

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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Delivered at the graduation ceremony for graduates from
the Faculty of Business

Great Hall, City Campus, Wednesday 28 September, 2.30pm

Deputy Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, faculty Dean, staff, distinguished guests, graduates, family and friends.

I also acknowledge the Eora and Guring-gai peoples, the traditional owners of the land on which this University stands.

When I was invited to be the Occasional Speaker, I asked of myself: "Why me?".

I passed over that question and went down memory lane. I remembered my two graduation ceremonies in this very hall – I remembered the joy of the occasion, the pride of my parents, and the photographs. But there was one thing I could not remember about those two graduations: Who were the Occasional Speakers.

That memory defect was not peculiar to the U.T.S. ceremonies. My third graduation ceremony was at Sydney University and that Who question, suffers from the same amnesia.

Despite just having put my importance for today, in its place, I will venture forth with my messages of experience for you, knowing full well, you will remember nothing.

Perhaps you might be kind enough to me to remember only this. I congratulate you on persevering with your field of study and may today be as special for you as it was for me.

The invitation to present the occasional address caused me to be reflective about my career and life's experiences. I will share these reflective memories with you and perhaps you may find something of value in them along the way.

YOUR CAREER AND EDUCATION

Today's primary focus of course is the theme of education, and education has figured largely in my career given my three tertiary courses of study. But firstly I want to speak of an event that occurred during my school education and which brings out the pride of my parents that I referred to in my introductory remarks.

My parents went into a small business, a sandwich shop, that was not successful. They were offered monies to bail them out on condition that I left school, prematurely, and obtained a paying job. My parents declined that conditional offer because they wanted me to have an education.

To those parents, families or friends who have made sacrifices for today's graduates, I acknowledge you.

As to my tertiary courses of study, these started later in my life – in my 30's.

I began my career in tertiary studies in order to be more professional in my career as a union official. The white collar workers that my union represented had become more knowledgeable about their rights as employees, and more knowledgeable about the impact of state and federal government policies and decisions on those rights. This increased knowledge, in turn, led to my decision to increase my knowledge in industrial relations matters, in order to be more professional in my servicing of those office workers.

Entry into that first tertiary course was as a mature age student. In that regard I recall my first night in the classroom, when I observed with trepidation that my fellow students were younger than myself.

That age differential drove me to study hard so as to get through the course. I was driven so hard by those youthful students that I came first in the course and that RSL motto rang true: "Age shall not weary them".

My second tertiary study was the Law Degree course. The volume of study required to complete this six year degree course of some three nights per week, is best reflected with the following advice I gave to persons who asked me if they should undertake this torturous course. My question to them was: "Are you married?" If they answered "Yes" – I responded: "Do you wish to

remain married?" If they answered "No" to the marital question, I asked: "Do you have a social life?"

Putting aside this light heartedness, I appreciate (as one who has been there and done that) the hard work and sacrifices that you have made in order to be at his ceremony. Your tertiary accomplishment will be invaluable for you as it has been for me.

Your tertiary accomplishment can open up doors not only to opportunities, planned and unplanned, but as well to find your chosen career.

YOUR CHOSEN CAREER AND OPPORTUNITIES

Something needs to be said about this concept called "chosen career". Those two words have an air of ordination about them, as if you have had a career earmarked for you from birth. It may be that way for you but it was not for me.

When I left school, I knew not what I wanted to be.

I had a short stint as a clerk and then became a cadet structural engineering draftsman. I did so because I excelled at technical drawing at school. However, I was not suited to this job.

Five years later, I became a Union official representing private sector white collar workers.

I did not know that this third job would turn out to be my chosen career.

I want to impress upon you that you may have several jobs before you find your chosen career or it finds you. So please don't despair.

YOUR CAREER AND PERSISTENCE

So far I have spoken of the value of your tertiary education and the job opportunities that can come your way.

There is something else you possess when seeking out these job opportunities. Implicit in your having undertaken this course or courses of study is that you have the perseverance factor. If you are out there selling yourself to prospective employers, remember that you are selling more than just your educational achievement.

YOUR CAREER AND ITS INTERACTION WITH THE LAW

Whether you have a job now or are on the look-out, I have a practical tip about your career and its interaction with the law. This tip goes to the value of documentary evidence.

The Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales plays a major role in settling disagreements between parties. These disagreements could be unfair dismissal claims by employees against their employer. Or unfair contract claims by say, managers, against their former company.

In assessing the claims by one party against another, the Courts have regard to evidence – be it oral evidence, observation evidence and documentary evidence. In terms of documentary evidence, it is important that you maintain a job folder that holds such documents as the job advertisement you successfully answered, company policy documents, and correspondence about the performance of your work and money related matters.

So many times, Courts are asked to decide disputes between parties based on conflicting oral evidence when one kept document could have more easily resolved the disagreement.

YOUR CAREER AND YOUR COLLEAGUES

Somewhere in your career, you will be put in a position of authority where you will be responsible for managing your colleagues.

You don't need a textbook on managing employees, to tell you that your colleagues are human beings, and not a number in the company's ledger journal.

One of the classic reasons for disputes or misunderstandings between management and employees, is lack of communication or consultation. If you find yourself in a position of authority, remember to communicate with your employees. You may know what you want from your employees, but if you do not communicate it effectively, then your managerial goals are not realised, because your employees are not mind readers.

YOUR CAREER AND YOUR REPUTATION

Throughout your career, your reputation is on display.

All I wish to say about reputation, is that you and your professional dealings are expected to be an open book. Remember this, you might be able to disguise your professional dealings, but ultimately, you can't disguise your true self.

YOUR CAREER AND YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

My final message goes to your career and your social life.

I want to emphasise with you that your career is not the 'be all and end all' of life.

You need a social life and this pronouncement has two levels of understanding.

Firstly, you need a social life in order to maintain your sanity. A social life means you are a happier person, and happy people are more effective in all areas of their lives.

Secondly, a benefit that comes from interacting with others, through your social life, is an understanding of other cultures and values which you can use when dealing with other people - be they fellow colleagues, existing clients or future clientele.

You don't have to travel far in our society to come across another culture and value. Australia has one of the most multi-cultural societies in the world. This provides you with an opportunity of interaction. Your formal education may end today but your informal education that can enrich your mind and character through interaction with other cultures and values, is there for the taking.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this speech, I put my importance for today in its place.

And now, near the end of my speech, with the full on-set of your amnesia on nigh, I wish you every success for your future and may today be as special for you, as it was for me.