

Graduation Speech

University of South Australia Graduation Tuesday 16

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Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and the academic community, graduates and their families and friends.

First, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land on which we meet the Kaurna people of the Adelaide plains and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Second, thank you to the university for bestowing this award on me. I see this honour as an acknowledgement of the critical role of nursing and midwifery in the provision of health care to all Australians.

It is always uplifting to attend a graduation ceremony and this occasion does not disappoint! Graduations are very important for the graduates, their colleagues, family and friends. It is an opportunity to acknowledge the critical role of support from families and friends in this achievement. Graduations signify the end of a defining period in one's life and the beginning of a whole new episode. However, do not think for a moment

that you have finished your or informal formal education. This is just the beginning of a lifelong process.

From an educational perspective, I have some reflections on my own career. I am surprised that I have had such a wonderful career with such a poor initial nursing education. This was a reflection of the role and function of nurses in the 1960s. Nevertheless, I have studied to overcome that and, spurred on by an understanding of the shortcomings of preparing nurses in hospitals, I was privileged to have been part of the move of nursing and midwifery education from the hospital apprentice type programs to the university sector. The story of this achievement is one of dedication, doggedness and political ingenuity by many nurses across Australia and far too complex for me to explicate now. Suffice it to say the nursing and midwifery graduates of today and the community as a whole are the beneficiaries of this effort.

As the most populous health profession, and one that is widely regarded as the most trusted, nursing and midwifery is unique in its ability to be flexible and to adapt to changing health needs. With the huge expansion in demand for primary health care including aged care, we, as a profession, shall be at the forefront leading these changes, always with the best interests of the patient as the top priority.

In addition to the expansion in the primary health care area, there is a concomitant and growing need for nurses and midwives to continue to

be involved in health policy analysis, advocacy and implementation. It is essential for the nursing and midwifery voice to be present at the decision-making tables of our health system.

Underpinning these activities is the need for nursing and midwifery research and it is pleasing to note that the University of South Australia, along with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (SA Branch) has established the first nursing and midwifery research centre in Australia which already shows signs of becoming a national centre.

Having been the recipients of an education program, which will give you a base from which to spring in whichever direction you wish, a good question to ask yourselves is how, as individual professionals, you can make the very best of this opportunity. There are many answers to this question. Taking time out from the busyness of our lives and attending events such as this, offers an excellent opportunity to reflect on this question, and I encourage you all – new graduates and old - to do so.

Congratulations to you the graduates and your families and friends as you embark on the next chapter in your lives!