Vice Chancellor’s speech for SA Power Networks’ Leaders Forum

Time: 11:30am-12:30pm
Date: Friday 3 March, 2017
Place: The Junction, 470 Anzac Highway, Camden Park in the Stables Room
**Leaders Forum Agenda – Friday 3 March 2017**

**Location:** The Junction, 470 Anzac Highway Camden Park in the Stables Room

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<td><strong>Introduction and welcome</strong></td>
<td>David Syme</td>
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<td>• Discuss agenda and objectives</td>
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<td>• Set frame – format for this forum is primarily presentation based because</td>
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<td>it is about providing information updates</td>
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<td>• New format going forward</td>
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<td>1110</td>
<td><strong>2016 Recap:</strong></td>
<td>David Syme</td>
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<td>• Rob’s DVD (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• 2016 Performance (including Corporate Benchmarking) – Darren (10 mins)</td>
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<td>1130</td>
<td><strong>Key Note Speaker David Lloyd (Vice Chancellor University of SA) –</strong></td>
<td>David Syme and David</td>
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<td>Industries in Transformation</td>
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<td><strong>Business Updates</strong></td>
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<td>• Our Storm Response – Dean (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Ring fencing – Darren (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• EB update role – John F (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Safety Blueprint – George (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Customer Strategy update – Dana (10 mins)</td>
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<td><strong>Stretch break</strong></td>
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<td>• New and Emerging Business – Ben (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Future Network Strategy – Mark Vincent (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Launch of Future Operating Model – Rob Stobbe (10 mins)</td>
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<td>• Table discussion to identify 2 key questions from each table – David (10</td>
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*Each presentation will consist of no more than 3 slides and address the following questions:*

- *What does the leader need to know about this topic?*
- *What does the speaker need the leaders to be able to communicate to their team/colleagues?*

| 1445 | **Break**                                                                    |                            |
### Vice Chancellor’s remarks for SA Power Networks event

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<td><strong>Fit Mind, Fit Body – talk from Australian Dance theatre</strong> –</td>
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Request 3 nominations to coordinate and MC the next Leaders Forum.
• Good morning.

• Thank you for the invitation to join you today.

• And I apologise for the accent. It’s the only one I’ve got.

• They used to write ‘slow don’ in my speeches.

• I confess to something of a sense of déjà vu because I recently spoke at a water industry forum and went through a similar process of confidence and self-doubt beforehand.

• Then, as now, I initially thought “I run a university, what can I possibly tell these people” – and immediately tried to find reasons and ways to say no and wiggle out of the ask.

• However, then as now, I realised that our businesses may be different but there is a common theme;

• we both need to keep changing and evolving and doing better (even if we think we are doing pretty well already).
• We must strive to meet more and different expectations and constantly keep ahead of the game.

• Electricity is still electricity, but even an outsider like me can see that supplying it effectively, efficiently, reliably and safely is increasingly complex because there are more and more variables at play all the time.

• Not least the vagaries of Mother Nature.

• Similarly, learning is still learning, but you don’t have to be a Vice Chancellor or school principal to know that how, when, where and why that learning happens is a lot more complicated than it once was.

• We live in a digital age which butts up against analog processes.

• And that’s challenging.
• There are no rules to the process of staying solvent and staying relevant,

• other than don’t spend more than you make and listen to your customers’ needs

• but we all have ideas and experiences that may be useful to others.

• So – now, as then – I said yes and agreed to give this talk and Q&A session.

• But, having committed, I took a more detailed look at your situation alongside my own and thought two things:

• One – we are both in changing industries, but they are very different scenarios that probably require very different approaches

• And honestly (that’s when I return to the “what can I possibly tell these people?” dilemma) which doesn’t bode well for the rest of this dialog;
• And two – I don’t envy you. However tough the balancing act is of providing education to over 30,000 clever customers,

• It must be very difficult to try to look to the future, to contemplate new business models and how to leverage your strengths, to be innovative and think outside the square, while having to...

• (a) second guess what the regulators might do; and

• (b) constantly justify and defend what you are doing in the present.

• Actually, on saying that out loud, it’s exactly the same for both of our industries.

• However, there is no university equivalent of grumpy customers shouting, “I want my power, I want it now, I
“don’t want to pay much for it, and I don’t care how bad the storms were, just fix it.”

