

# UniSA Graduation Occasional Address

Andrew Pridham AO.

26 September 2022

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today and pay my respect to to their elders past present and emerging.

I would also like to acknowledge

University of South Australia Chancellor Pauline Carr  
Vice Chancellor Professor David Lloyd  
Members of the University Council  
Doctors, Emeritus Professors, Fellows, Senior management and staff and of course my fellow graduates.

It is difficult to comprehend that it is now almost 35 years since I graduated from the South Australian Institute of Technology, which is today of course called UniSA.

I would like to sincerely thank the University Council for conferring me with an Honorary Doctorate of the University. When I graduated from this place in 1988 you would have struggled to get odds of 1000:1 that this would ever happen!

So much has changed in the world and my life since my graduation day. The iPhone was still 20 years away and Irish jokes were not only politically acceptable, but in abundance (apologies Professor Lloyd).

In Australia, approximately 40% of our population aged between 25 and 64 have achieved a tertiary education. In countries like Indonesia and South Africa this figure is below 10%. We should never forget how fortunate we are.

The piece of paper you receive today is a great achievement. It is a consequence of your commitment to better yourself. It is a consequence of a decision to challenge yourself, to work hard, to be tested, to be challenged. Whether you finished at the top of your course or just scraped in, you are part of the circa 40% of Australians with a tertiary qualification. Now the hard work begins.

Educational qualifications provide all of us with an entry ticket to a career or one sort or another. This entry ticket is not the only way to forge a career. Many people become highly successful in a variety of careers with very little education. However, all of us graduates play the odds. The better our education the better our chances in life.

Sadly, our educational qualifications are nothing more than an entry ticket. How you apply yourself, how hard you work, how you behave, how you treat others, how you manage personal and professional development from today onward will determine your future.

I will give you one simple piece of advice. Please listen well. **Your challenge for the rest of your life is to be a better person next year than you were this year. If you can do this consistently, year after year, the law of compounding can see you achieve great things in all areas of your life.**

If I look back on my life it is apparent that my greatest achievements have resulted from me challenging myself. It is when you take yourself out of your comfort zone that you give yourself the opportunity to achieve. Taking risks and then working extremely hard at whatever you do can see you achieve great things. The best things I have achieved have come from making what, at the time, were terrifying decisions to move well outside of my comfort zone. Decisions that seemed easy in retrospect were often bold and excruciating at inception.

Playing it safe, staying at home, sitting quietly in the corner will not lead to much. One of the few certainties in life is change. The world, your world will continually change. Don't resist change. Try to cause change. Embrace it, impact it and benefit from it. If you can find the positives in change you will be a beneficiary, not a victim.

We live in a complex world. In fact the world has never been more fast moving and complex. We are all desperately clinging onto this planet as it spins rapidly through the vastness of infinite space. We are all here for only moments. Please, please make your moments count. Make them amazing. Only you can do this. Take risks. Lean in.

Your education gives you a baseline of understanding on which to build a career and life. It is what you learn from today onwards that will determine your future. Try to learn things, not in a narrow channel, restricted to the skills and knowledge you need for your particular career, but learn on a broad canvass. Understand numbers, understand the arts, history, popular culture, religion, politics, sport, botany, farming, music, technology and so on.

My primary professional focus has been on banking, finance and business building. Sounds pretty dry doesn't it? But I have also focussed on sport, through my 21 years at the Sydney Swans Football Club. Business has taught me how to make money. Sport has taught me how to make people happy. Passion brings more richness to life than money.

Sport gives people a sense of belonging and passion. It inspires the young to dream big, to have hero's, to have a focus. It is far, far more than just entertainment or a game. As the world has become more diverse and more complex more and more people feel marginalised. They do not feel a sense of belonging that most of us enjoy. Marginalisation of people is the greatest danger we all face.

Back in 1988 when I graduated from UniSA (in a building far less impressive than Pridham Hall) the faces of the audience was largely young middle class white South Australian people. We watched sitcoms on free to air TV, read newspapers, drank beer at the pub, ate at Hungry Jacks, studied, watched and played football and tennis.

The world is not like that anymore. At the Sydney Swans we play an annual themed game called Marn Grook. This game celebrates the unique culture of Indigenous Australians.

It acknowledges the important place Aboriginal and Torres Strait people play in Australian Football and in our society.

We are very proud that we established this game in 2002, three years before the first Dreamtime at the 'G' game and five years before the introduction of the first AFL Indigenous Round.

I am also very proud of UniSA's indigenous development programmes and in particular its GO Foundation scholarship programme undertaken by the University in partnership of my great friends and fellow South Australian's Adam Goodes and Michael O'Loughlin.

In 2016, along with St Kilda the Sydney Swans introduced the first Pride game. This game acknowledges and celebrates the LGBTIQ+ community.

I have witnessed first hand what a profound sense of pride, belonging and acceptance that each of the Marn Grook and Pride games gives to so many people. Making an effort to help those who need our help genuinely matters.

The Sydney Swans plan more themed games into the future, aimed at welcoming segments of our community that may feel threatened, un-valued or excluded.

As our world becomes more diverse all of us have a role to play in making those in the community who may feel marginalised or confined to the periphery of society and culture feel safe and included.

This is not an easy task. Our world is very very complex. The issues related to inclusion, racism, sexism or any form of discrimination or exclusion needs education, patience and a careful balance to correct. Overall it needs decency. We can all be decent.

The complexity of the social issues we face are not to be underestimated. We cannot expect that hundreds of years of exclusion and prejudice can be reversed quickly or without mistakes being made.

There is no simple solution. In fact, even understanding or being aware of the problem is enormously challenging and nuanced. It is just time, patience, care and most importantly education that can make this world better for everyone.

Each of you is a leader. If you do not think you are one today, you most definitely can become one. You are the fortunate ones. This is your time. Grab opportunities when they present.

I implore you to use your UniSA education to achieve your dreams. Whether your dreams are to become rich, famous, powerful or simply to enjoy life, you must be multi faceted in your journey. Do not become selfish or one dimensional.

Build your career and dreams by all means. However, please take time to help build the dreams of others. Help the next in line. Your reward will not be in heaven, it will be in life.

This is your time. This is your place. Your future. Importantly the future of the entirety of our community can be improved by your efforts, by your care and your talents.

Be GREAT. Be UniSA GREAT.

Thank you.