

Good afternoon, all

Thank you Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, colleagues, graduands, and friends

What an absolute honour to be with you today.

My speech comes in four (mercifully short parts)

Part 1

I am deeply honoured to receive the Honorary Award of Fellow of the University as another reminder that learning is not a solitary journey, but a shared pursuit.

Occasions such as these also remind us that education is a privilege, and with it comes a responsibility — to use what we have learned not only for our own success, but for the greater good.

Whether in research, community service, leadership, or innovation, may we strive to leave things better than we found them.

Part 2

My parents migrated out of war-torn Europe in the early 1960's. Full of hope they worked hard and loved their new home, Australia. Australia is the only home of their children. My brother and I were born in Sydney we were first in family to start and finish high school and first in our family to go to university.

Today I stand here representing the real story of migration. People ravaged by wars and human tragedy who bravely sought safety. A safe place to raise children so that they can thrive and contribute. Migration is not about burden it is about sacrifice, hope, commitment, and trust in humanity. We are a nation of people, those that have ancestors that date back centuries and those who more recently, equally, call Australia home.

My story honours my parents and the many people who saw something in me, including my friends and colleagues. People who opened doors taught me to value opportunity and to be a leader, a leader who would in turn open doors for others. My story also speaks of hope for my children and that their generation do a better job of looking after each other and the planet.

Compassionate purposeful leadership is worth the trouble and much needed. Today's world is not a pretty place and you will have moral, ethical and values-based challenges arguably greater than any other generation before you.

My generation must hold itself accountable and with graceful intent gently hand over the reins.

As Jacinta Ardern stated

“Be kind but strong, empathetic but decisive, optimistic yet focused. You can be your own kind of leader, one who knows when it's time to go.”

Part 3

Now to explain. I wanted to create 2 versions ... Part 1 which was generated by CHAT GPT –and Part 2, which was created by me.

The AI response was technically sound, well- structured and articulate... a version of the truth, built from patterns and probabilities. With a few more prompts and tweaks, I could have made it sound more “me” ... but no matter how advanced the algorithm; AI can write about lived experience, but it has not lived.

What I shared in Part 2, the contents of my story, is not something you can generate. My story is real, based on memory, my understanding of personal human experience, of history. Both versions are valid and useful, even powerful when synthesized.

Your challenge, and mine, if we choose to accept it, is to learn how to use the tools before us, while never losing sight of the human intelligence, creativity, and empathy that give those tools meaning.

Because the value of these tools lies not in their output, but in your input.

You need to know what matters.

You need to ask the right questions.

You need to know what to keep, what to discard, what to challenge, and what to reimagine.

You need to spot the difference between nonsense and knowledge.

And most of all, you need to **care**.

To truly master what we create, we must embrace its potential, but never abandon our own intellect. I call this the 'magic of thinking and feeling.' My best advice to you today is to not lose the magic.

Now, if I am being honest, I have only just mastered QR codes; and ChatGPT. I am still in the early stages of those friendships. Only last week I met Jen the Robot in a hotel lift in Singapore, I said hello. Jen replied "Mary please where sunscreen outside as UV levels are high. What, how and why did Jen know?

Did Jen sense my unease? I remain unsure of human – robot social etiquette.

So no, I cannot predict where AI and emerging technologies will take us. I am truly a novice.

But I remain an optimist. An optimist because I have trust in you

Because the future will not be shaped by AI. It will be shaped by you.

I know that you will be faced with moral and ethical challenges, and that applications of your expertise will require you to bring together ever evolving tools and human

intellect in ways that we have never done before and that we cannot possibly forecast.

The ones who will succeed will remember that *what* we create must always be shaped by *why* we create it, and *who* we create it for.

In a world overflowing with information, your ability to think critically, ethically, and independently will matter more than ever.

Part 4 Thank you

I am deeply humbled by the significance of today. To be recognized in this way is truly an honour.

Of even greater significance, today is your day, your graduation is the beginning of opportunity, all you need to do is continue to be brave, like my parents.

For you and for me this is not the end of our journey, but the beginning of many more. Let us carry forward the values we have gained here — curiosity, resilience, collaboration, and hope. We have also understood that there is no shame in being wrong, only in failing to learn from and correct our mistakes.

Thank you for letting me share your day. Like you I would not be here without the support of many people. To my family and friends — thank you for your constant encouragement, you are my world. I would also like to thank all my University of South Australia colleagues, Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, university staff and of course all the students who are the real reason we work hard.

In closing thank you University of SA, onwards to Adelaide University. I salute the past and look to the future as we boldly go forward, live long and prosper.