

13th September 2014

Occasional Address, Southern Cross University (SCU), Lismore Campus

Chancellor, Acting Deputy Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Chair of Academic Board, Councillors, SCU Staff, Friends of SCU community, Families of Graduates, Mayor of Lismore Cr. Jenny Dowell.

Fellow Graduates. Firstly congratulations, you have all worked hard and today deserve any accolades that come your way.

It is common to remind ourselves that as University graduates, we are privileged; we get status with accreditation-bits of paper matter; we do in general receive better income; we have taken benefit of one of the best public service systems in the world. One of the oldest too, in its modern state form. Our health and education systems are in terms of quality and affordability second to none.

SCU is Australia's only university that has regional in its enabling State legislation; and we are regional in both our genesis, and our responsiveness to local community; but importantly for a university global in outlook and outreach. We are products of SCU and shaped by our SCU experience. That is a nice bond and it does not matter where we go or where we are, we never lose that.

I have lived through all our Chancellors and a few Vice Chancellors and have appreciated them, but have to say the current combination has been pretty special, not least of all because Chancellor John Dowd and I are friends. Vice Chancellor Professor Peter Lee has been great for our community. I know the Union may not say that when bogged down in staff wages and conditions negotiations, and I would always support them for the staff, noting it was running on the local ABC radio this morning, but my comments stand.

It is to the local responsiveness and global outlook and outreach, that my comments are directed today, and also about doing good. One can never be too busy to do good. It is accumulative and eventually cuts through. I have lived a life that is very local, but also very global and I have done good. It has been some forty years in Lismore and I am fortunate in that I can see the result of my good work across the Northern Rivers.

Right here in the SCU, with among other things the new School of Engineering and Learning Centre. I secured \$28 million to ensure that these

developments took place, and more with the \$32 million secured for the Gold Coast Campus, all Federal Government funding, to allow proper growth to take place. Some \$60 million in total, which I was able to bring to our area.

I was in Lismore Court House yesterday. My name is on it having opened the newer building, regional services that I have always advocated for. Our Chancellor who was then the NSW Attorney General adopted a policy of upgrading regional courts in both status and capital works (now commonly called infrastructure). He put in motion the upgrade of the Lismore Court House. There is much more and much not seen, and it has all made a difference to our lives.

As I have your undivided attention for another nine (9) minutes, I want to say two (2) things that need to be said, in every forum and at every opportunity until the right result is reached. They are on Timor-Leste and Domestic Violence.

Timor-Leste (or East Timor as you will know it), our closest neighbour and friend. It is about the relationship between Australia and Timor-Leste and the Timor Sea, especially the unresolved matter of maritime boundaries, between Timor-Leste and Australia.

If anyone knows anything about Timor-Leste, they know that in 1999, Australian Armed Forces, in a mission called INTERFET, authorised by the United Nations Security Council and led by General Peter Cosgrove, now Sir Peter, entered Timor-Leste to help make it secure post the independence referendum (popular consultation), and post the absolute destruction of much of Timor-Leste. A few hundred thousand people had been murdered during the Indonesian occupation and similar in number were abducted into Indonesia as the Indonesian forces left in 1999. The Chancellor and I were observers to the referendum.

Timor-Leste's history has been one of occupation firstly by Portugal by some 400 plus years and then Indonesia for 24 years. When they were occupied by Portugal during the WW11, Australian troops entered their territory that was neutral territory, thus pulling them into the war. The Timorese paid heavily with the loss of some 60,000 up lives. The Timorese also looked after our soldiers, our early SAS soldiers I call them, as they were our first

Commandos; from the 2nd/2nd Independent and 2nd/4th Companies known as Sparrow Force.

I am fortunate in that I have known a lot of them, with only about six (6) of the men still alive. One is in our midst and he attended a talk I gave to the CWA on Timor-Leste and I was able to honour him. I did that because he maintained his life-long commitment to the Timorese as did many of these wonderful men. Soldiers who defended Australia and then the Timorese when Australia turned its back on it, not doing the right thing or good until 1999. When our Sparrow Force were taken out by our planes they dropped leaflets saying “We will never forget you”. Well Australia did more than forget, it recognised the illegal invasion of Timor-Leste by Indonesia accepting advice from our DFAT head, saying we should “slip into” de jure recognition to facilitate the oil talks. That was 1978 and it happened again in 1984, both times regarding resource talks, and I hold every Australian Government accountable and equally culpable.

