



GOVERNMENT HOUSE

ADELAIDE

**GRADUATING STUDENTS' CEREMONY  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

***His Excellency Rear Admiral Kevin Scarce AC CSC RANR  
Governor of South Australia***

**Thursday 1st April 2010**

- **Dr Ian Gould, Chancellor of the University of South Australia**
- **Professor Peter Hoj, Vice Chancellor University of South Australia**
- **University of South Australia Graduands**

Can I add my congratulations to the 2010 University of South Australia graduands.

Today we celebrate the culmination of years of work with the award of degrees that provide the opportunity to kick start the next phase of your career.

I realize that this has not been a solo effort for most and that family and loved ones have been instrumental to your success. On behalf of the graduands I acknowledge the families and friends and thank them for their support.

This afternoon I intend to outline some elements of my career, not that I believe it was particularly special, but in the hope that it might provide some food for thought for the future.

I will be brief because I appreciate that I'm one of the last impediments between you and some well earned celebrations.

I am a passionate South Australian. I was born in Adelaide and went to Woomera at a very early age when my Dad worked on the Blue Streak Missile Program. Unfortunately, that program did not “take off” and the family transferred from Woomera to Elizabeth in 1959.

It may surprise some to hear that for me, Elizabeth was a great environment in which to grown up. We enjoyed good mates, plenty of sport, with lots of room to explore in relative safety.

I thought we had good schools with dedicated teachers. However, even with the concerted efforts of my teachers at Elizabeth East Primary and Elizabeth High School, the best that could be said about my patchy academic records was that “he occasionally tried hard”.

I entered the Naval College in 1968 at the age of 15 to find my largely egalitarian outlook on life to be a relatively poor fit for a disciplined military environment. It took me a lot longer than it should have to figure out that discipline was not a debating subject.

I guess the other shock was the importance placed on academic pursuits. So much so that failure of any subject in Year 12 meant instant dismissal from the Navy. That certainly focussed the mind. To be honest I was not that sure that Navy would be my long term career. It was really more a great adventure. I was, however, very sure that any departure would be on my terms and not through failure.

Anyway, I eventually passed and as soon as the opportunity arose went directly to sea, passing up the chance to go to University.

It took a long stint at sea, probably five years after joining the Navy, to firmly establish my longer term career aspirations. Having now decided what I wanted to do, it came as a bit of a surprise to realise that my skill set had not keep apace of the rapid change in technology. So with a busy job at sea and a young family I started my first degree through part time studies. It was a very busy but thoroughly enjoyable six years and probably the first time that I actually enjoyed learning in a classroom.

As you might expect, my 37 years service in the Royal Australian Navy had a profound impact upon me. We were imbued with a

strong sense of duty to the nation and our mates. We were certainly ambitious, but I like to think that individual success was never the predominant motivating force.

I met and worked with outstanding people: people who understood the critical importance of being professional and working as a team.

Whilst I was very critical in my earlier years about the lack of input from juniors in the decision making process, the complexities of modern warfare and changing social mores eventually led to the much more inclusive approach we see today. I've always felt it important to know as much as I could about each crew member, irrespective of rank or station. All were significant and demanded attention, care and respect.

Our sailors are not afraid of hard work and have a real passion for life. When we could, we questioned, we argued and then we committed ourselves to the way ahead. From a personal perspective, once committed to a Naval career, I gave every task my very best effort. I am convinced that this approach provided many more opportunities than my raw talent alone ever could. It should have my approach from the start. Today I am more disappointed by the opportunities missed in this early period than any achievements realised.

During my career I encountered some simply outstanding leaders, some not so outstanding and some quite frankly dreadful. I watched closely and learnt from them all. Being a leader, to my mind, means firstly contributing as a team member. It is there, through observation and experience, rather than from a text book, that you really learn.

Of the many lessons you will learn on your leadership journey, perhaps one of the most important is the personal values you bring to the team. Your team members, and for many of you your future students, are incredibly adept at spotting the "Clayton" leader. They will accept your mistakes, but not your failure to live up to the values and beliefs you espouse.

Perhaps it is our "tall poppy" syndrome, but I often see reluctance from young people to engage in visible leadership roles. Many of you will have already had that experience, but for those who have not, I hope you make the opportunity to do so as early as you can.

Without doubt some of the most rewarding times in my career were to witness the growth and achievements of teams that I have been able to help.

Despite my self-professed skills and knowledge I continue to strive to learn. I am rarely completely satisfied with my performance. There is always more to learn and a better way to apply that knowledge. Critical self appraisal combined with a passion to improve will help to keep you in tune with our rapidly changing world.

And your very best effort will be essential as we face the challenges and complexities of this modern world.

Issues such as food scarcity, environmental pollution, climate change, corporate greed, poverty and terrorism pose significant challenges for the way ahead. We need global solutions to these challenges from an engaged global community.

Even the proliferation of multifaceted communication networks will not in themselves provide that engagement. It is the personal interchange among people of different nations with different backgrounds and interests that will forge global engagement.

One of the significant benefits of your education in this University is the presence of such a diverse group of students. In this group of graduates today we have students from Australia, Canada, Singapore, Korea, India, Thailand and the UK. I have no doubt that through your studies you have mixed with students from many more nations. We also have a mixture of mature age and part time students. Personal relationships forged during your studies can be pivotal as states and nations thread their way through a myriad of local and international challenges.

Too often these albeit complicated global issues are seen as intractable problems for someone else. They are our issues and require our attention if we are to progress successfully as a global community.

Global solutions are not beyond an informed community with leaders exercising a social as well as an economic conscience.

If I can briefly continue along the vein of social conscience, I would

also urge you to find time to expand your horizons and contribute to your state, country or internationally by volunteering or supporting causes that lie outside your direct line of employment.

As you well appreciate, there is no shortage of needy causes. In Australia there is considerable evidence to suggest that, in recent times, the gap between the privileged and poor, between the alienated and the affluent, is widening. More particularly, there is a growing concentration of disadvantage in identified communities in our state and nation. Clearly this is not just a national trend.

Throughout the world, poverty and alienation are contributing to extremist attitudes and actions. Whether in the spirit of compassion or self-interest, we cannot ignore these complex realities.

We must remain on guard against everything from lazy narrow-mindedness to malicious extremism. And we can do this by constantly challenging complacency, intolerance, prejudice and blinkered self-interest. Pursuing a blend of philanthropic, social and economic aspirations can provide the balanced approach needed to support and progress the entire community.

By taking time out to apply your passion and knowledge to the broader community you will make a tangible difference and get great personal benefit. We will all profit from your involvement.

I thank you for your attention this afternoon and again offer my congratulations on your achievements.

I will close with a quote from a man who led nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, to expand women's rights, to seek independence from foreign domination, and who built religious and ethnic amity. A man whose advice is well worth reflecting upon as this next phase of your life unfolds. Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change that you want to see in the world".

So go out and be that change agent for good.