Your Royal Highness, as we extend a warm welcome to you, the official party, special guests and all gathered here today to celebrate 60 years of the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Awards program in Australia, I reflect on what education at Yirara meant 45 years ago when this school first opened.

Back then, the traditional western academic focus included numeracy and literacy, homework classes and sport, while manual arts and domestic science rounded out the curriculum.

As a boarding only school, with students from the most remote communities with no internet, phone or even regular **mail** delivery, coupled with English as a 2nd mostly 3rd language and a world view significantly different to that which we know and understand, life at Yirara could be very lonely and bewildering.

These days students still have the distances, language challenges and cultural diversity, they are still engaged with curriculum and sport, but like most schools, they spend significant time on community service, life skills and self-learning.

Some might question why Culture and Language is acknowledged and respected at Yirara but not taught.

With around 25 Indigenous languages covering an area 1/3 the size of Europe and each group **owning** their own language and culture we believe these are most effectively learned from families and home communities.

So today, students here and at the schools represented, do vocational training like barista courses, hairdressing, they learn to operate earth moving machinery, practice horse husbandry and get involved with Clontarf.

Specifically at Yirara, they even make guitars and produce their own weekly TV News bulletin which is broadcast back to families via YouTube and the internet.

Students volunteer at local events such as the Finke Desert Race or the Henley on Todd and at community facilities like Hetti Perkins and the Old Timers Village.

They travel all over Australia for sport, science and adventure, all the time learning and growing.

All these activities are neatly encouraged and facilitated by the Duke of Edinburgh’s International Awards program which has become an important feature for the schools represented here today.

Additionally, ‘intangible skills’ such as creativity, teamwork, confidence, resilience, responsibility and leadership are developed and nurtured, producing young people that contribute positively, to an employer, to their family, to the community.

The Awards program supports students in achieving goals while very significantly acknowledging their participation and success.

We are grateful to your father’s vision for initiating this wonderful program.  From the United Kingdom all the way to Australia and then importantly to the remotest part of our country, here in the Centre.

Now, in the 60th anniversary year, we thank you for the passion and stewardship that you bring as the Chair of the Award internationally, which so actively contributes to the next generation of leaders seen here in students like Amy, Danielle, Jake and Mishai and no doubt hundreds of others in the years to come.