The resource rich Timor Sea has been at the centre of this since the 1960s, yet it was a story not well known.

One of these Sparrow Force men, the late Paddy Kenneally, appeared in TV ads saying to our then Prime Minister, as it has been Australia Government who have successively not done good by the Timorese, “It’s Timor’s Oil”. What a good man. He continued to campaign for the Timorese to his last breath. Paddy was a religious man and attended Mass every day of his life and prayed for the Timorese and then got out and did good working for them.

The Sparrow Force were assisted by Timorese men and boys and the women who fed and hid them as well. The men and boys who scouted for them and travelled with them were called Creados, a Portuguese term that denotes a master-slave type of relationship, but it was not seen like this by the Sparrow Force. It was seen as saviour.

How shameful that we did not honour these brave people.

I shall turn to 1975 as in the short time I have left as I cannot tell all that needs to be told.

Indonesia invaded Timor-Leste, and just prior to that invasion, six journalists all working for Australian media, had been murdered. One on Dili Harbour,

who had actually worked here for our own Northern Star. The other five (5) men were murdered by the invading Indonesian Armed Forces.

I was actively involved as was the Chancellor and other International Commission of Jurist Members, notably Rodney Lewis, in getting a coronial inquiry to happen in NSW into the death of one of the men. He had been resident in NSW at the time, which meant under NSW Law, such an inquiry could proceed. So I had lobbied here and then lived there and was given the job of working to ensure the cooperation of the Timorese if they so chose, by the Timorese Government, H.E. José Ramos-Horta. I then worked with the Timorese Public Prosecutor to bring the witnesses down to Australia, with certain guarantees. He and I accompanied the witnesses, to be at the opening of the inquiry and sat through a lot of it. The Coroner found that the men had been murdered. Have we got justice yet? No. There has been an AFP inquiry going on for ages, but as yet nothing. Justice takes time but it generally comes.

Back to oil, where there has been no justice for the Timorese.

The Timor Sea was an area known as petroliferous, one of the worlds' biggest areas, as early as the 1960s.

In 1972 Australia negotiated a seabed boundary with Indonesia, and Portugal said they would not do it, as Australia was pushing the prolongation of its continental shelf, a legal position by then with no legal foundation. Legal fantasy as I call it. The law of the sea is that where the distance between coastal states, is less than 400NM, then the median line applies. The distance between Timor-Leste and Australia is less than 400NM. This was known of course to Australia and in a 1965 Cabinet submission by then Minister Fairbairn, he argued that Australia should accept the median line position, lest we find ourselves in confrontation with our neighbours. Minister Snedden resisted, saying since 1963 we have asserted the prolongation position and there has been no kick back, so we continue to do so and defend. Fairbairn was on the money and Australia is still today defending its indefensible prolongation position. It has however settled maritime boundaries, with PNG, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, and New Zealand and on the median line as well. With Timor-Leste no.

Australia proceeded to form a joint development area that included Timor's territory and exploited it unilaterally and with Indonesia. In 1999 Australia

had to face a new reality and that was the new state of Timor-Leste. Australia has refused to settle maritime boundaries with Timor-Leste, as it would upset the arrangement whereby they continue to exploit Timor-Leste's resources.

Back to 1999: There were three arrangements struck, one on the very day their independence was restored May 20, 2002, and some ask why Timor-Leste agreed. They had no choice. When your neighbour is big and has resources, and you are new and have none, you agree to get some resources. That is in essence what has happened. Timor-Leste is still small, but it has had twelve years now to build the form of its state and there is lots to do, not least to settle its maritime boundaries with Australia. There are legal cases, underway that some may have seen, but not put on hold for six months so the parties can negotiate an amicable settlement. An amicable settlement would be to settle maritime boundaries and get the long awaited pipeline to Timor's shores. Darwin got one, so it is Timor's turn.

The legal cases involving espionage and seized documents from one of Timor-Leste's lawyer. So if you see this debate or feel you can join it, the message is that it is Time to Draw the Line as Father Frank Brennan so simply yet eloquently puts it, meaning the median one that is. Australia will then have settled its debt of honour as our WW11 soldiers called it that we owe. 1999 took us halfway there, where circumstances made us do good, do the right thing. Now we need to finish the job.

