

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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Delivered at graduation ceremony for graduates from
the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building and
the Faculty of Engineering

Great Hall, City campus, Wednesday 29 September 2004, 2.30pm

Vice Chancellor, Faculty Deans, staff, distinguished guests, graduates, family and friends.

Welcome and good afternoon.

I would like to address the families of the graduates first and in particular the parents. This is indeed a time for great pride in your children. I know it has been a long and at times a difficult journey from those first nappies to this degree. And while you are justifiably proud of your children's achievement, do not sell yourself short. For it is the very values and character that you as parents have instilled in your children that has given them the courage and persistence to graduate today. For it is not an easy thing to commit oneself in your late teens to a career path that will almost certainly shape the next phase, if not all, of your life. This takes courage.

And then to attend lectures, be disciplined in your study time and strive to achieve and succeed with so many other exciting distractions. This takes persistence. Without the values and character you parents have given to your children the story most certainly would be different. So I say to you parents congratulations and well done and to your children I say that before today is out please ensure that you thank your parents generously.

And so to our graduates. You will face many challenges as you pursue your career. We hear a lot about globalisation, diminishing distances, increases in communication and removal of boundaries. And yet, we see a very strong desire in communities to retain and reinforce old cultural heritage. Technological change is and will continue to challenge you to keep pace with the demands of the people you serve. The need for environment sustainability will continue to stretch you to find new solutions to old problems. The regulatory framework in which you have to operate is far more complex today that it was when I graduated some 30 odd years ago and with it of course an increase in compliance audits and legal activity. This is the environment in which you have to work and for which you have been trained.

Now while all that is interesting and challenging, it is not what I want to address with you today. You have chosen careers in Engineering, Design, Architecture and Building and as such you will shape the physical environment in which the rest of us live. I want you to think about that for a moment because the physical environment has a major part to play in how we behave. I certainly would not have had this view prior to my

involvement in Darling Harbour where we created a new city precinct from a rundown, disused industrial disaster area. My mentor then was the very talented Barry Young (who is unfortunately no longer with us). Barry's proposition was that if you give people carefully thought out and designed space, they would respond with behaviour respecting that space. This use of design to cause a reaction is a common ploy in retailing where different moods are created to assist with sales. Barry believed you could and should do the same with urban space. Barry and his dedicated team worked tirelessly to ensure that the public spaces in Darling Harbour related to people having fun. This was the message of Barry Young and so we observed at Darling Harbour people walked much slower than in the city, they held hands, they put litter in bins, they relaxed, they had fun. In Darling Harbour people recreated in this city as never before and behaved differently than they did elsewhere.

I am reminded that on a study visit to China to work out how to build a Chinese Garden, my guide at a particular garden said to me "This in my view is the very best Chinese garden in China". Impressed I replied with all of two days exposure to such things "Why is that? Is it the pavilions, the waterways or the balance of yin and yang?" "No" he replied looking at me somewhat puzzled. "Look at the people having fun!" His measure of a successful garden was the extent to which people enjoyed it. This lesson I have never forgotten – and nor should you. You and people like you over the next 35 years or so will shape the physical environment in which we have to live. Plan it, create it, build it having careful regard how people are going to use it and what behaviour you require from them. Don't put up signs telling them how to behave, rather produce an environment that will encourage and produce that behaviour.

So 30 years ago or so I sat where you sit with the bit of paper I had worked so hard to obtain finally in my hand. And given that passage of time, I feel indulgent enough to offer some advice – 5 things:

- never be so clever that you're not prepared to listen and learn;
- never be so superior that you don't stop to teach and help others;
- understand what you know and what you don't, be precise and not afraid to say "I don't know".
- be true to yourself, say what you mean and mean what you say and be big enough to admit when you are wrong;
- have fun, be a whole person combining career, family and other activities to be balanced - but enjoy yourself.

Getting the last one right is probably the most important.

So to wrap up. The career you have chosen imparts upon you an awesome responsibility. You will shape tomorrow's world and with it the way in which the rest of us live and behave. I am confident you are up to it. Why? Because the very values and character instilled in you by your parents which enabled you to reach this point in your lives will continue to serve you as you are called upon to make those judgements.

To you all I wish you every success however each of you define it, good luck and please enjoy the journey as I have.

Thank you.