- And I’m sure the media focus doesn’t help.

- In such situations it is easy to think purely in terms of change that will release the immediate pressure,

- short-term adjustments

- rather than change that is a part of the longer-term and necessary transition of your business and your industry.

- But by the same token, it can be difficult to recognise the need for change when things seem to be ticking along quite nicely.

- Comfortable operations can quickly become complacent organisations

- Especially if there is a risk that even raising the idea of meaningful change will open a Pandora’s Box.
• Universities definitely tend to fall into this category.

• Centuries of tradition (        ) with huge suspicion. And resistance.

• In both situations, I’m sure the key lies in having the structure, ethos and mindset to accept change as a constant and a necessity, and a culture that invites ideas from anywhere and assesses them with an open mind.

PAUSE

• Of course, our organisations do have a bit of shared history, indirectly and directly.

• Both SA Power Networks and UniSA can trace their roots back to the late 19th Century – to the Adelaide Electricity Supply Company and the School of Mines respectively – and have since been through a series of transformations.
• Some changes were mandated or forced upon us by political, legislative, economic or other imperatives.

• Other changes were internally driven by proactive will and determination of our predecessors to succeed and thrive.

• No doubt those who went through such changes might attest to the sometimes-painful experiences that had to be endured to attain the status that our organisations enjoy today.

• As an educator I’m all for imparting knowledge.

• The lesson we might learn from our past is that on our watch, there may be painful decisions and actions that we must take to ensure we hand over to our successors a better enterprise than that which we had inherited.

• That’s the tenet of responsible stewardship.
• I will briefly mention one such decision I have had to make a little later and a little about the process of decision-making which precipitates change.

PAUSE

• More recently our organisations have shared history through the University’s corporate education program.

• Since April 2014, UniSA’s Strategic Partnership program has delivered a tailored industry-based Graduate Certificate in Business Administration for SA Power Networks staff.

• There have been two successful deliveries to date involving 33 staff, with a third commencing just last month.

• Last year, Strategic Partnerships also worked closely with you to develop and deliver Business Excellence programs
covering Lean and Continuous Improvements.

- This is a collaboration we hope will continue to strengthen into the future.

- Now it’s confession time. I am, by training, a chemist. Technically I am a lapsed chemist. I have no formal non-scientific training to my name.

- I’m no expert in this area of change and change management but I do read widely and I have a very good business school to guide my reading and thinking.

- It strikes me that as environments and contexts change, our success can only be measured relative to how well we are positioned within that changed environment.

- The external world pushes or pulls us. How we respond determines our success or otherwise.
• We will continue to face challenges that constantly force us to review who we are, what we do and how we need to act to sustain our success into the future.

• Change is a constant.

• Paradoxically, one of the greatest threats to future success is past success.

• We need to be mindful that what worked well in that past cannot be relied upon to continue to support future success.

• But we similarly have to learn from the past as we move forward.

• Legislation, social thinking and norms, the political landscape, economic, technological advances and other factors change, independently and interdependently and often in an uninfluencable manner.
• We cannot use yesterday’s tools for tomorrow’s problems. The sacred cows that may exist in our organisations, and the mindset that says: “…this is the way we have always done things, and this is the way we will continue to do things”, might need to be sacrificed.

PAUSE

• As an aside, sometimes quoting the Harvard Business Review can be a change in influences.

• An article around building positive culture had the throwaway line, ‘fire all the negative people’;

• More seriously however, just as much as we need to develop ability and agility for change to secure our future place, we should be cautious in not implementing change simply for the sake of change.

• Change needs to be well justified. Justification comes in many forms, not the least of which is the imperative to
remains relevant to the context of the key stakeholders’ expectations.

PAUSE

• Both incremental and radical changes have their place in transforming organisations.

• Ideas big and small contribute to the transformation.

• We have been through such a process at UniSA, and I will talk about that in a moment.

• When we talk about change in the modern setting, we increasingly are talking about change readiness, which can be roughly defined as the ability to continuously initiate and respond to change in ways that create advantage, minimise risk, and sustain performance.

• One recent article I saw noted that: “Companies most likely to be successful in making change work to their
advantage are the ones that no longer view change as a
discrete event to be managed, but as a constant
opportunity to evolve the business.”

- I would like to talk first a little about how we have gone
about setting our future course at the University,

- and then later about how we were forced to make that
difficult decision I mentioned in response to what was
happening more broadly in our sector.

