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WING PATRON ADDRESS ROYAL NZ POLICE COLLEGE

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E ngā mana e ngā reo, rau rangatira ma, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

This is a very proud day for my graduating recruits – for their families and friends, for the Police College instructors and staff who have been instrumental in getting them to this point, and for the Commissioner of Police and the Minister of Police who are here today.

You each bring something unique to the important role you are stepping into. You come from very different backgrounds and life experiences, and have made significant personal sacrifices to be here, but something I know you all have in common is a desire to contribute to the public service.

When I spoke at your first gathering, I drew analogies between the role of a Judge and the role of a Police officer. Judges and Police Officers have much in common. They deal with a vast array of people and situations, often very complex and more often than not human frailties lie at their heart. It is a crucial part of our respective jobs not to make assumptions; to understand that things are not always as they first appear; that nobody is wholly good or wholly bad; that everyone has a backstory and that everyone in this country, no matter what they have done or may be suspected of doing, has an unquestionable right to be treated with dignity and respect – particularly by those who exercise official power and control over them.

We must also continually remind ourselves, as Judges and Police Officers, that we are part of a bigger whole, and that our ability to effectively do our work, is fundamentally based on public trust in our respective institutions. If we are to contribute constructively to the collective whole we must strive always to act with integrity, in accordance with our oaths, to do right by all people, and to serve to the best of our abilities. If we as

individuals slip below the standard we set for ourselves, and which the public rightfully sets for us, the collective whole is damaged and trust in the judiciary/the Courts/the Police – is undermined. Without public trust our institutions are doomed.

All of this sounds weighty.

None of us can hope to single-handedly resolve the complexities of unlawful behaviour. So just as much as I cannot expect to change the behaviour of every employer and employee in New Zealand, you as Police Officers cannot hope to go out into the community and change the criminal behaviours, and their fallout, that you will come across on a daily basis – no matter how hard you work, no matter how long you are in the job, no matter how committed you are.

I have found it helpful to look at it in a different way. While we cannot, individually, change the world, we can commit to making our interactions with the people we come across in our work more positive than negative – to try our best to leave a constructive, rather than destructive, path in our wake. And if we manage to do that we each can contribute to building institutional trust, and building and sustaining the effectiveness of the collective whole.

You have each chosen a challenging career – you will see things you would rather not have seen; experience events you will find difficult to shake. You will inevitably, at various points along the way (often at unexpected times), find yourselves foundering, wondering what you are doing and why you are doing it, concerned that you are ill-equipped to handle the challenges you are asked to deal with. There will not be a single person here today celebrating your success who has not hit the wall. Ask for help. You are now part of the Police whānau, and help is very close at hand – make full use of it along the way.

What I have been privileged to see in each of you over the last 16 weeks is a genuine openness, commitment, enthusiasm, support for one another, hard work, diligence and a refreshing absence of ego. And one of the things I have observed is the way that the diversity of background you each bring, of culture, life experience, of thought, approach, faith, custom, makes a very rich and strong fabric. You were each selected because of

your unique suite of talents, skills, experience, personality and abilities, and that contributes to the strength of the fabric – if I can leave you with one piece of advice: remain true to yourself. Do not become a cookie cutter caricature of what you think a Police Officer should look like or be. It is of vital importance that the institutions that serve the public of Aotearoa New Zealand are reflective of the communities they serve.

Finally, at our first gathering 16 weeks ago I told you about a young man I had sentenced – his crime, his victims, his family and what had led to his offending. I told you that I would tell you the sentence that I imposed at the end of your training. In the meantime I invited you each to think about what you would have done if you were the Judge deciding the case. The purpose was not to identify a right or wrong answer. In my experience right and wrong answers are often illusory – Judges and Police Officers tend to operate in a difficult grey area. The purpose of me telling you about the young man and what had led him to the Court was to invite you to consider the grey area and how you would navigate through it.

In the end I imposed a largely rehabilitative sentence. Right or wrong? Who will ever know, but I have always been at peace with that decision. The point is that you must deal with each case to the best of your ability, on the information you have available at the time, and then move on to the next, trying to leave a positive trail behind you.

Nō reira

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa