



University of Southern Queensland, Graduation Ceremony
Clive Berghofer Recreation Centre, Toowoomba
Saturday, 6 September 2008, 10am

The Hon Paul de Jersey AC
Chief Justice of Queensland

Chancellor, distinguished guests, graduands, ladies and gentlemen,

I treasure the opportunity to congratulate such a redoubtable band of high achievers. Graduands, that you are shortly to graduate from this fine University will I hope be a source of continuing pride for you, and also of course, for your families and friends.

Although I cannot remember who spoke at my graduation ceremonies, or even one word of what he said – it would have been in that era almost certainly have been a “he”, I do still relish many fond memories of university days, not the least meeting my wife-to-be in the Law Library. I hope your experience will be the same – though my wife I should make clear remains my own.

My era at university – and my studies were Arts and Law, my wife’s were in the Arts – our era at university was the second half of the 1960’s: popularly portrayed as refreshing, progressive – some said “swinging” – even revolutionary. Was it a revolutionary era? I doubt it was really any more than “questioning”.

Today you graduate from a university which has fostered very well your own capacities for thoughtful analysis. Tapping those capacities, resident in intelligent and accomplished citizens, is essential if our civilization is to grapple effectively with challenges not envisaged even a decade ago.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, with the end of the Cold War, filled us with optimism about the future of humanity, but the optimism was sadly short-lived. September 11, then Afghanistan and Iraq intervened, and now with Georgia, we hear rumblings frighteningly reminiscent of the Cold War.



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And we confront other, different, challenges: the prospect of the obliteration of cities, even nations, or at least their transplantation; the earth's capacity to support, say, 8 or 9 billion people by mid-century; the increasing poverty of nations where people somehow manage to survive on less than \$1 per day; the elimination of the nuclear weapons which have the capacity to eliminate mankind.

Increasingly, we are acknowledging that critical issues like those will not necessarily be solved by pure scientists and their ilk, notwithstanding the immense capacities of those specialists. And correspondingly, we are recognizing that really worthwhile qualifications in fundamentally critical disciplines like medicine, are best informed by primary degrees in disciplines which address broader abiding issues – and I mean especially those of concern in the Arts. Any lawyerly talent of mine was nurtured through my primary degree in Arts.

Another emergent problem, quite unforeseen, potentially drastically plaguing our 21st century world, is the possibility of economic downturn verging on recession. We now recognize that our apparently cosy Australian economy is dramatically dependent on what happens with the volatile US economy, what happens for example to those quaintly named American mortgage finance companies of which we have heard so much in recent months. So business graduates, recognize the enormity of the contribution which may be expected of you.

Now I do not seek to overwhelm any of you by emphasizing the grandeur of your potential contribution to the resolution of the world's problems. Your youth does however equip you well to embrace that responsibility with alacrity, and especially, to utilize exponentially developing technology as a power for good.

But those grand responsibilities apart, you are entitled now to revel in this qualification, to use it as a springboard for optimal personal development: so enjoy life, become even more fulfilled human beings, and recognize that that depends in large part, on well-developed and persisting relationships with other people. We all depend on others to tell us when we are being unduly self-indulgent, blinkered, or simply wrong headed.



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The Chancellor has generously described me as a reformist judge. We have just about got it right: for the moment any way. We are successful with the court system, because of the cooperative support of judicial officers, and the legal profession, and our source of material resources, executive government. It is a cooperative effort, and so I emphasize today the importance of continuing relationships with other people. Do not underestimate their importance.

I wish you all well, and that is a given. What I should add is this: I sincerely hope you are able to embrace all the wonderful opportunities life opens up to people with your intellectual, and creative, capacities. I hinted before that humanity depends on you. It does, and you will be wonderfully recompensed if you embrace the discharge of that responsibility.

The university has today accorded me an honour which I embrace with humble pride. "Humble pride", the linguist will be querying. I ordain today there can be such a thing.

Graduands, 37 years ago, when I was in your position, I could not have conceived I would one day see a fine university honouring me as has occurred today. It is, I should say, a matter of particular pride to me – there goes that word again, that the honour should come from a university not based in the metropolis.

Although I was born in Brisbane, I spent the first 11 or 12 years of my life in regional Queensland centres, and they were instrumentally important years for me. It has been a feature of my Chief Justiceship that I have travelled substantially to court centres outside Brisbane, to interact, hopefully beneficially, with the legal profession and the community, and to enhance the fulfilment of our courts' mission, of delivering justice according to law throughout this uniquely decentralized State.

In that context, that it is the University of Southern Queensland which has seen fit to extend this exceptional acknowledgement, has been a matter of particular delight to me –



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and especially because the main campus of the University is in this city of Toowoomba for which Kaye and I have always felt considerable affection.

Dare I conclude in a predictable way? I will. I have in my professional career risen to a level beyond any reasonable expectation of my own. Each of you graduands has the capacity to do that. Your innate capacity has been fostered wonderfully by this great University. For the sake of your own fulfilment, and for the betterment of humanity, please exploit those capacities to the full. Thank you, and best wishes to you all!