

SCU Graduation Occasional Address

**Rear Admiral John Lord AM (Rtd)
Chairman, Huawei Technologies Australia**

2.00 pm, Saturday, 24 September 2016
Whitebrook Theatre, Lismore Campus

Ladies and gentlemen and graduates

I wish to acknowledge the Widjabal People of the Bundjalung Nation, Traditional Custodians of the land on which this event is taking place, and pay tribute to the unique role they play in the life of this region.

I thank sincerely the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for the honour of being asked to join you here today for this important and exciting occasion, and to be asked to make some remarks.

Several weeks ago I read in my local newspaper about a school in Melbourne which for years had banned parents from delivering to the school lunches, sports gear, home assignments, etc for students who had left these items behind. I thought about this, its message on making students responsible and accountable for their own lives in some small way, and recalled how my parents many, many years ago, had used like tactics to impress on me the importance of checking and being accountable for my actions and possessions.

On one cold winter's night in Perth I arrived home on my pushbike after riding from football training some 10 kilometres away. I was about 10 years old. On arrival I was made quickly aware that in my haste to get home to the warmth and dinner, I had left my school shoes beside the oval. I was dispatched immediately, not in company with one of my parents in their car, but again on my bike to retrieve the shoes; which in those days were quite a costly item.

Was I angry, probably, but I cannot recall? Was I miserable, most likely? But what I have remembered regularly through my life is being turned around to ride back and retrieve my shoes. I recall it was my own sloppiness, inattention to detail, failure to follow through completely. I had failed to be accountable for my own actions and own possessions.

That story in a circuitous way leads to the theme of my remarks to day. Although, I am confident none of you need that kind of harsh lesson as we are here today, where you have organized yourselves, applied yourselves, and achieved the honour of being a graduate of Southern Cross University.

Your studies, your degrees, have given you qualifications to start out in life and a solid basis to learn and grow throughout your lives.

It is now up to you to apply this start to take responsibility for your lives and your future. I consider this is the first step in leadership for all of us. Learning to take personal responsibility for our outcomes, our actions and achievements, as the start of being a leader is to be able to lead yourself. In future, and it may not be that far into the future, you will then also no doubt have responsibilities and leadership roles with your peers and subordinates.

At this particular stage of your life, most of you are in a great position of being able to start with a plethora of choices. It is time for a personal plan, a broad brush strategy, mapping out a career, with an aim for where you want to be in 5, 10 perhaps even 20 years ahead.

Of course you have already started the plan. You chose your degree stream, probably some associated subjects, and you chose this prestigious University. Some of you, more mature students, may well have chosen to be here today in order to change your career direction, or to gain a qualification that lifts the ceiling on what you can achieve in the future.

Some of you who know of my career which started with 36 years in the Navy may well ask “what career choices or life choices did he have to make?” But I did, firstly to join the Navy with little knowledge of what it

entailed at the age of 15 years, then at 17 years, like you, a stream choice to be an engineer, logistician or seaman officer. At 21 years of age sub specialization choices which impacted long periods spent away from home throughout my life, probability of serving in war zones, or career choices that would have limited my ceiling for promotion in the Navy in later years. And then later at a far more mature age, the decision to move from a long career in the Navy to a second career in business and industry.

And you too will make like choices throughout your life. It is important you have a structure and methodology to make these choices.

Your studies at Southern Cross University have given you knowledge and skills that will last for varying time periods. But most importantly, you have gained core skills of planning, evaluation, assessing, and applying logical analysis.

Use these now to develop your career plan. Choose an AIM, sketch out a PLAN to achieve the Aim.

Then it is important that you discuss the Aim and the Plan with all you can; parents, colleagues, mentors, experts; as no one of us can have 100 percent knowledge in all areas, and these external comments and inputs

will allow you to adjust and fine tune your career Plan using a broader range of expertise than you alone can ever have.

