It is with great pride that I've had the privilege to witness St John's College celebrate 2026. When we gather to celebrate, we pause to reflect on our student achievements, the pursuit of excellence and how each of these young men has found themselves in the way and life of a Marist Man. Congratulations to all prize recipients. Congratulations to our graduating class, congratulations to your brothers who found training and workplace opportunities earlier this year.

On behalf of your Board of Trustees, thank you to our Principal Mr Tong, our teachers and support staff for another successful season of education, your vocation is a blessing upon our community. When I think about St John's, I'm reminded of our core values, Faith, Integrity, Service. These are simple words, but powerful ones that describe the kind of men our world desperately needs, and this is why we are called to serve this community.

I'll be honest and share that this year of governance has been one of the most challenging I have experienced, we've had to make difficult unpopular decisions, we've continued to research and lobby external agencies to enable long-term change, we've grappled with a changing world, the poor use of new technologies and sorrow within our community. I'm deeply grateful and thankful that we have a Board of Trustees who gather as a strong collaborative team in service to St John's, who with great generosity bring their diverse talents in support of, and to protect our Catholic mission.

St. John Paul II said "Do not be afraid. Do not be satisfied with mediocrity. Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.", when I have a moment to reflect on the beacon of hope that is our college, I find feelings of optimism, hope for the future, I see fishers of men who in their nets raise up young men willing to stand up for what is right. I see young men prepared to serve others. I see kindness and the beginnings of an enduring brotherhood.

This year it has been pleasing to see that the guidance provided by the strategic plan for St John's has supported deeper actions in the pursuit of excellence for each student in their chosen pathway. It has directed St John's towards increased investment in our student wellbeing and the adaption of our traditional stoic behaviours to meet the needs of a community with increasing diversity and changing needs. And yet, there are areas where we want to do more, what would it mean for each of our young men to know what it means to be an Old Boy before departing daily college life, what would it mean to have a centre of prayer and reflection abundantly available in our times of joy and sorrow?

Four years of experience, review and community feedback has shaped a renewed strategic plan for 2027. We have delivered a refined strategy, taking guidance from our successes and shortcomings to make changes that will elevate, enhance, develop, and build up the St John's Whānau. I look forward to pushing onwards into 2027 with a

renewed sense of urgency to ensure that St John's remains the school of choice for Catholic young men.

To all our school leavers, remember that God does not ask you to be successful; He asks you to be faithful (St Mother Teresa), remember that this church will always be your home, visit often.

I pray the Lord’s presence will always be beside you. I pray that your guardian angels surround, shield, and protect you from all harm and danger. That they will go before you to open doors, to walk beside you to offer strength, and stay behind to guard your back. May your heart be filled with peace and your mind with truth, forever confident in our Lord’s faithful care.

Amen

Richard Doohan