

Let those doing HSC know you are with them – all the way through

BY ALISON COLLET DE SOUSA

SEPTEMBER MARKED nine years since my Year 12 Graduation from Mount Saint Joseph, Milperra. I loved school. Despite not being the most studious or academic student, I delved deep into all aspects of school life, having been warned by older siblings, cousins and friends that there is in fact life after the HSC.

Although it may seem really helpful to encourage a student to 'stress less', every student experiences the stress of the culmination of 13 years of schooling in their own unique way.

I was (am) a procrastinator – so the one thing of which I needed to remind myself, constantly, was that these few months of exams were simply a hurdle that would reveal God's life plan for me. I just needed to get over the hurdle.

I knuckled down to study in the morning, allowing myself an occasional sleep-in. I knew that by putting in the effort then, I would put myself in the best possible situation when it came time to sitting my first exam.

Having overcome that hurdle, I had my heart set on one university, one course and one career path. I wanted to be a speech pathologist and started on that journey through a bachelor of health sciences.

Never would I have imagined that two years on, not completing the course (my personal high school definition of failure) would ultimately lead to me discovering my greatest passion and vocation



Alison Collet De Sousa works with a student at Loreto Normanhurst. Encouragement for HSC is vital, she says.

in life: the education and faith formation of young people.

Looking back, it would be easy to define those two years before I began my education degree at the University of Notre Dame Australia as a "failure".

But they weren't "a fail" at all. They taught me the difference between what I thought I wanted to be and what I was meant to be. It is definitely okay to "not know" what you want to be when "you grow up".

The truth is that you will probably start down many different ave-

nues – all teaching you invaluable lessons that build your character and mould you into your true self.

This time of your life is more than just finding out your marks, ranks and ATAR. The HSC can open up doors; school life prepares you for what is much, much greater than anything you have experienced so far.

What values are you taking with you? Who do you want to help? Who do you want to give back to? You only have one life, so make it count.

dent Growth Model resonates with my Year 12 self. It is a model that seeks to provide each individual with a holistic education while encouraging them to be critical thinkers and women of integrity who are concerned for others and the world around them. It is not just what they achieve in an exam that defines who they are.

I have told my students that it is time to put the "pedal to the metal". It isn't time to slow down, but attempt double the amount of multiple choice quizzes, send double the amount of essays for feedback and spend double the amount of hours with their heads in their books.

Now having graduated from the playgrounds, hallways and classrooms of their own school, they also have the opportunity to spend double the amount of time out in the fresh air and sunshine ensuring a well-balanced approach to the HSC.

Their family and friends will be their support; just as they have been throughout their entire schooling.

They are the ones who can be the constant reminder of all they have achieved so far and all they have the potential to achieve in the future that they will spend years creating.

So, parents and friends: encourage them. Let them know you are there and are proud of them, regardless of their results. Knowing that they have a tight knit support network around them is invaluable.

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Having graduated, I am now a secondary teacher at Loreto Normanhurst. I have prepared my second Year 12 Studies of Religion class for their HSC, and have now commenced teaching the HSC course with another cohort of students, as well as my ten-strong Aboriginal Studies class.

I also teach Integrated Learning to Year 9 students whom I have accompanied on a two-week Far North Queensland (Outreach) Experience.

The Loreto Normanhurst Stu-