Commencement Dinner Address 2014
Dr Philip Dutton, Principal Burgmann College

Special guests, Mr Chairman Greg and Gayl, Members of Council and partners, my Colleague Heads of Halls, Steve Foley, Head of J23, Dr Ian Walker, Head of Ursula and Toad Halls, Marion Stanton, Head of Bruce, Peter Warrington, Head of Unilodge including, Davey, Kinloch, Warrumbul and Lena Karmel, fellow staff and friends, my darling wife Valerie and YOU – over 320 fellow residents – who make up this wonderful academic, residential COMMUNITY within this great university, the Australian National University ....

Welcome to the 44th Annual Burgmann College Commencement Dinner.

Now Ladies and Gentlemen we reserve a very special welcome this evening to Helen Baxendale who has come back to Burgmann tonight with her sister Cat, a more recent alumna, to deliver the Commencement Address as a newly awarded Australia at Large Rhodes Scholar.

In addition, we offer a special welcome to a great carer and guider amongst the ANU professoriate as well as an esteemed science academic, the ANU Dean of Students Professor Paula Newitt.

Another Professor in our midst is Willi Ribi and Ladina Ribi, a longstanding Visiting Fellow of Burgmann, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Lichtenstein who comes to us every summer to continue his research at ANU.

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Now, the College is delighted to have the Vice Chancellor of the Australian National University, Professor Ian Young with us this evening. The Vice Chancellor has happily agreed to present some awards for us a little later on the programme when we may ask him to perhaps say a few words. Please join me in making our own Vice-Chancellor and all our special guests welcome.
It is a happy coincidence that it was only three years ago that the Vice Chancellor joined us at Commencement with another Burgmann Rhodes Scholar had been announced.

To all residents, new and returning, may I offer you a special welcome this evening and trust that it will be a most memorable event as you continue to make, renew warm and supportive friendships in shared learning with each other at Burgmann?

You all look so wonderful and it is inspiring to see so many handsome, beautiful and talented young men and women gathered together– don’t you agree? I am just so encouraged by the sight of the future unfurling so strongly before us and I need to remember that it may not resemble the past or even the present.

We may be inspired by many things at Burgmann.

But how inspired may we be of the community feeling generated by all residents in your energy, in your giving and in both your individual and team achievements and support.

How inspired may we be of the community building work and leadership of our new Deputy Sally and Brodie our Residential Fellow?

How inspired might we be by those volunteers, led by the wonderful Greg Mills, who populate our governance Council and Committees in all the work they do for Burgmann and beyond?

How inspired might we be of Bettina Soderbaum awarded last Saturday at a gala ANU function as the university’s volunteer leader – an inaugural winner - a first?

How inspired might we be by the work of BRA and its orientation towards community and charity support in all its activities as well as great sports and arts programmes and achievements?
How inspired may we be of the residents who have continued to build our community partnership with the Doomadgee people of the north west cape since 2008?

How inspired and proud might we be to note that just last night over 20% of the ANU Law School Academic awards for 2013 were picked up students who have resided at Burgmann?

I am especially inspired by the dedication of RAs and the constant surveillance, refinement and development of our academic support models that brings this about? Megan Shellie has made the most recent input into our thinking on this, an area of very special interest to me.

In that regard, we may all be inspired by the Vice Chancellor’s message at the recent Tuckwell presentations and gatherings that learning and development can hardly be restricted to the lecture theatre at university. It happens in all the learning relationships and experiences with each other at university. He consistently points to the importance of university residential life as a unique opportunity to grow and develop.

ANU leadership generally is strongly aware that great universities, like ours, have great residences with great leadership – and not just management leadership – but education leadership – the learning that we all share.

In that regard, I am especially delighted to see so many of our ANU Heads of Halls and Colleges here, and I can tell from nearly 40 years of experience – they are just the finest and most professional group of Heads of which I feel so privileged to be a member.

Should not then all of us be inspired by the simple fact that ANU, the halls and colleges, let alone Burgmann itself, have seen two graduates in the last three years go forward to Oxford as Rhodes scholars?

Yes we can.

This year it certainly adds to an already a very special evening for us made possible by the combined efforts of staff and residents.
So with special thanks to so many people who have put this evening together for us, especially Margaret Cadman and Vicki Guyer, let’s celebrate all these things this evening by ensuring that everyone has a most memorable time because they are in the very best of company – your company.

Thank you for the part you will play in Burgmann life this year. Have a great evening and – once more – welcome everybody.

I would like to hand over now to our Chairman of Council, Greg Mills, to add a few words of welcome.