

**University of South Australia Graduation Ceremony.  
Speech by BankSA Managing Director Jane Kittel. March 27, 2012**

Chancellor Dr Ian Gould,  
Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Peter Høj,  
Senior representatives of the university,  
Graduands,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would also like to acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of the Kaurna people.

It is my great privilege to be here today to celebrate your achievements and be part of this significant milestone as your dedication, diligence and discipline is rewarded.

As a graduate myself of the University of South Australia I look back on my years of study now with an appreciation of how important the education I attained has been to my success today. The qualifications you attain today are an important building block as you move into the next stage of your lives and careers.

You embark on your careers in an age where the pace of change in all areas of life is moving much faster. Driven by advances in technology and the availability of information, it's changed the way we learn, communicate and do business.

This is where a life-long approach to learning is so very important and I believe it's crucial for each of you to cultivate this in whatever your chosen vocation. The ability to keep learning and developing oneself is one of the key ingredients that set's apart the truly high achievers and leaders who will shape the world of tomorrow.

Having a thirst for knowledge and education is an asset and from my own experience, along with that, I'd urge you to seek out opportunities in your lives – don't wait for them to come to you. Make sure you keep challenging yourselves.

Stepping outside the boundaries of what may seem to be a tried and true path in a particular industry can lead to a whole new world of opportunities opening up for you.

I look back on my own career path to date and some of the important moments where I stepped outside the boundaries – when I reflect on those moments, I know it took courage and self belief to step forward and take those opportunities and I can say it's been worth it every time.

I'd like to quickly share with you one of those moments – it was in the late 1990's, I had completed my Bachelor of Management in Employee Relations from the University of South Australia! I was working in Human Resources at the Westpac Group and was deep in discussion with one of the key senior executives about the need to recruit for a particular line management role.

I went home that night and thought about that conversation – and I thought to myself, you know what? I could do that job. So the next day I put that to the senior executive along with a bit of a sales pitch about my abilities and his response was basically – great, when can you start!

I share that story because there was a lesson in there about seeking out opportunities, about being confident in your abilities and being prepared to back yourself.

Further on in my career I became the General Manager of Pacific Banking for Westpac, where I had oversight of the Bank in seven countries and learnt an enormous amount. It was a job full of challenges – one in particular happened on my first day on the job when there were riots in Honiara in the Solomon Islands! – in that first year I managed through 2 riots, a coup, a cyclone and floods – all in different countries.

One of the many unique aspects of the role was the opportunity to work in developing countries. These are countries where many people don't get the chance to fulfill their true potential because of limited resources, family circumstances and lack of the most basic of infrastructure.

I learnt a huge amount during this time. One constant that was reinforced during my time in the Pacific was the value of education and the choices it opens up for people.

I met many families with an absolute determination to ensure their children have better opportunities than they did, and there is a real recognition across all walks of life that education will bring about changes that ultimately benefit the entire society. I wholeheartedly agree with a statement made by Nelson Mandela who said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

We are indeed fortunate in Australia to have a sophisticated and world-class education system giving people the capacity to excel and inspire in their chosen fields.

I'd like to make special mention of those graduating today who've been undertaking their studies on a part-time basis. As someone who studied part-time over 10 years to finish two degrees and moved States three times in the process to take up new positions in my working life, I must say I always envied those who had the opportunity to study full-time!

But certainly, no matter what direction you've taken to be here today to graduate, it is a wonderful occasion and a testament to your hard work, commitment and drive. I encourage you each to celebrate your wonderful achievement – you've earned it!

I'd like to leave you today with some of my thoughts on what's key to success – and that is, keep on learning and developing yourself, seize every opportunity, challenge yourself, take some risks, find your passion and make sure you have some fun along the way.

I wish you all the very best and offer my sincere congratulations to everyone graduating today.