

Toowoomba Chronicle
Tuesday 3rd Feb '09
Hopes and Dreams

It is a clear indication that the holiday season has come to an end when the tennis is no longer on television. I thoroughly enjoy following the Australian Open on television, but the late nights and heightened adrenalin that come with it are not so good for my morning schedule!

With the beginning of February comes a more focussed, 'ordinary time' of life. We seem to be more ready to get down to business again, to move back into regular routines after Christmas and New Year celebrations, school holidays, and Australia Day weekend. The more relaxed lifestyle that many people enjoy during January is good for everyone - we all need a more restful pace at times. But now, as the second month of the year begins, we settle back into the reality of what our daily lives bring us. While many people still make New Year's resolutions at the beginning of the year, the more cynical amongst us may have given up doing that some years ago! However, as we focus ourselves on the year ahead, it can be a time to refocus our hopes and dreams, either personally, as a family, or professionally.

I have learnt some things about hopes and dreams in the past few weeks, as I have reflected on some of my own experiences, and those shared with me by others. At the end of last year, a young Sudanese friend completed her secondary schooling. She had arrived in Australia four-and-a-half years ago, with limited English, a very patchy educational history, little confidence, but high hopes. In speaking of her gratitude to her school community, amongst other things she said "*We came from a country that was at war where we saw our brothers and sisters and colleagues dying every day. There was no dream for us, no hope for a future. The only thing I used to dream about was when I would die? When would it be my turn? ... When we came here we were able to dream again. You gave us hope that one day, one time, we will help our people.*"

As I thought about these words, I realised how trivial our language often makes our hopes and dreams seem. We say to each other 'I hope you have a good day, a good weekend, a good night out.' I cannot imagine what it would be like to live without hope, without the belief that the future will open out before us with the promise of well-being for ourselves and our children. From the words of my young friend I gained an insight into the resilience, persistence and hard work which are necessary if hopes and dreams are to take on flesh in the everyday of life.

Watching the last couple of matches of the men's singles in the Australian Open reinforced this message for me. Physical, mental and emotional persistence, resilience, commitment and hard work enhanced skill for both Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal as they each struggled to bring their dreams to life. Hope doesn't just happen - we must work hard to keep it alive.

So as we begin this new year in earnest, let's encourage each other to dream our dreams and to have strong hope - not just that the weather will be good to us, or that we won't have to deal with difficult things. But let's focus our hopes and dreams on the things that really matter, on those things that give meaning and purpose to life, on an assured future for us and our children,

a future that we share with others throughout this global village we inhabit. And let's remember that hopes and dreams are given flesh through persistent commitment. It seems to me that we might then, together, be able to make those small and often imperceptible changes which will make our world a better place.

Sue Flood