

SPEECH NOTES

University of South Australia Whyalla Campus Graduation

Occasional Address

Middleback Theatre, Whyalla Campus

Uni SA

Friday 5 April 2013

Mike Sinkunas

Small Business Commissioner

- Good afternoon everyone and especially to today's graduands - and also thank you to the Chancellor, Dr Ian Gould for his kind invitation
- It is a great pleasure to be in Whyalla today for the University of South Australia's graduation ceremony and I also welcome distinguished guests, family, friends and UniSA staff members to this important occasion and a special welcome to the University's new Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd
- I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians whose lands we meet on today. I pay my respects to those traditional custodians both past and present and recognize their spiritual relationship to country.
- I have always thought that graduations are very symbolic events – one the one hand it is the finalization of a chapter in a person's life but at the same time it is start of new opportunities and beginnings
- A university education is something I think isn't valued enough in today's society – my experience tells me that while not essential for success in today's demanding business and work environment it gives a solid platform for success and often drives innovation and creativity

- Why is that so?
- Each one of you graduating today has had to make sacrifices, show persistence, achieve the challenges set - you have developed a range of knowledge, skills and attitudes which should assist you greatly in your future endeavors - if you reflect on what it took to achieve this award - especially when times are difficult in the future— these experiences will sustain you (and should inspire you). Not everyone makes it - so graduating today is a great achievement.
- In South Australia we have traditionally had a lower proportion of the population with post school qualifications and there is a clear link between a strong skills base that must be both broad and deep - and economic and social prosperity – it is the development of human capital that I imagine all of you are aware of.
- Universities are critical to this development of human capital - and I commend the University of South Australia for its investment in regional communities such as Whyalla – we need prosperous and socially cohesive regional communities and you are strongly contributing to that development.

- In my own career I originally trained as a teacher with my first graduation at the then Salisbury College of Advanced Education way back in 1977.
- Within 2 years whilst working full time I started my first post graduate studies and since then have completed other post graduate studies including an MBA – all of these have been part time and most have been by distance education as I lived in regional South Australia when I completed many of these qualifications
- The key point here is a commitment to lifelong learning is, in my view, an essential component of a successful career – that may not be formal study - but it is essential in my view that you commit time and resources to yourself – it builds your confidence and competence and will give you a competitive advantage – that is critical in today’s world – people now have many ‘careers’ within a career.
- The third area I want to touch on is being passionate about what you do personally and professionally.
- What you have achieved by graduating does not guarantee success – opportunities won’t automatically come to you.

- The active, the entrepreneurial, the “go getters” among you will go out and find the opportunities. They won’t just sit back and wait for opportunities to come to them.
- As an illustration of this in setting up my new office last year we had 524 people who applied for the 6 positions available. Many people had the expertise so we looked for the best fit and people who were passionate about the opportunity – it was a challenging task.

So my key messages are:

- Be positive and resilient – remember this moment
 - Stay focused on what needs to be achieved and commit to lifelong learning – set the goals and achieve them
 - Be passionate and energetic about what you do
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- I congratulate you for investing your time, energy and resources into the award you will shortly receive – you have built a platform - and I wish you every success for the future.

Thank you.