Then it is time to IMPLEMENT your Plan. Be true to your commitments and your ideals of what you want to achieve. Do not delude yourself but be honest and frank in assessing where you are at. Regular REVIEWS are important, and that leads to the need to be FLEXIBLE. So whilst being committed to your career plan you must always remain Flexible and ready to adapt to changing circumstances.

Society changes with time, technologies will change your environment and industry of that you can be certain. Ceilings may be imposed or arise which limit your options. You must therefore AMEND your Plan; but that should be done with the same rigour as you started with in designing your personal career Plan.

It is probably more important for you than me in my career to be flexible and adapt to meet new technologies. As an example, when I was 18 years old I was training in navigation using a sextant, mathematical tables and a formula called the half haversine formula for calculating the position of my ship. James Cook in discovering Australia in 1770 used almost a similar method; my tables were perhaps a little more accurate and no doubt my watches and clocks far more accurate. Even 12 years

later I was using this same method when the very first satellite navigation system gave us the ability to plot our position from a satellite but only once per day. Little had changed in this mathematical and technological subject in over 200 years.

And then in another 10 years, that is only 10 years after the first satellite we were using the global positioning system (GPS), able to plot our ship's position at almost any time we wanted during the 24 hour period. You today sit here with a phone or a wrist watch that can calculate your exact position far more accurate than I could plot a ship's position in my career. The transition from mathematical formula and tables to GPS occurred in the relatively short time period of about 15 years.

And your mobile phone that no doubt is an integral part of your life for most of you today. The first phone with 2G became available in the early 1990s, because of data need 3G was introduced in 2002/2003, and then the norm today – 4G, began being introduced in about 2010. Using this technology we are experimenting with driverless cars and trucks today, but in 2020 when 5G technologies are widely available, a driverless car on our roads will be entirely safe and easily usable. Probably safer than with some of us driving!

So what technologies will impact your workplace, social life and society in 5, 10 or 20 years time? Some will guess, but we really do not know.

Stay flexible, open minded, and adapt to change.

If you move through your life and career with the support of a dynamic plan then you will be well equipped to deal with changes and disruptions that will come along throughout your life. You will have developed personal leadership skills and confidence that will give you strength as an individual.

It will then not surprise you that these skills and strengths you have developed and fine tuned will stand you in good stead later in life when you will be needed to lead others – your peers or subordinates.

There is much talk about leadership in Australia, or lack of it. Many think that high flying CEOs must be good leaders but I would propose that is not true of all; they may be good managers but are they leaders? Do they motivate, inspire and encourage others to achieve their personal aims and fully utilise their potential.

There are very few natural leaders in society; most of us have to learn how to be a good or an effective leader. Good managers are not necessarily good leaders.

You will not be surprised by me saying that you, in taking charge of your career through a personal plan, have developed already a solid leadership base. With this background you should observe other leaders and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Choose the strengths in them that you like and want to follow. However, these strengths will be added to your personal array and you will develop your own particular leadership style, which is good as we are all individuals.

As a leader you will choose the AIM, develop the PLAN, discuss the Plan with peers and subordinates and ADJUST the Plan accordingly. You will then INITIATE and lead by example. Walk the Talk; that is lead by staying true to your values and the commitments you expect from those you lead. And you will regularly REVIEW and adjust your Plan, and communicate those changes clearly to those you lead.

So those skills you need to lead others, whether that is in business, in social groups, on a sporting field, or in emergency situations; are surprisingly not that different to those skills you have developed in setting out your personal career and plans.

As a Graduate of Southern Cross University you have been given subject knowledge to start you off in your chosen career path. As importantly, you have been given lifelong knowledge and skills that will allow you to take charge of your career and make those important life choices. You have been well prepared; You are well prepared, to take on the challenges in your future and to contribute and lead when called upon. Apply yourself and you will succeed. And that success is reflected by all of us individually ensuring we make the most of our individual capabilities and the opportunities we are offered.

Graduates, I wish you all every success and in congratulating you on your achievements thus far, recognise the support of your parents, relatives and friends in helping you achieve what you are being recognised for today.

I thank Southern Cross University for giving me the honour of being here today to be part of this important occasion.