

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

CEREMONIES FOR THE CONFERRING OF DEGREES

MAY 1987

"THE CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION"

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The Hon. Justice Michael Kirby CMG  
Chancellor, Macquarie University

This congregation has assembled for the conferring of degrees and the award of graduate diplomas.

On behalf of the University I welcome the graduands, their family and friends. I congratulate all of you on the attainment of this happy day. I must also welcome the special guests of the University on this occasion:

The University goes from strength to strength. It is now in its 21st year of teaching. In the old days, 21 years meant adulthood. The achievements in the early days of the University depended very much on the men and women of vision who conceived it and built it. This week we are honouring some of our Founders. For the first time the University will confer honorary degrees. It will do so on its Founders to acknowledge the end of the beginning. The recipients of the honorary

degrees will be the first Chancellor (Sir Garfield Barwick) the first Vice-Chancellor (Professor Alec Mitchell) and the person who, like Dean Atcheson, was present at the creation - my Deputy, Judge John Lincoln.

The University has always prided itself on its commitment to improved teaching. Now, in a number of fields it has also achieved pre-eminence in scholarship and research. Its future reputation depends very much upon the graduands who are about to receive their degrees. They are the standard bearers of this young University. Their success, professionally and personally, will be the mark of the success of the University itself.

Somewhere, years ago, in a local kindergarten the journey to this day began. Do you still remember that far away day when your formal education commenced? Can you hear your early playmates? Perhaps, as with me, you shared your first day of school singing - urged on, as he did for 26 years, by the inimitable Terence Hunt:

[Play tape - first part

"Hello girls and boys. I wish you good singing. Lets begin with song no. 25 "The Blacksmith". Hands up those who remember how many bars of piano introduction there are. Hands down". - End of tape.]

It is pretty clear that the graduands before us were those who put their hands up more often than the rest and got it right more frequently. But our records do not indicate whether you sang in tune:

Insert tape 2 the children singing

"Tis George that I hear ... (first stanza)

Run tape to end of violin solo after first stanza fade out."

Education is a continuous golden thread. It begins, even before kindergarten, at your parents' knees. It continues long after this ceremony. But school and university are special times in life. We should never forget the friends we make there. We should not forget our teachers. Nor should those of us who have had the privilege of education forget those less fortunate - those who sat with us in our class rooms and sang songs with us. The privilege of education imposes heavy duties on all of us to work for a better society and a better world.