- Neither story is directly relevant to your situation. I would
love to have the answers for you, but I don’t.

- But it’s my half hour and I get to fill it as I see fit.

- I hope, however, that our experiences may trigger some
ideas for you – or at very least some questions for me in
the second half of this session.

- In both cases the process was interesting.
But let me say up front that in most situations where complex decisions are required, I find it useful to ask one key question:

What would Captain Kirk do?

When the chips were down and he was facing near certain defeat at the hands of Khan Noonien Singh (the first time around, not the reboot), Captain James T. Kirk imparted the following wisdom to a young lieutenant aboard the Enterprise:

Lieutenant Saavik, played by Kirsty Alley in her first screen role (you can tell I’m a tragic),

What Kirk told her was: “You’ve got to learn WHY things work on a Starship.”

He then went on to exploit his knowledge of why things work and launch a fairly definitive photon torpedo salvo,
ultimately winning the day in Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan.

- The underpinning premise is quite straightforward. If you carry the ultimate responsibility for the craft’s destination, you need to understand its capabilities and limitations.

- You need detailed knowledge of its component parts, as well as a comprehension of how those parts define and impact on the whole.

- You must know which operations are fundamental to your journey, and those that can be effectively jettisoned or occasionally overridden.

- Where you can warp and where you cannot.

- And you must share these insights with your crew – all of them, not just those punching in combat codes on the bridge.
• That way everyone is aware of wherever it is you are boldly going and reassured that the role they are playing in getting you there is both recognised and appreciated.

• As a student of Star Trek in all its incarnations I must say Captain Kirk didn’t dispense much in the way of leadership advice throughout the Star Trek series, but he did offer one other nugget – to his successor as Captain of the USS Enterprise B (at the beginning of Star Trek: Generations).

• He noted, “risk is part of the game if you want to sit in that chair”.

• His message was that risk is part of your role as senior managers, but that it isn’t frightening if you determine how to manage it.

• So let me turn to Captain Lloyd of the Starship UniSA.
• I came to the University four years ago from the far side of the planet with the benefit of having studied it from a distance.

• I was able to bring a picture from being within a different country sector and different sort of university.

• And I also had access to a lot of data in the sector and comparator and competitive benchmarking.

• I asked a lot of questions before I started and did a lot of talking to previous leaders and key stakeholders – a lot of external conversations.

• I also knew I needed to sample the product: I sat at the back of lecture rooms, walked around unannounced to various areas in the university; met with leading researchers, one on one and in groups.
• Early on I moved around and avoided working always through strict management lines and chain of command to hear from as many different voices as I could.

• This causes great consternation among the senior staff – why is he talking to X?, what is he doing at Y?

• That’s healthy when you are readying for change

• If we were to change, and challenge our current practice, I considered that the way we made decisions might need to change as well.

• A changed process was more likely to deliver a changed outcome.

• And I did my homework on the town and place.

• So what did I find? I found a university that was doing very well in the two things universities provide to society. It was delivering knowledge and delivering graduates.
• But everyone involved – and this had little to do with me, I was the new guy – knew there was potential to do more and better.

• Everyone – and I mean almost universally – everyone who I encountered was extremely proud of how the organisation worked and wanted I to do even better.

• There was an opportunity for our research to become even more relevant and useful to industry, to translate fundamental and curiosity-driven research into practice by providing new solutions for problems and new ideas for industry and society.

• There was equally an opportunity to deliver an even fuller student experience.

• And there was an imperative to ensure that our definition of a learning environment included personal learning
environments in which e-content was pervasive across all courses.

- So, the vision of what UniSA could become was there. What we needed was to hear more ideas from all sectors of the university and get their buy-in.

- This would normally be the time to order in pads of butcher’s paper, pallet loads of sticky notes and great fat marking pens.

- A time for traditional strategic planning.

- Get senior management around a table to workshop, invite an American learning guru to talk and promote his or her books, craft a vision distilled from half a dozen vested interests, then present and defend your plans to people who have had no input into them.

- Not us. We decided to have a party. We threw the doors open – figuratively – and asked the world what they
thought we should do to bring about the changes we wanted.

- We called it Unijam and it was a crowd-sourced social media brainstorm that involved the entire university, its students, staff, alumni and stakeholders as well as our government and industry partners, plus some VIPs for added variety and, maybe, some new thinking.

