

Ms Ronni Kahn AO, Occasional Address, University of South Australia
Tuesday 12 April 2022 at 9:30 am

I feel enormously honoured to be standing here in front of you all today and I want to congratulate each and every one of you on your graduation in your chosen field. I am sure that it has taken dedication and hard work to get to this point.

This ceremony marks a very significant part of your journey and whilst it is such a personal achievement, your graduation today fills me with hope at this time of huge uncertainty facing all of us in our everyday lives and for the future of our planet.

The reason I feel hopeful is that each of you represent the learning and knowledge that you have gained during your time at this esteemed establishment and those are key attributes to protecting and building the society and country we want to live in.

Through my life's journey I discovered how in this abundant and generous country we have the shocking statistics that 1 in 6 Australians need food relief (2021 Foodbank Hunger Report) whilst at the very same time 1/3 of all food we produce globally goes to waste and in Australia that is costing our economy \$36 billion a year. Food waste feeds climate change because food waste in landfill is responsible for 8-10% of greenhouse gas emissions. OzHarvest tackles both these challenges by having diverted more than 62 million kgs of good from going to waste and delivering more than 200 million meals to those in need.

I respectfully ask you to take all that you have learned and discovered and to use it well. Use it to tackle issues that are close to your hearts.

Through my life's journey I have learned that giving is so much more valuable than getting and it is now time for you to step out into the world with this question on your lips "What can I give back and contribute to the world?" Not 'what can I get from the world'.

I'd like to leave you with a quote, by the late Amos Oz that appears in the afterword of my recently published memoir A Repurposed Life, that I believe is a powerful reminder of our role as citizens of the work and it goes like this:

"I believe that if one person is watching a huge calamity, let's say a conflagration, a fire, there are always three principle options.

- 1. Run away, as far away and as fast as you can and let those who cannot run burn.*
- 2. Write a very angry letter to the editor of your paper demanding that the responsible people be removed from office with disgrace. Or, for that matter, launch a demonstration.*
- 3. Bring a bucket of water and throw it on the fire, and if you don't have a bucket, bring a glass, and if you don't have a glass, use a teaspoon, everyone has a teaspoon.*

And yes, I know a teaspoon is little and the fire is huge but there are millions of us and each one of us has a teaspoon. Now I would like to establish the Order of the Teaspoon.

People who share my attitude, not the runaway attitude, or the letter attitude, but the teaspoon attitude – I would like people to walk around wearing a little teaspoon on the of there people jackets, so that we know that we are in the same movement, in the same brotherhood, in the same order, The Order of the Teaspoon.”

You are all now graduates and leave this university with wisdom and knowledge and can make a decision as to which of the options you will choose.

May you go out into the world and make a positive difference.

Thank you.
