A special welcome to all new and returning students and staff. I look forward to a wonderful 2017, full of promise and opportunity. I hope all who are new to our community find a warm welcome and discover that we are generous in helping you adjust to our ‘Whitsunday Way’.

Over the past few weeks, I have enjoyed visiting classrooms and seeing the fresh faces of the boys and girls, and it has been fascinating to learn about some of the extraordinary places they have visited over the holidays. I know most parts of the globe have been visited by a student or more during the holidays. Some, of course, stayed very close to home. I also enjoyed holidays with my family in Mackay, and for the first time in quite a while, I enjoyed a true beach holiday.

We have all had very different experiences while being apart these holidays, and these experiences have enriched all of our lives. While breaks from routine are essential, it is also good to be back for a new year.

Today we celebrated the beginning of the new year with our annual Principal’s Welcome assembly. One of my great pleasures as a principal is to witness the growth and development of our students. Marking the beginning of the year, as we did today, gives our school community the opportunity to re-set our focus for the year ahead, while recognising how far we have all come.

The academic results from last year are a matter of some pride to our School. Our 2016 graduands surpassed our expectations with 86% of our students receiving an OP1-15. Special congratulations must go to our three students who received an OP 1 - Dana Stolp, Julia Boets and Meghan Dansie. Across the state, 2.77% of students received an OP1. At Whitsunday Anglican School, the percentage of OP1s was 5.2%, among one of the highest percentages in the state. 17.2% of students received an OP1-3, compared to the state results of 11.4%, with three students receiving an OP2 and four students receiving an OP3.

Students have received their university offers and we are thrilled to learn that of all our students, who applied to university, 100% have received an offer. Students have chosen their universities and courses diversely, ranging from Nursing, Education, Law, Business and Science at James Cook University, QUT and UQ, to Arts at the University of Melbourne, Dentistry at Latrobe University and Visual Arts at the University of Woolongong.

We are also very proud of our three students who received apprenticeships before the end of 2016. In this economic climate, this is no mean feat.

I am also delighted to announce that we have received some outstanding scholarship news from our Year 12 graduands of 2016.

Dana will study a Bachelor of Business Management/Bachelor of Economics.

Meghan Dansie, our School Captain, has been awarded a University of Queensland Academic Excellence Scholarship and a Bond University Collegiate Scholarship. Meghan received early offers to study a Bachelor of Arts/Law (University of Queensland), a Bachelor of Arts/Law (Australian National University), a Bachelor of Journalism/Law at Bond University and a Bachelor of Arts (University of Melbourne). Of these highly competitive courses, Meghan has chosen to study Arts at the University of Melbourne.

Joel Bennington, our School Captain, has been awarded a Queensland University of Technology Acting Scholarship. One of 900 students to attend an audition, Joel is one of 16 students chosen to study a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) and one of four students to receive a scholarship.

Travis Joblin, our Charles House Captain, has been awarded a prestigious scholarship from the renowned International College of Hotel Management, Adelaide (ICHM). One of only four Australian students to be awarded this scholarship, Travis will commence his Bachelor of Business and Hotel Management, with access to international hospitality industry placements.

Another tremendous outcome comes from our Giving Report. Mr Hodge announced that since 2014 our community has donated over $120 000 to our supported charities. This is testament to our service learning ethos.

As I come to the end of writing this newsletter, I wish for each one of you a year beyond your most optimistic imaginings. Let’s make the most of each day and delight in the new experiences we will encounter along the way. Let’s strive to be even better in 2017.