

Boarders' Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 1 August 2025



Tēnā koutou katoa,
Nau mai, haere mai.

A very warm welcome to you all, on this Boarders' Assembly.

Boarding has been a key part of St Andrew's College since it was founded in 1917. The original boarders' sleeping conditions in Strowan House were much rougher and more basic than are offered today. For example, when I started here at StAC at the beginning of this year, I heard stories of how some of the boarders' beds were outside on the balcony of Strowan House, with a simple canvas hung over them in the winter to keep the frost off them. I thought these early stories were dramatic myths made up to make the good old days sound so much more heroic.

Until I hosted our annual 60 Years On Reunion in Term 1, at which many of the Old Collegians attending were boarders. These past boarders confirmed the realities of these tough conditions in the early days of boarding. They had great joy walking through some of the old rooms where they slept, lived, had lessons, and made friends. What I saw very evident amongst these Old Collegians were strong and lasting friendships, relationships that were formed here in boarding but have lasted a lifetime.

Living together in community can create a strong sense of belonging. I have seen and experienced this myself, when my wife Judi and I ran a boys' boarding house at St Peter's School, a co-educational independent school in Cambridge up in the Waikato.

It is not surprising that for many boarders, school can become a second home, and their fellow boarders their wider family. This doesn't mean that everything in boarding goes smoothly and there are no problems. But living in a wider community can grow your confidence, your own self-reliance, a better understanding of others, and your ability to be adaptable and resilient.

Boarding communities, like all our families, are made up of different people with different interests, personalities and styles. It is this human diversity that makes our world so much richer and better. Thankfully, we all have different talents and gifts, and it is important we recognise and celebrate our diversity.