

OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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Delivered at the UTS graduation ceremony
for graduates from the Faculty of Business
Great Hall, City campus, Monday 12 May 2008, 2.30pm

Acknowledgements: Deputy Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, distinguished guests, graduates and their families and friends.

I also acknowledge the Gadigal and Guring-gai peoples of Eora nation, the traditional and enduring owners of the land on which we meet today.

I commence with my sincere congratulations to each of you graduating today.

This moment is a celebration. One steeped in tradition analogous to many tertiary institutions around the world and made especially important due to the UTS celebrating its own 20th anniversary this year. Your achievement today is an important milestone in your life and the importance of this graduation ceremony will remain with you — and your family and friends — for many years.

The ceremony today is important because you share it with your family and friends. Even if they are not physically present, your family and friends are very proud of you today. You should be filled with happiness yourself for bringing such honour to your family and friends.

Now I have to share a story with you about my own graduation 27 years ago when UTS was the Institute of Technology. My mother and father lived in the county, the Hunter Valley where I grew up. I, their 3rd and youngest son, was the only child to graduate from university. My parents grew up in the depression era of the 1930s, and, through family circumstances both were forced to leave school when they were children — my father aged 8 and my mother age 13. They went on to run a family business and were obviously intelligent people but just lacked the opportunity to study — which our parents gifted to you and I. On that day a quarter of a century ago, my proud parents sat at the side of this hall just as your family may be today. Joining them was my girlfriend. Being from the country, my parents did not know my university friends. After the ceremony I found out that my mother had spent about most of the time talking to my girlfriend about the girl sitting behind me. She went on and on about this how

beautiful this girl was to my girlfriend. What my mother did not know — which my girlfriend did know — is that the girl sitting behind me was my EX-girlfriend. So mothers — my advice to you is to be careful today.

Like me, you will have made many wonderful friends here and you will have wonderful memories to cherish for the rest of your life. Whether that memory is of some silly joke you shared in the classroom, a social outing that you may indeed wish to forget, or the sheer pleasure of getting a better mark in an assignment than your best friend.

You should look forward to retaining today's friends for the rest of your life. In many ways the UTS classmates and faculty will always be like an extended family. My graduation year still occasionally gets together. In 2006, we even had a trip to the Hunter Valley vineyards. I was supposed to share a room with the late UTS Professor John Hughes who sadly died a few weeks before we went. Honestly, the things some people will do to avoid sharing a room with me! You will come across the people in this room today — faculty, friends and family — over many years to come. Today forges a common bond between all of you and it is a wonderful thing.

The next observation I want to make is how you can use your business knowledge in a global business world. When I graduated my class represented the immigrant mix of the 1980s. My classmates were children of 2nd or 3rd generation Australians or of immigrants from the UK, Italy, Greece, or Lebanon — typical post WW II immigrants to Australia. Today, of course, Australia has major trade with Asia and a Prime Minister who speaks Chinese languages. Many of you will find yourselves working on trade between Asian nations. In my current company, Allomak, which is the holding company for a set of businesses in the automotive after-care market, we buy a lot of our supply from Asia — China and Malaysia in particular. We see countries such as Korea and China as potential buyers of some of our intellectual property in automotive performance diagnostics and emissions testing. The combination of your heritage and business skills acquired here put many of you in a good position to take advantage of the trade between Asia and Australia. I congratulate the UTS Faculty of Business for having the foresight to see the opportunity and provide you with the education to leverage the opportunity.

Even though the current world of global trade beckons, each of you will take your own path. When I graduated in Computer Science and became a Computer Programmer on Australia's first automatic tellers, I could not have imagined that I would end up working around the world as a business executive and company director. Some of your journey from this day will be determined by chance or just being in a certain place at a certain time. I do not mean to make

your passage sound fatalistic. What I am trying to say is that you will have to find your own way. I am also saying that when the opportunities come along — grasp them with both hands. Use the knowledge you have gained — and the family and friends you have with you today — to guide you through all the opportunities that life presents.

When I look back at the times when I felt I had challenges, personal or business ones, I can honestly say to you, that I turned to my extended family to help guide me through those times. Years may pass before you see each other again but my personal experience, and, I would dare to say the experience of other older people here today, is that the people in this room will be there for you when the need arises.

The last point I wish to make is about how you can apply your knowledge to the issues of the world. 27 years ago, even though I graduated in Computer Science, I could not have imagined the degree to which information technology would enable economic growth and shrink the world with instant communication. The award-winning New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, author of “The World is Flat”, essentially highlighted simply through the title, that the global economy is a seismic shift in thinking — just as it was to realise the world was round and not flat. In this new connected global world, you and your generation will have to deal with the issues such as sustainability — where corporations have to deal with more than simply shareholder return. Corporations will have to deal with the inescapable need to be socially and environmentally aware. This, of course, is more complex than simply making a buck. And who knows what new issues will emerge over your working life? How can you solve issues such as providing the best opportunities to all people in the world — access to the best available health care, education, and democracy? You are indeed fortunate that you attended a forward thinking university that has prepared you with the knowledge to deal with these complex issues.

So, in summary, once again I congratulate you on your graduation. I congratulate you individually for the achievement. I congratulate you for making your family and friends proud of you even if they are not here today. Know that they are proud of you.

Take your intellect and knowledge beyond this great hall. Take your extended UTS family with you for the rest of your life. Remember that the community you are with today will help you solve the complexities you will face.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the UTS graduating class of the Faculty of Business 2008.