A father farewells teenage son

Standing before you today to farewell our son William is one of the hardest things I've ever had to do. Words cannot describe the sorrow and loss that I am feeling, but I will try.

William was a wonderful, sweet boy. Even as a baby, he had a calm temperament and as he grew into a little boy, always took things in his stride. I remember his first day at school – I think I was more nervous than he was. I held his little hand and walked to the gate thinking that he was about to cry, but William calmly turned to me and said, “This is going to be fun, Daddy... Will there be lots of kids here for me to play with?” I laughed and assured him there would be.

Being the youngest of three, William was always special to his sisters, Michelle and Andrea. They would dress him up and take him out for walks in the pram – they were just so excited to have a little brother and when he started school, they became fiercely protective of him.

As William grew from a boy into a teenager, I could see the man that he would become - strong, steadfast and assured. He loved school and loved his sports. Every afternoon after school, he would race down to the oval to kick the ball around with his mates. When he became captain of the soccer team, we were so proud. He was always competitive, but humble. It was such an endearing quality.

William and I had some wonderful times together. After the girls had left home to go to university, the two of us would go camping together at the weekends. William loved camping – he loved the adventure and simplicity of it. After a day of fishing and swimming, we would set up camp and spend hours talking about life. It was those conversations that I will never forget. I was watching a teenager grow into a young man - a young man with so much enthusiasm and with so many plans for the future.

Recently, all he talked about was the overseas trip he had planned with his mates after they finished their HSCs. He couldn't wait to go over to Asia to have what he called “his amazing Asian adventure”. But he also looked forward to studying to become a teacher – a vocation that was a perfect choice for William as he was a gentle soul, unwavering in his patience, and with a real desire to help others.

William was adored by his friends and family and it is testament to him how many of you are here today to farewell our boy. Not only was he a loving son and brother, he was a kind and giving friend. Someone who was always a pleasure to be around.

To have lost William is heartbreaking – it has come as such a shock to us all. His life was far too brief.

My family wishes to express our heartfelt thanks to all those who have given their support, compassion and love throughout this very difficult time. I know in my heart that he would not want us to grieving for too long. Rather, William would want us all to remember the good times we all shared with him.

Goodbye, my son. You will live in our hearts forever.