



## Morning Comment

### Boarders' Assembly – Friday 1 August 2025

Beau Hopkinson (Year 13)



Giddyay everyone, for those of you who don't know me or who couldn't care less, I'm Beau, a Year 13 boarder here at St Andrew's College. I've been here since Year 9 and can proudly call myself one of the few who managed to stick it out the whole five years.

If you were to tell a Year 9 Beau that in five years' time, you're going to be standing in front of the whole school saying the address at Boarders' Assembly, he probably would've said "what a joke, you're bloody dreaming." If you were then to tell me that same thing at the start of this year, I would have again said "ya bloody dreaming." But here we are.

Throughout my early years at St Andrew's, I had my fair share of visits to Mr Parr and Mrs Stirling's offices, for varied reasons, many which won't be brought up today – as I wouldn't want to give the Year 9 boarders too many ideas. One of them I remember vividly, as it was my very first time entering Mr Parr's office, and the majority of the boys behind me got told that Mr Parr wanted to see us after some of the conversations that were being told a little bit too loud in the dining room. What exactly was said at that table during our annual formal dinner I'm unsure about; but one thing I can remember was that look that Mr Parr gave me when I walked through the door into his office. I always thought that look would be the most daunting thing I'd see at St Andrew's – until today – having to stand here and come up with something to say to the 1000 people sitting in front of me.

Now when thinking of a topic for this speech, based off my experience in boarding, and with ChatGPT, you'd think something would have sparked an idea for me to base my speech around, but nope, nothing came to mind. Fortunately, with the help from my personal tutor and so-called Head of Boarding, Lachie Sidey, the idea was brought up of "day one." And although those may not have been his exact words, it's at least what I took from it.

I don't usually like talking about my Year 9 days but, experiences must be shared. With a freshly trimmed buzz cut, a bit chubbier, shorter, and tad more confident, Year 9 Beau strolled into MacGibbon House with a bit of a spring in his step, excited to meet all these new people. From day one I took every opportunity in front of me. I have a clear memory of the pōwhiri in Year 9, when we were having a dean's meeting and Mr Tuu'u was speaking to us, wanting to know if any student from Year 9 would do something in front of the whole school. Now looking back, he probably did explain what exactly it was that we'd be doing, but I can't say I was listening. So, when he asked for a volunteer, "Put your hand up," I was sure everyone would be rearing to get up there, so my hand shot up. I looked around and realised what I'd just done. Not a single other hand was to be seen. There was me, a little



white fella from deep in the Marlborough Sounds, who had just nominated himself to hongi all the new staff in front of the entire school. All I can say is that it was quite an experience for me.

At this point you're probably wondering what the video I shared meant about having to pick between the different doors to either Doritos, or the vegetables. But here goes me trying to make sense of it. When we all start here at St Andrew's, we are all given the option to take one of the two different doors, door one being passing through school aimlessly, bouncing from class to class, day to day. Or door two, embrace yourself in the St Andrew's culture, and get yourself involved in every opportunity in front of you. From taking that first guitar lesson, to joining that rugby team, there is always a way to show courage and do something out of your comfort zone.

In my junior years, you can probably gather from my countless visits to Mr Parr's office, that I was going down the path of door one. I was sure that I was always going to be heading down this path just going day by day, trying anything to bend the rules. In Year 10 I had quite a run of getting in trouble; from the way I was treating my fellow boarders, to school camp when I decided to grab a possum by the tail, swing it around, and throw it at a group of girls huddled around the fire. Because of this behaviour, my phone was taken off me, and I was only allowed to use it for 10 minutes a day to call my parents. I remember sitting in the changing rooms on the phone talking to my mum, listening to her give me a bit of an earful about how I need to change my behaviour drastically, or they are going to consider expelling me. Mum was so angry she was only able to talk for about two of the 10 minutes before hanging up the phone. Once she hung up, I was just sitting in the changing rooms, no noise, no nothing; just me reflecting about the things I'd done wrong. In this moment I realised then and there, that being known as someone going down the path of door one wasn't the legacy I wanted to create, and something needed to change.

With the decision to change my act and attitude towards school, I took the gamble and through door two I headed. I started training and learning to try and better myself every day, not only for rugby, but also in the classroom, in boarding life, and just myself in general – to see what I was capable of if I really put my mind to it. Now, I'm not saying that it was just a simple decision to head down the path of door two; it also took a lot of work and determination, utilising every opportunity St Andrew's had to offer.

Going from the Under 55kg rugby team and the regular meetings in Mr Parr's office, to making the 1st XV and growing positive relationships with my teachers, there were many ups and downs and challenges. There are a number of people to thank along the way, from my coaches and teachers, to Lachie having a dig at me calling me a fat bugger all those times I was trying to put on weight.

So, at the end of the day, if you take anything away from this speech, it would be to simply think about what I've said next time you are making a decision. Do you want to go through the first door, where everything passes by in front of you – where you allow the controllables to control you or, pass through door two, and take the courage to do that thing out of your comfort zone, where you write your narrative and allow yourself to control the controllables. So, what will it be? Door one or door two – it's up to you to decide.