

Elliot Tay
2024 Keynote Speech

Good morning Mr Featherston, Mr Angus, Dr Swann, staff, and boys.

I am not a natural public speaker. As a result, I found myself seeking advice from people around me who are more comfortable with speaking in front of an audience. In doing so, I realised what I wanted to talk to you about, and the topic may surprise those of you who know me well.

As I was gathering small bits of advice from my peers, I realised just how important other people are. Now, as a self-proclaimed introvert who is not well known for having a voracious appetite for social events, I once believed that I would be better off on my own, without interference from others.

However, I now understand the crucial nature of our being a social species, and, related to [Zach's keynote](#) two weeks ago, I want to address what I believe are the three key types of people that are necessary in your lives.

I am, however, aware that you have undoubtedly been spoken to before about the importance of parents and mentor figures in your development, so I decided to focus on the importance of peers.

That being said, the first group of people you should look for are friends that drive you to pursue excellence. In terms of a school situation where academics is the first amongst equals, I believe it is essential that you find a group of peers that drive you to achieve highly.

Personally, my close friends are all extremely academic and act as a constant reminder of what can be achieved, as well as providing motivation to keep working hard, even when I feel burnt out at times.

Whenever I feel unmotivated or lazy, their constant diligence in their work inspires me to continue trying, even if part of it is my competitive side coming out.

In the same way the Hancock Wing or a library provides an environment that encourages productivity, a group of friends who all study hard and have a healthy commitment to their schoolwork keeps you accountable for your studies and ensures you don't slack off and get distracted.

Similarly, if you find yourself constantly getting distracted while doing work at home, I encourage you to go to a nearby library, as the presence of other people alone who are working hard can push you to conform to the expectations of the space, thus resulting in increased productivity.

The second group I would like to address can be considered the "social" friends. While these people are by no means "un academic" – in fact, all of them are equally academic

in their own right – I value their healthy balance of work and play and find that spending time with them allows me to take a break from the slog of school and relax.

For me, I made these friends from my time doing the School musicals. I enjoy going to the movies or bowling or just hanging out at their house as a way of finding that balance of work and relaxation – something that I would find difficult to achieve by myself.

Furthermore, if I were to stay isolated in my bubble of friends that I previously mentioned, it is quite likely that the only time I would leave my house is to go study with them at the Melbourne Uni library. By contrast, I find the relaxing time spent with this group of friends to be essential in not getting burnt out.

Finally, and arguably most importantly, finding someone who pushes you to take part in things, not just survive school, but actively get involved in other activities of school life is essential to prevent you from getting burnt out and bored with school.

Personally, from Year 7 to 9, I was super apathetic and lazy, doing nothing more than the bare minimum and just trudging through school with no spark or passion. However, in Year 10, I made a new friend. This person is, in the best of ways, an overachiever, collecting every badge and co-curricular activity under the sun like it's a trophy.

As a result, they inspired me to get involved in more optional activities, starting small with the school musicals and coaching, and eventually resulting in me taking bigger steps out of my comfort zone that led to me becoming a prefect amongst other things.

As such, I implore you to find people who inspire you to take risks and get involved in as much as you can. Because of this person, I developed a new mindset where, whenever I see a new opportunity to get involved in, I think "why not?"

Because of this, I have all these extracurricular activities and responsibilities that keep me busy, preventing me from getting bored or settling into a monotonous routine every day. Now, most days have something I can look forward to, whether it's a rehearsal, coaching a Year 6 student or a meeting with marketing.

With all that being said, I know making new friends may not be for everyone. As I previously stated, I am not a particularly social person, so I understand not wanting to go out of your way to find new friends. So, I encourage you to try new things out, be authentic to yourself, and your personality will naturally attract like-minded people.

To conclude, I would like to leave you with a quote by Amy Poehler:

"Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you; spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life."

Thank you.