- They included Bob Hawke and the administrator of NASA.

- Many moons ago when I wasn’t a lapsed chemist, I had a collaboration with IBM.

- For my sins I would frequently spend 3 or 4 weeks a year in Silicon Valley working ( ).

- So, at long last, we used IBM’s Collaborative Innovation platform. Globally, over 80 businesses, not-for-profits and government bodies had successfully used this technology
for organisational conversations. However, we were the first university in the world to use it.

• Over 38 hours, almost 8000 people scattered across our city and suburban and regional campuses, along with people in 50 countries, gave us their ideas on how to bring about the changes we needed.

• And the ultimate modern sign of success – we trended on Twitter over two days. Pre Trump.

• Let me stress here that this was an open communication and it remained that way. Although the conversation was led from the top, it didn’t stay there and some really interesting ideas spilled out.

• Ideas like building a Great Hall as a place that can be our physical heart, our gathering space and a resource for the wider community – housing the only publicly accessible large swimming pool in the CBD.
• We’d never discussed it before, never even thought of it. Now, if you care to wander down Hindley Street, you will see it taking shape.

• It was a $50 million good idea.

• It even inspired one of our famous alumni – Andrew Pridham, Chairman of the Sydney Swans AFL club – to kick in $5 million towards its construction.

• Not for nothing is it now called Pridham Hall.

• Another major decision coming out of Unijam was keeping a campus that had been slated for closure.

• Far from disappearing, the Magill campus will now become a focal point for education and enterprise in this State, building on its heritage as a place of lifelong learning and teacher education.

• Between us all we co-created a planning conversation about the university’s future
• all of which went into producing our strategic action plan, _Crossing the Horizon_. That plan has 50 discrete actions for the years ahead that can be traced back to Unijam.

• Four years on and we’re ahead of schedule on its implementation and delivery.

• And, of course, since students, staff and alumni suggested most of the changes, they were happy to help bring them about.

• This was co-created and co-owned

• Almost as soon as the action plan was published I did a series of town hall meetings on each of our metropolitan campuses with video links to our regional colleagues. We shared the plans and opened ourselves to questions and comments.

• That was when I knew that we had the buy-in we were hoping for. Across all four campus meetings there was
nothing but reinforcement that we were on the right path and that people were happy to walk on it with us.

• In fact, there was only one negative comment at one Town Hall and that turned out to be someone who’d slipped in from another institution!

• Last year in our 25th birthday year we did Unijam again, to help us further refine our strategy.

• I don’t know whether it was “Unijam 2”, “Unijam Revisited” or “Return to Unijam”, but it did a lot better than many movie sequels (though possibly not Star Trek).

• There were almost 4600 participants registered and the jam generated 18,217 visits from 55 countries this time with 314,073 page views. This time the event was live-streamed and again we trended on Twitter.

• Simon Birmingham and Christopher Pyne were among the participants.
• Topics that generated the most interest included how we can improve staff and student connections, the best ways to transition to university, and how we can develop closer links between our researchers and end users.

• Students wanted to green the City East campus, and, dare I say it, power Mawson Lakes campus with solar energy, put on more campus connector buses and increase online study options.

• We have a lot of food for thought and ideas for the future.

• Opening such an important conversation to so many people proved that we weren’t hiding anything and people were free to raise their concerns and consulted about ways to address them.

• You have to be careful that urban myths don’t perpetuate – so we have been consciously sharing the data and
enabling conversation and debate from a shared base level of understanding.

- Management decision-making needs a hierarchy. Communication does not.

- My point in sharing this is to reflect that we have some very tangible innovations occurring in our institution because of Unijam.

- But just as important as the outcomes was the process.

- We changed up the model of corporate planning and interaction.

- We successfully leapt collectively into another space – and mostly achieved that, I would argue, because we simply tried to and we took on the risk.

- I believe Captain Kirk would be proud of us.
The most important point was that everything was assessed not in terms of how great it might be in theory or in isolation, but whether it was a valid part of what we were trying to achieve.

Even something as momentous as a Great Hall needs to have a purpose. For a University such as ours, it is a really important part in our evolution and of our presence within this city and State, so it happened.

For other universities, there might be different imperatives.

