

ADDRESS TO CONVOCATION DINNER

MAY 1990

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

CHANCELLOR PRAISES UNI ACHIEVEMENTS

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At the end of the May series of graduations, the Chancellor, Justice Michael Kirby addressed a large graduation dinner organised by Convocation. The dinner was held at Curzon Hall, near the University, with a record attendance of nearly 200 graduates, their families and friends. The assembled guests were entertained by the Canberra Piano Trio. The toast to the University was proposed by the Acting Chairperson of Convocation, Ms Ruth Duckett.

Proposing the toast to the graduates, Justice Kirby listed a number of achievements at Macquarie University during the past year. He called special attention to:

- * The passage of the new Act constituting the University and the appointment or election of new members of a smaller University Council;
- * The establishment of the Foundation of Convocation which became a legal reality in 1989. Its Chairman is Mr Ray Powys, a member of the University Council. Mr Russell Agnew is its Secretary. The purpose is to raise funds in order to promote greater alumni interest in the progress of the University;
- * The establishment of new Centres of Excellence

- within the University. The Chancellor mentioned in particular the Centre for Numeracy Skills; the Centre of Egyptology; and the Centre for Research in Post-colonial Teaching. He said that other centres had been established and more were under consideration by Federal authorities;
- * There had been a significant devolution of responsibility to the Schools from the central administration of the University. This involved the shift especially of financial responsibility and was in line with the policy of the Vice-Chancellor (Professor Di Yerbury) to liberalize the administration of Macquarie University sometimes in the past criticized as "too centralized";
 - * The Discipline Assessment Review of Teacher Education in Mathematics and Science had found that the programme at Macquarie University was "exemplary". Indeed it recommended that the other Universities of Australia should copy it;
 - * The Bachelor of Technology degree had been introduced and was proving a very popular course and a great success. It was pioneering teaching and research in opto-electronics, biotechnology and atmosphere science as well as in informatics; and
 - * Over \$200 million of capital works is now being

built on the campus or is on the drawing board. The Chancellor said that these projects included the developments of the Graduate School of Management, the Science & Technology Building, the NCELTR Building and the Research & Development Park.

Justice Kirby told the graduates that Macquarie University had suffered a lot of bad publicity in 1988-9 because of the disputes in the Law School. He paid tribute to Professor Tony Blackshield who, as Head of School, had helped reduce the personal tensions within the School. Justice Kirby said that it was his view that Australian Universities were altogether too bland. Differences of opinion, even strongly held, about disciplines and theory were the very essence of a vital university and a free society. This was not always understood in the community fed a diet of consensus. But Justice Kirby urged the new graduates to defend the University and the right of academics to have strong differences of opinion, strongly expressed.

The Chancellor said that the most notable achievement of the past few years had been the "flood of funds" which had come to Macquarie's academic staff for research. "The University's motto is 'And Gladly Teche'. We do that well. But we are also in the forefront of university research in many fields. In its twentieth year of conferring degrees, yours is a University of which you can be truly proud", the Chancellor concluded.