

## Graduation Address

**Councillor Liz Campbell, Mayor of Kempsey Shire Council**

SCU Graduation Ceremony 1pm Saturday, 30 May 2015

T Block (Student Sport Centre) Coffs Harbour Campus SCU

Good Afternoon.....Deputy Chancellor, Mr John Shanahan, Vice Chancellor, Professor Peter Lee, Academic Staff, Graduates, Family and Friends.

It is indeed an honour to have been invited to give the Address at this Graduation ceremony, and to share in your very special day.

Graduation Day is one of those significant days that's memory remains with us for a lifetime..... of course as time goes by and memory fades photos help capture the significance and importance of the day.

I offer my personal congratulations to all graduates, and include your lecturers, families and friends who have supported you in achieving this great milestone. We celebrate with you in your success.

Today I am going to talk in part about shoes... Shoes in general, my shoes and your shoes.... (and by the way, I do love shoes) .....

A couple of years ago I sat in the front row of this same room at a graduation ceremony and watched as each graduate walked the distance to receive their scroll. I was fascinated in the individuality of the shoes. The academic dress highlighted the common thread of the professional qualifications each graduate received but every shoe style, every person's journey, was distinctly their own.

When you think of every important milestone in your life you will have grown from one pair of shoes to another. You leave behind the comfort of something well-worn and

familiar, to trying on new and exciting shoes that sometimes fit – and sometimes that don't.

By life's end, you will even have bought a few pairs that not only gave you blisters but regret of knowing you made a bad shoe choice. You may also find that it is the good and not so good decisions along the way that give life its character and richness. Whether it was the pair of school shoes you wore on your first day of school; to that pair of footie boots or ballet shoes that meant you made the team; to the pair you are wearing when you meet the love of your life or land your first job; to the pair you are wearing when you lose that job or person of your dreams; or the shoes you wear when you attend the graduation of your children or grandchildren; to the ones you're wearing when you say a final goodbye to someone dear – each of these shoes represents a new and vital step in your journey through life.

As with our final choice after trying on a wide selection in a shoe store, we all try on a huge range of life choices that lead us down different paths. Why today is so significant, is that up until this point, although enjoying a certain amount of freedom to make your own choices, many, (not all), have still enjoyed the protection of the family home and the close knit community of Southern Cross University.

As you take the next step in your life's journey, the shoes you wear will be of your own choosing and will determine the style and form of the person you will become. Throughout my life, I have worn a multitude of shoes (and worn out quite a few) but all contributed in their own way to the person I am today. ....So who is this lady talking about shoes, who is Liz Campbell, what background has shaped her vision of life?

I have had 4 name changes; over 30 changes of address; (by the way I have come full circle and live back in my childhood home) I have studied, completing diplomas in Business, Travel and Tourism and partially-completed a Sociology Degree. I have worked in many places; visited many destinations within Australia and around the world ...I've been fortunate to have lived at Smoky Cape Lighthouse, climbed Ayres

Rock, sat at the foot of Mt Everest, and swam at the mouth of Coffs Creek, worked with some amazing people and have a large circle of wonderful family and friends....

I have had many life experiences ....as a student, a teacher, a teenage mother, a divorcee, a widow, a business woman, (taken risks, made money, lost money and started over again).... a grandmother, a carer, and amongst other things, now the Mayor of Kempsey Shire – all of these experiences helped mould the person I am, and my view on how to provide the community of the Macleay with leadership. Amongst all this change, the one constant that has remained throughout my life is my connection to the Macleay Valley, the river that runs through it, and the people who I've known all my life.....

One of the most important lessons I have learnt in my time as Mayor, and something many of you will at some point discover .....leadership can be a challenge – but it is also a great honour. It can try your perseverance, it can cause you to question your own judgement, it can be controversial ..... it will make demands on your time and ask you to make tough decisions.....it will drive you to the nearest shoe store for some retail therapy.....

But it is also rewarding, humbling, inspiring. You may not always get it right, but you won't go far wrong if you always do your best, treat people from all walks of life with respect..... act with honesty and integrity..... and never lose sight of the fact that it is the responsibility to do the right thing for the greater good which governs all that you do as a leader.

I attended a travel conference a few years ago and one of the most significant statements I heard and have never forgotten, is that everything has 2 creations....in the vision and in the doing....

'Vision without action is a daydream'

'Action without vision is a nightmare.'

For each of you your vision, your dreams, your reality will be your own and what fits right with you. No one can walk in your shoes and there's little point in trying to walk in someone else's.

My advice, for what it's worth, is to decide on the shoe that best fits you at the time, walk confidently forward and take the scuffs in your stride as you negotiate life's rough patches. Be assured that for every new pair of shoes you choose they each will hold special memories.

When asked to give this address, I wanted to leave you feeling inspired to go out and make your great achievement today the first of many. I spent time thinking over what really inspires me. I didn't need to look far or for someone famous, because what I find most inspiring is seeing ordinary people do extraordinary things (We all know them, you are all those people).

People who are told something can't be done ....yet make it happen.

People who see others in need and quietly lend a helping hand.

People who can look adversity in the face and keep on smiling.

People who aren't particularly talented but have a go anyway.

People like graduates here today ....who commit to something and see it through....

That is one of the great privileges of being Mayor of the Kempsey Shire, I am constantly inspired by people within our community in what they achieve, how much they give, and how much they look out for others.

I mention this because as you put on your next pair of shoes as practitioners in Business, Tourism, Education, Law, and within the Engineering, Science Environmental and Geo and Plant Science sectors I ask that you find time for walking within your community....get involved in a way that makes another person's world better. You will also make your own world better because it's through being part of a

community, that your professional career will gain a clearer perspective and your personal life richer.

Make time to reflect on the accomplishments you have achieved so far, be inspired to live life to the full, enjoy every day .....and every shoe that you wear in the years ahead.