



Carter Russell – Prefect (Community & Engagement)

Keynote Speech 2025

I want to start with a story. The morning sun cast a warm glow over Brighton Grammar as students in sharp navy blazers streamed through the front gate. A young boy, his uniform immaculate and shoes polished, approached with a mix of nerves and excitement. Standing at the entrance was Mr Tellefson, greeting each student with a firm and welcoming handshake. The boy took a steady breath, recalling his father's advice – a firm handshake, strong eye contact.

"Welcome to Brighton Grammar," Mr Tellefson said, recalling the boy's full name. A surge of pride filled him as he stepped forward, ready to embrace the day.

Good morning, Mr Featherston, Dr Swan, Mr Angus, Ms White, my family, staff, and boys. Today, I stand before you as your Community and Engagement Prefect at Brighton Grammar. I am deeply humbled and grateful for the opportunity to deliver this speech.

Being a part of the Brighton Grammar community is not just about individual success – it is about contributing to something greater than yourself. At its core, a strong community provides support, a sense of belonging, and a lifelong network of friends and family that extends well beyond our time at school. Today, I want to speak about three key values that lie at the heart of our Brighton Grammar community: the importance of respect, the value of kindness, and the significance of commitment.

The story shared at the beginning of this speech was my first experience at Brighton Grammar – the day I stepped through the gates of the Junior School in Year 6 back in 2019. My family and I had been living overseas in Southeast Asia for over six years. Moving back to Melbourne after so long felt foreign. However, knowing my father had once stepped through the same gates of Brighton Grammar for the first time, it had given me confidence. He had told me to greet the principal with a firm handshake and to always maintain eye contact. That small act of greeting someone, at a young age, shaped my understanding of respect within a community.

Not only did I feel more comfortable knowing the principal remembered my name, but that simple moment forged something deeper. For me, it became a symbol of respect – a reminder to acknowledge others, to listen when someone speaks, and to appreciate the efforts of those around us. Learning respect at a young age was crucial. Though it seemed like a small lesson at the time, it served a broader purpose in how I interact with others.

At Brighton Grammar, respect should not be just a word on a poster or an empty phrase – it needs to be a value we live by. Our community is built on this foundation of respect, carried forward by 143 years of students, fathers, and grandfathers who have walked these halls before us. It is why we passionately chant on a Friday night and Saturday morning. It is why we remember not to stand on the grass in the Quad. It is why we shake hands with our opponents, always gracious in win, loss, or draw. But importantly, respect is not just about the ceremonial gestures – it is also about how we treat each other, how we respond to our teachers, how we show up on public transport – it is an understanding that others matter.



In this room today, I see passionate and dedicated teachers. I see respectful and devoted young men. But it is up to each of us to decide how we will immerse ourselves in the culture and history of our school.

A famous philosopher once said, 'The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.' The countless Old Brighton Grammarians who have walked these halls are all part of this community. The respect we uphold, the kindness we show to our Tonners, and the commitment we dedicate to this school are carried forward through them. Throughout the year, the Old Grammarians support the Year 12s in various ways, culminating in the Valedictory Day BBQ and the passing on of the OBGS ties. Through this, we become part of the chain of men who share a history and support each other. I love the story told last year, when a group of Year 12s celebrating the end of the school year, came across a 50-year Brighton reunion at the New Bay Hotel. Despite the differences in age, they shared stories and laughs and the young men listened and felt part of something enduring and important.

My grandfather is turning 90 this year. He was deeply involved in Brighton Grammar – not by appointment, but by choice. When the First XV Rugby team had no coach, he stepped up. For six years in the late 1980s, he dedicated himself to guiding and mentoring young men on the field. That is commitment.

While I am aware that this is not equal to what he did, there are so many opportunities for us to contribute to the wellbeing of each other and the school – for example, the Year 10 and 11 coaching program gives us the opportunity to work with Year 5s and 6s. While it seems so easy for us, it actually has a profound impact on those younger boys who look up to us so much. I still remember my old OELP mentor, Ben Sexton. He took the time to get to know me, and although I was new and unsure, he honestly made me feel like I belonged here. His generosity and appreciation of others underscore the true impact kindness can have.

Any act of service, any act of involvement, any act of engagement strengthens our community and ensures its longevity. The power of community is often understated, but it is these simple moments – like the principal remembering my name on my first day – that take on a deeper meaning. We have all been given incredible opportunities. But a good life goes beyond just ourselves. A truly rich life involves giving back to others.

Our school community extends far beyond the aspects of schooling and your understanding of its importance may change, but the lifelong network of friends and family that you have will last.

Continue to immerse yourself in this school, be respectful of others, and never forget the importance of empathy. Bring a hunger to improve, bring a hunger to provide service to our community.

Meliora Sequamur

Thank you.