



## ACK Story: Tim Kane

### **1. For how many years were you at Assumption College Kilmore?**

I was a boarder in Kilmore for six years from 1980 to 1985.

### **2. Can you share a brief overview of the past few decades of your professional life?**

I joined Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in 1990, after graduating from the University of Melbourne. Since then I have served in Canberra and as a diplomat in eight Australian Embassies overseas. I have done a variety of things in the foreign service, including working on nuclear issues, the Antarctic, bilateral relations, trade issues, international aid, consular work, human resource management, United Nations issues, and negotiating international agreements. I have been Australian Head of Mission to Spain, Australian Ambassador to Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela. I am currently the Australian Ambassador to Brazil.

In terms of memorable events, some of the ones that come to mind are being in the initial embassy response team in Washington D.C. after the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in 2001; leading for Australia on important priorities at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna in 2006; assisting with the successful retrieval of an Australian kidnapped in the Horn of Africa in 2009; helping to coordinate the Australian response to the Fukushima tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011; representing Australia at the signing of the landmark peace agreement in Colombia in 2016; supporting the family of an Australian child killed in the terrorist attack in Barcelona in 2017; negotiating various Air Services, Double Taxation, Education and Investment Protection Agreements, which opened up opportunities for Australian business; and through Australia's aid programme, bringing water, education, healthcare, infrastructure, etc., to the world's most disadvantaged communities.

### **3. How did your time at ACK influence your interest in foreign affairs and prepare you for your current role?**

I'm not sure how directly relevant it was, but indirectly, factors such as six years studying French with the formidable Madame ten Brink at Assumption helped open my eyes to the world beyond Australia (I remember clearly a quote Madame had on the wall of the French room "languages unlock the world").\* Subjects such as Politics in Year 12 gave me an insight into Australian foreign policy and Year 11 European History gave a good overview of the challenges of the 19th and 20th Centuries and helped explain why the world (of the 1980s) was the way it was. Boarding for six years taught me to be independent, to adapt quickly, to persevere and to get along with people. The compassion of the Marist Brothers also had a lasting effect.

\* A footnote from the ACK Principal: Madame ten Brink passed away in 2017, leaving a significant and generous bequest to Assumption College. The bequest enabled the substantial refurbishment of the Kenneth Wing and the Upper and Lower William Wings. This generous gift will be forever appreciated by the College community. College staff and students were privileged to be present and assist at her funeral.

***4. How does the work of your office with other government agencies make Australia stronger, safer and more prosperous?***

One of the key things the Australia foreign service does is pursue Australia's interests overseas to improve the quality of life of all Australians. The consular role is especially important and Australians travelling overseas have a reliable network of support should they find themselves in trouble, lose their passport, be robbed, etc. I've worked very closely with the former Australian international aid agency, AusAID (now part of DFAT), the Departments of Home Affairs, Defence, Attorney-General's and others in a whole-of-government effort to achieve positive outcomes for Australia. A free trade agreement is a good example, where the incomes of all Australians can be improved by opening markets for our exports and bringing down the cost of imports for Australian consumers.

***5. Some people believe success is merely a product of luck and coincidence. Looking back on the obstacles you have overcome since leaving Kilmore, and all you have achieved, would you agree with them?***

I strongly believe you make your own luck. At the end of the day, common sense and hard work usually lead to success in some shape or form. A quality education is also a big help.

***6. What values are most important for you to live by?***

I can boil these down to two: be true to yourself and do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

***7. Which people have had the most influence on your life and why?***

There are too many to list here. I would not have made my way in the world without the help and support of others. Family is an obvious group to mention. Bosses I've had over time, friends, people I've met through work who have been incredibly inspirational - often serving the poorest of the poor and making huge, positive changes to people's lives. Many of my biggest influences have come from those who are the least known or obvious. Their humility, commitment, generosity and selflessness have had a lasting impact on me.

***8. When will you consider yourself to be successful?***

Probably never! It's best to let others judge whether you have been successful. Success is a relative term. I am very grateful for the opportunities I have been given. I'm satisfied with my life and my objective remains to always do someone a good turn rather than a bad one.

***9. Is there a particular failure you remember most vividly? What did you learn from the experience?***

A tough question. Probably missing out on promotion in the middle years of my career. I couldn't understand why and became very frustrated. I learned to pick myself up, dust myself off and get on with things. I was determined to keep going and that determination got me through. As someone once told me, we never really understand the day unless we've experienced the night. I think that's right and I think we need to experience pain and sorrow to fully understand who we are and to help us be better and stronger people.

***10. If you had one piece of advice to share with the Year 12 ACK students of 2019, what would it be?***

Never give up. Have a dream and don't stop until you achieve it. Ignore the naysayers along the way and always remember that the most important thing in life by far is to be happy.