I hope, new memories made.

With gratitude and pride, we celebrate all the good that this College and successive generations of Collegians have achieved and contributed.

On this night precisely 100 years ago, after the guests for the official opening had left Downer House, the nine students with whom the College started and the Master no doubt wondered what the future would bring.

One hundred years on, 2025 sees not only the largest enrolment of students in our history, but it also sees a student population of exceptional talent and potential, of whom I am very proud; excellent student leaders and a vibrant, safe, and healthy student life and culture; facilities bigger and better than ever; and a staff team to support our students which is second to none.

The achievements of our students, including in excellent academic results and in community service, and the friendships and mutual support that continue to develop here suggest that the vision and values of our founders are alive and well today.

In celebrating the best in our history and looking ahead with optimism and confidence, we also know, of course, that not everything has been or is always as it should be, but we continue to strive to narrow the gap between noble aspiration and imperfect reality.

As we celebrate the College's Centenary, we also enter our second century, and as we do, we recommit to upholding the values for which we stand.

In the last couple of years, our wonderful student leaders have written a statement of those values – what they call the Living Document of Values – which all our students sign, pledging to uphold them. The Living Document lists those values as:

- Integrity
- Collegiality
- Respect
- Growth, and
- Generosity

I think our founders would be pleased to see the College's values expressed this way, and I think they would, like me, be proud of what St Mark's has contributed over the last 100 years, and of the Collegians of today.

Since 1925, student leaders have played a central role in shaping College life, and College life has played a central role in shaping leaders.

Being so proud of the students and student leaders of St Mark's, it is my immense pleasure to introduce to you our Centenary year College Club President, Cameron Dixon, and Vice-President, Tiahna Olsen, to speak.