CONCLUSION

I have gained much in the sixteen years of service to Southern Cross University, and will miss it, but there comes a time to stay and a time to leave. It is that time now. We have some wonderful local people coming on board, whom I know will make great contributions to not only SCU but to the field of Higher Education.

The Chancellor and I might be able to do an overseas mission together, observing elections, capacity building as it is called as well (I was asked to come to Kabul recently to observe the Presidential election recount and I thought of the Chancellor but he was away and I was travelling as well). There will be other opportunities.

I hope that you too seize opportunities to involve yourselves for the first time or continue to seize opportunities to be involved to do good locally and to maintain a global outlook and outreach, doing good there as well.

It makes for better citizenry and that is good for our nation of Australia, or your nation, and good for the global community. Informed and engaged citizens that is. It is easy to get swamped with work and family but there can always be time to make a difference, and I do not mean just giving money, which is good, but giving time and intellectual effort. A letter here and there, can make a difference. These ultimately make a difference.

I have travelled to many countries, know many people, from the villages to the Palaces, and I know I have made a difference to peoples' lives, for the better and will continue to do that.

Once the maritime boundary is settled between Timor-Leste and Australia, and imagine the good this will do for the people of Timor-Leste, then I can tackle other matters, such as domestic violence.

I see what is being done and it is not enough, or not quite right, our responses are a step up on the societal non-response of decades back, but not right enough yet. It is not a personal matter but a public matter and those who commit it need to be shamed more; that has the seeds to make it work.

I have been involved in the move from the societal non-response to the current societal response. In getting the laws changed so that they would recognise domestic violence. I worked in a women's refuge here, and set up the first regional domestic violence liaison committee outside the city. I sat on state and federal committees to progress the work.

I got the local committees to be recognised by the State and got them funded just to help offset administrative costs. We did things like create a little card, that had messages and contact details on it, and letterboxed a local village where we know it was rife and no help was forthcoming. We also went on to write a domestic violence policy paper on what should happen when victims (primarily women) presented at local public health services.

This policy that our then Northern Rivers Health Service adopted became state policy. It went on to become national policy. We also ran public campaigns and involved doctors, police and other agencies.

I saw a recent announcement that my friend Natasha Stott-Despoja will head up a new organisation to highlight it and tackle it, and I know she will do well, as Natasha is a doer and a doer of good, but I know it needs more and I can see what is needed and how it can play out. You imagine living daily in fear of the person you love and live with. We cannot tolerate or abide this.

I now want to tackle it on the global stage and that will impact here. I have enough years and energy left yet.

I said I had two things to say and I have and yet it would be remiss of me not to talk about Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Even more so as I just watched our Gnibi Scholars graduate.

I cannot for the life of me think what is to debate? The fact of non-recognition, is shocking, given our first Australians constitutional recognition is a racist one, that needs to be removed and further the first Australians need to be in our pre-eminent document that established our federation.

I a member of twenty-two (22) member Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians and we worked hard to produce an informed and intelligent report that accommodated all views, from the left to the right, in a collaboration, and importantly that was primarily representative of the diversity of views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Panel travelled Australia, having hearings, two up here, in Lismore and Grafton, and many submission and consultations.

It is time for Canberra to just simply agree and do it.

On that note, Graduates I shall now take my leave, so you can get on with your special day.

To my friends, supporters and colleagues behind me and in the audience, I thank you. To the Chancellor I thank you and salute you as a man who has spent his life doing good and will to his last breath. To Jill who has shared that journey I salute you too. The Vice Chancellor Peter Lee and Janet I thank you for your active support in many ways.

To my Council Colleagues you are wonderful reps for our local community and I am now going to single one out; Margot Sweeny. Our relationship is a long one, through this University and now beyond, as we have travelled overseas together doing good.

We sit beside each other and get a good view of the audience. The best part is seeing the looks on the faces of the Graduates and the families and friends. We have watched the fashion for many years, particularly the shoes and we worry until the women get off the stage in their high ones and they always do!

So Graduates, go well, live well and do good. Have today off though.

Thank you.

Janelle Saffin