

Speech Notes

**Raymond Garrand
CE DFEEST**

Whyalla graduation ceremony

**Friday 17 April 2009
1:15 pm
Middleback Theatre, Whyalla campus**

I'd like to acknowledge that we're meeting on the traditional lands of the Bangarla people, and that we very much respect their continuing spiritual connection with this land.

I would also like to acknowledge:

- Chancellor of the University of South Australia - Dr Ian Gould,
- Vice Chancellor and President - Professor Peter Hoj,
- University Council members
- Parents, friends and most importantly graduands.

Thank you for the invitation to share this special day with you.

Congratulations to you all - . on your commitment and hard work.

Today you reach an important milestone in reaching your personal goals and aspirations.

You can be rightly proud of your achievements.

While the long hours of study have been yours alone, I'm sure that most of you would have had considerable support from family and friends, and from mentors and staff of the University.

So I would like to also acknowledge the family and friends and others who have supported you along your way.

I'm sure they are proud to be here with you this afternoon.

Global Financial Crisis and importance of education and training

As graduands you are a very special group in South Australia and Australia.

Nationally only about 12% of all university students study at regional university campuses.

In South Australia that percentage is even less.

It is a credit to you and the University of South Australia for your commitment to regional communities.

As graduands today you are also graduating at a unique time in world history.

You probably don't need me to remind you of the Global Financial Crisis on the day of your graduation.

While it is no doubt a concern for many, I am pleased to say that the prospects are much more positive here in Australia and in South Australia than globally.

And much more positive, especially if you are a university graduate.

The Commonwealth Government has provided in excess of \$50 billion to stimulate the economy and the South Australia Government is currently embarking on one of the largest infrastructure spends in the State's history.

While we don't know exactly when the international economy will recover we do know that it will recover.

When recovery comes it is expected that South Australia will out-perform the nation, with strong growth in defence and mining, together with major opportunities in service sectors and in the regions.

Key to how well we emerge from the downturn is the investment we make now as a nation as a state and as individuals in education and skills.

As Professor Roy Green stated in a recent speech at a National Skills Conference:

While the global financial crisis changes everything – when it comes to innovation and skills it changes nothing.

Clearly now is not the time to reduce investment in education or training.

That is why the Commonwealth and State Governments have responded to the financial crisis by significantly increasing funding for training.

Education, training and upskilling are front and centre in the strategy to cushion the effect of the economic downturn and position us to rebound strongly during the recovery.

As graduands today you have made the personal investment in your future. An investment that will provide strong returns now and in years to come.

This is particularly true in today's difficult economic times.

A recent report found that the estimated lifetime earnings of a university graduate is around 70 per cent greater than those of students with only Year 12.

So I hope you leave here today with confidence and optimism knowing that you have a qualification held in the highest regard from a University of international repute.

Importance of regions

As the former Chief Executive of the Department that was responsible for regional development I know all too well of the challenges faced by regional communities and the importance of regions to our economic and social fabric.

The regions account for just over a quarter of the State's population and full-time jobs, about 40% of exports and 25% of economic output.

It is pleasing to see in recent years the resurgence of population and economic growth in the regions, with Whyalla, in recent times, experiencing its largest population growth in 30 years.

The provision of quality education in the regions is fundamental to maintaining the fabric of regional communities.

One of the main factors contributing to the thinning out of regional populations is the loss of young people to pursue their studies in the capital cities.

And so I cannot overstate the important role that the University of South Australia plays in supporting the needs of regional South Australia in supporting the communities of the Upper Spencer Gulf and Eyre Peninsula, and through its presence in Mt Gambier, in supporting the communities of the Limestone Coast.

And as graduates from the Whyalla Campus of Uni SA you will leave today as ambassadors not just of the University but of your region as future leaders in your community.

As a nation and as a state we have set ambitious targets in terms of higher education.

Aiming to significantly increase the proportion of young people with degrees especially amongst people from a low socio- economic background.

To reach these targets will require new approaches by governments universities and training providers

An important part of any strategy will be to maintain a strong commitment to the regions and increase the linkages between vocational education/TAFE and universities.

It is pleasing to see that the University of SA is leading in both these areas.

For example the University actively promotes alternative pathways into university and has the strongest linkages and articulation between TAFE SA and higher education of any university in the State.

Technology

New technology will also play a significant role in the increase in university participation in the regions.

In the future the delivery of education services in the regions will depend increasingly on the provision of high speed broadband.

Last week's announcement by the Commonwealth to invest \$43 billion in the delivery of both fibre and wireless broadband to cities and regional centres has the potential to revolutionise the provision of services in the regions.

And it is imperative that regional communities and smaller towns, especially those in South Australia, fully benefit from this rollout.

This is particularly the case in South Australia with almost 20% of our towns in the State with a population of less than 1000 people – more than any other State in Australia.

I know that many of you here today are graduands of regionally specific programs in nursing and in social work.

It is pleasing to note that these programs have a high rate of employment in their local communities.

While your qualification will be your passport to many destinations , I hope you choose to invest your knowledge, skills and ability in South Australia.

And make an ongoing contribution to your communities and to South Australia as a whole.

Education and skills development are the keys to future prosperity of the State...

- ... keys to your future development

- ...keys to the future prosperity of regional South Australia.

The challenge for you as graduates of the Whyalla campus of the University of South Australia is ...

- to now build on your knowledge and skills...
- to grasp with vigour and confidence the opportunities that come your way and the opportunities that you create...

Not just for you as individuals but for the community as a whole.

As one of my childhood authors Robert Louis Stevenson said:

measure your success in life not by what you harvest but by the seeds you plant.

While I realise we are near Goyder's line I am sure that many a field will be sown from graduates here today.

I congratulate each and every one of you on your achievements today.

You should be very proud of your accomplishments and I wish you every success in the future.

Good luck and well done.

Thank you.