

Vice-Chancellor
Distinguished guests
Members of staff and especially graduates

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to present the Graduation address this morning. In 1979 I graduated with an Economics degree majoring in Commerce. That degree together with my subsequent studies has provided me with the opportunities for a career that I have greatly enjoyed and continue to enjoy. Today you graduate with those same tools and the question will be for you all – what will you do with them. You have all worked hard to be here today and your future direction and destiny is in your hands. Your Degrees provide a vast array of opportunities and open doors which lead to further doors. In 20 years time I am sure that many of you will look back and acknowledge that you could not have predicted your pathway. That is both the excitement and the challenge of your career and through that period there will be many highs, there will be lows, there will be certainty and uncertainty, but above all there will be many decisions that will have a material impact on your lives. I often look back at my career and relate it to the movie “Sliding Doors” which for those of you that have not seen it, I recommend you make some time to do so. The movie contrasts two sets of circumstances and decisions and the events that unfold from those different scenarios.

Whatever pathways you choose for your career there are in my view some fundamental and basic philosophies that you should always have at the front of your mind as you chart your pathway forward. The world that you go forth into for your careers is very different from the world when I started. It is a world where information moves quickly and where major change is the norm rather than the exception and where unpredictability breeds uncertainty. This is certainly reflected in the wide daily movements across stock markets and the many examples of what appear to be successful countries or companies prospering one day and failing the next. Information Technology impacts on all aspects of our lives and for you, it is merely an extension of your senses such is the adaptability and second nature of the way it has been embraced by your generation. We also live in a world that is far more transparent and intrusive and where there is an expectation of high standards of behaviour. Many people believe that we live in a community where too much regulation is being imposed in virtually all areas of our lives.

However, much of the regulation to the extent that it will impact on your careers, is as a result of unacceptable or undesirable behaviours that have occurred previously. The most important thing that you can protect throughout your career is your reputation. Regardless of how successful an individual may be, their reputation once lost is very difficult to recover. An example in recent years was Stephen Vizard, an extremely wealthy Australian businessman and entertainer who for a small amount of money, by his standards, engaged in insider trading whilst a director of Telstra. The consequences were that his reputation was destroyed and will never be recovered and the damage flowed not only to him but to his family and to his friends. Reputation is tied to integrity and honesty. They are aspects of your professional career that you must guard at all costs. In virtually all my commercial dealings one of the first judgements I make with people is whether or not I can trust them and whether they are honest. Sometimes circumstances exist where there is greyness or difficulty in determining courses of action and an individual in those circumstances, must rely on the education that they have received and their own judgement. Sometimes individuals will be put in circumstances where they may be compromised. Thus the maintenance of integrity and honesty and reputations is difficult and can be challenging, but it is fundamental to a successful career. Many younger people are driven by the desire to make fast money, but as the Vizard example shows if that occurs at the expense of your reputation, it is an exercise in futility.

When you go forth in your careers I encourage you to seek pathways which provide intellectual stimulation and challenge and an opportunity to grow as an individual. If money is your number one driver in assessing different career paths then there is a high risk that you will be disappointed. If you seek work that you are interested in and that provides you with the enthusiasm to work hard, then financial success will follow. You come from a generation where the trend is to have many more jobs than your predecessors. I am not sure that that is a good trend. In the many businesses that I am involved we value integrity, loyalty and hard work. The people that we take care of and who are successful with us, are the people that exhibit those characteristics.

With the many opportunities that you will be faced with, you could consider having some form of mentor or mentors during your career. There is no particular qualification for a mentor, it should be someone with whom you can communicate well and of whom you respect their experience and opinion. I have had many mentors during my career and they have all been of great assistance and to this day remain my friends.

Take care of your health. It is the engine room of what you do and if it fails, so will your career. Work hard but find a balance. Through my career successful people have been those that have this adjustment right. They have maintained their physical and mental health and the health of their family relationships, which are the engine room that provides the combustion for your career. Keep your brain active as well and pursue further education even if it is not related to your vocation.

It is with a great deal of envy that I speak to you today and wish you the best for the future. I would very much enjoy being in your shoes and once again going through my journey of the last 30 years. Set yourself high goals, use what you are being awarded today carefully, respect your fellow human beings, but above all enjoy yourself.

Thank you.

Bruce Carter
Partner
Ferrier Hodgson