When looking to change – and to be seen to be changing - I think it is very easy to embrace things that have worked elsewhere,

that can be implemented without too much disruption,

that on the surface say the right things about you or your values,
• but that don’t fit the narrative.

• Or – most importantly – don’t fit the narrative that others will listen to without rolling their eyes.

• That, I suspect, is where I have a change advantage over you. People basically think well of universities.

• Sure, some don’t like the courses we teach or specific decisions we make, or think academics live in ivory towers and that the school of hard knocks is a better teacher anyway, but in general it is easier for universities to change the way they do things than it is for – well, power infrastructure companies.

• People understand that the way universities work and are funded is complex and accept that we are doing the best we can with the cash available.
Vice Chancellor’s remarks for SA Power Networks event

- You they blame for the cost of power and everything that goes wrong. I’m sure they demand change but would be suspicious of any proposed change.

- Perhaps it is a matter not of looking at where you want to be and how you want to look, but at how consumers think a power infrastructure company should be and look – and if and how you can be seen to heading in that direction.

- Beyond Unijam, or other forms of information gathering, there is still much that organisations need to think about in introducing and bringing about change.

- Do the systems, structures, policies, processes, people and skills, and leadership style, promote or hinder the capability for change to occur?

- Do the internal factors align to facilitate agility for change?

- Above all, are our people ready for change and ready to lead change?
• Readiness comes from awareness. Awareness comes from exposure to new ideas, thinking and learning and from understanding the change imperative and benefits.

• In the same vein that yesterday’s tools become obsolete, so do our knowledge and way of thinking.

• Yesterday's thinking may serve well to resolve yesterday’s problems. But new problems demand new ways of thinking.

• You have probably heard the quote from psychologist Herbert Gerjuoy of the Human Resources Research Organization:

  • “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

• My view is that investing in helping people to continuously develop the capacity to learn, the discernment and
courage to know what to unlearn, and the capability to process knowledge and to apply it in new ways are critical to building robust enterprises of the future.

• Let me just quickly tell you my other story before I open the floor to your thoughts and questions.

• A story about making difficult decisions.

• UniSA has a history of deep involvement with Indigenous education. It goes back to 1973 and the Aboriginal Task Force.

• I could talk for a long time about its component parts, but it’s fair to say that one of the most important was the establishment in 2007 of the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research.

• David Unaipon, a Narranjjerri man, was an inventor. He’s on the $50 bill.
• Better known to everyone as DUCIER, this quickly became our centrepiece for advancing teaching and research in Indigenous education and cultural studies.

• In 2015 I shut it down.

• It was a tough decision, perhaps the toughest I have had to make in this job, but when you start reviewing parts of your business and find that things could be done better or differently, then you have to respond appropriately.

• This was not totally of our own doing. A national review had recommended moving away from specific units having responsibility for supporting Indigenous education to a whole-of-university effort.

• We could not review DUCIER without taking heed of this recommendation, and our own comprehensive review concluded that we would be best served by closing DUCIER.
• The consequences were predictable:
  o Impassioned meetings at Academic Board;
  o Confrontational discussions with high emotion;
  o TV and press coverage.
  o Personal abuse directed at me.

• But the decision stood. The inputs to the decision were clearly and openly outlined and, most importantly, the benefits from the decision were communicated, time and again.

• Despite the prophecies of doom

• And the sun still comes up every morning and sets at night.

• We are even more committed to being the University of Choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,

• Our enrolments this year are our highest ever,
• and my conversations with Indigenous Elders and our First Nation staff and students are deeper than before as we plan a future together.

• The lesson to me from this experience was that “decision is a point in time”. Subsequent actions speak louder than policies.

• The scientist, academic and author Peter Senge once noted that “people don’t resist change – they resist being changed”. And that is very true.

• I think sometimes it’s less about resistance and more about drag

• However, I would also throw this into the mix. Do people seriously complain when you try to bring about change for the better?
• I don’t mean individual projects or initiatives where some people would have done it differently or preferred the money spent on project B rather than project A.

• I mean significant changes to what you do and how you do it based on the simple fact that this is what is needed because this is the way the world now works.

• And that is what we are all trying to do. Find our secure place in a world that is much bigger than us.

• The key to successful change is having the courage to countenance change.

• I wish you all the good fortune in the world as you try to find your own secure place.

• And now, if you have questions, fire away.