

* Build I acknowledge
throughout people

GRADUATION ADDRESS

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, members of staff, graduates
Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour to be invited today to
deliver the occasional address at the graduation of students
from Southern Cross University. *

A graduation ceremony is, of course, of primary importance for graduates. Others, such as your families and friends may share the joy and excitement, and, dare I say it, the relief that your studies have come to fruition. The University itself shares that joy because it is an opportunity for the University to display, through its graduates, the success of its teaching and its programmes. But it is to the graduates today, that I want to address a few remarks.

You have already achieved through talent, hard work and diligence, a special position in Australian society and because of your success you will be the natural leaders of this society. It is you who we will look to for inspiration, intellectual stimulation and technical invention for the 21st century and beyond.

And while I don't wish to burden you with too much responsibility on this day of celebration, it's worth remembering that you can all, as individuals and collectively, make a tremendous difference to our nation, or for that matter to any society in which you choose to live and work.

Consequently it has long been my view that we all have a responsibility to not only do as well as we can and to fulfil our potential, but to be active contributors to the community in which we live, to make that community a better place, socially, culturally and economically for all of its members.

You are the people who are now equipped to make that contribution. You have earned the imprimatur of this highly regarded institution; you have earned your knowledge. And it is precisely that knowledge, ~~that priceless treasure~~, which empowers you as you enter the next phase of your lives.

On the other hand, it is also important not to take your privilege for granted or to expect that because of your achievements life will deliver everything to your front door.

You will need to work very hard to continue to achieve your goals, but you will gain tremendous satisfaction if you can use your talent and your knowledge to make this and every other community a better place.

Now, that does not mean that you all need to pursue your careers in Sydney or Melbourne or other major international cities.

It may be that having graduated from an important university which happens to be located in regional Australia, you feel an attachment to this part of the world.....and of course one of the important reasons for having Southern Cross University located in Lismore is so that its graduates, ideally, can build their careers from here, or from any of its other campuses.

Australia is in vital need of a strong base of professionals who live and work in regional Australia and if that need is transformed into a real manifestation of practical delivery, it can be a powerful voice for regional Australian communities.

You may ~~also~~ find that as your careers develop, you will be working throughout Australia and the world, but it is possible, and might I say very satisfying, to travel a different road.

You may also find that your inclination lies in the fascination of a career which is outside mainstream activity but you should never feel that a different road is inferior or less worthy.

What is important, is to stay true to who you are and to what you want to achieve and how your achievements can contribute to the society which we all share.

You are all, (if I could use an analogy which is particularly relevant to Northern New South Wales), like great rainforest trees which will grow tall under the canopy of past generations. When you reach full maturity you will replace the trees that provided the appropriate environment for you to flourish and ~~and~~ you will then provide the protection and the nourishment for the seedlings of future generations.....it is you who will create our history, tell our stories and change the world.

Now, in a country whose one great failing is the well documented "tall poppy syndrome" I would urge you to encourage each other to grow tall and strong and I would ask you to resist the tendency to want to cut down the tall strong trees. I urge you to celebrate their successes and your own because if the tall trees are cut down, the small seedlings will be burnt by the sun and die.

Consequently I encourage you to be brave and uncompromising in your quest for excellence and to have the

courage to be leaders....and might I suggest....to be heroes.

We are all spectacularly fortunate to be able to live in a country as blessed as Australia and we can all list any number of other places where every day is literally a struggle just to survive. So I urge you to use our good fortune and to use your talent and knowledge to continue to strive to make your community and our country a place where dreams are allowed, not only to be dreamt, but they are allowed to come true.

I congratulate all of you on graduating today and I thank you for letting me share in your graduation ceremony.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you sincerely all the very best of success, and from my heart, happiness and compassion as you enter the most exciting time of your lives. You have the knowledge and the ~~strength~~ to make a great contribution. I wish you the will to do so. *tolat*