• To reiterate my sentiments in the traditional Kaurna language – ‘Ngaitalya’ (naitch-AHL-yah)

• In the mother tongue of my native Ireland – ‘Ta an athas orm an failte seo a glacadh, go raibh maith agat’

• And using the common language that unites all of us in 21st Century Australia – thank you very much, I am delighted to accept this welcome.

• Thank you to Uncle Lewis, to the singers and the dancers for your very generous and truly humbling welcome to country, and to the University of South Australia.

• It is a great honour for me to take part in this historic ceremony, and to establish an enduring, direct link with the first peoples of this region that my family and I now happily call home.

• I also want to thank our Chancellor, Dr Ian Gould, our invited guests, my University colleagues, the many families and friends here with us and – most importantly – our graduands for being here today.

• This is a day you will remember for the rest of your lives.
• You are here this morning because of your enterprise, and because of your endeavours.

• You have earned your degrees, and you should be proud of your achievements just as those who love you and have supported you take pride in what you accomplish, not just today but every day.

• And shortly, you will rise from your seats and stand poised to embark on your life’s next adventure.

• To begin your journey along a road that is paved with possibilities, utilising the skills and the experiences gained during your studies to navigate your way.

• It is an exciting, liberating time that I know well.

• Indeed, pretty much all of us up here on stage today have occupied the seats you’re in now – figuratively, of course.

• But what I can also tell you from personal experience is that coming up to receive your parchment represents simply the closing of a chapter rather than the end of a story.

• It’s the reason why, in many other parts of the world including Ireland where I was born and educated, this event is known as a commencement ceremony.
• As the famous line so often attributed to William Butler Yeats tells us: “education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire”.

• Or as author Terry Pratchett noted in his interpretation of a well-known truism: “Sometimes it’s better to light a flamethrower than to curse the darkness”

• Either way, your assignment now is to take the flame that’s been kindled in lectures and in tutorials and during exams and throughout late night cramming sessions, and put it to practical use.

• It is often said that history is written by the victors, so it’s now your turn to begin writing your own history.

• The degree you’ve worked so hard to secure was not developed to make a framed statement on an office wall, nor does it exist solely to make an impressive addendum to your Linked In profile.

• The degree you selected and earned is purpose designed so that you can make a difference.

• To our neighbourhoods; to this State; to the nation and beyond.
• This University is graduating almost 650 students today.

• Around 3,500 for this week.

• Nearly 8,500 during the course of the year.

• And you will be taking your places - in fact, some of you already have - as the Indigenous advocates, communications experts, public relations managers, journalists and wordsmiths who will help to shape our collective destiny.

• As such, you are the future pillars of our communities.

• Our region’s new generation of leaders.

• And the inspiration that will encourage our children to follow your example in the same way that I’m sure many of you are pursuing personal and professional ambitions spawned by outstanding role models from your younger years.

• But even though it is a core business of universities to train and challenge and learn from, and ultimately produce, skilled graduates I genuinely hope your relationship with us doesn’t finish when you walk across this stage.
• That’s because, in addition to your formal degree, you leave the University of South Australia with the title of ambassador for our institution.

• We would like to think that you are as proud of your alma mater as we are of your achievements – both up to this point, and those that are yet to come.

• As a member of our global alumni network of more than 170,000, you can play an integral role in spreading the word about UniSA to the world.

• And let’s face it – the stronger and broader our reputation grows, the more valuable your degree becomes.

• It’s a two-way connection, and we hope that you will choose to maintain it with your university as you make your way in the world.

• We would also be delighted if you came back to see us when you have a chance.

• To renew friendships.

• To share your story and your insights.
• To let us know where we’ve served you well, and what we can be doing better.

• Maybe even to grace an event such as this as an Occasional Speaker, or to deliver a guest lecture, or to act as an industry mentor, or simply to encourage those who might follow in your footsteps by recounting what can be achieved with hard work and with purpose and with passion.

• Above all, we want you to take your place as a citizen of value in a world that – perhaps now more than ever – needs innovators and trailblazers and entrepreneurs and achievers who are willing to roll up their sleeves and get the job done.

• People who think in the plural.

• Of ‘we’, not simply ‘me’.

• Of ‘us’ rather than ‘I’.

• Those who don’t see the glass as being half empty, but rather an opportunity to design an even better glass.

• You will invariably encounter disappointments and failures.

• In fact, the Irish have a lot to say about failure.

• But James Joyce, I think, hit the nail on the head when he noted that our errors are our portals of discovery.

• That’s because it is the way you recover and learn from your setbacks that will shape your character and define your journey.

• This is what we, as an institution, strive to propagate and cultivate in our programs and in our students.

• And it is why today – the day that you become a graduate of the University of South Australia – is one that I know you will remember for the rest of your lives.

• Thank you for bringing your talents to our university, and I wish you all success, prosperity and every happiness for the future.

(ends)