

Pro Chancellor, Professor David Mortimer

Presenting Dean, Professor Rae Cooper

Staff, distinguished guests, graduates, families and friends

What an honour to be here... on this side of the podium, in this great hall. The great hall of Australia's first university, founded in 1850 to provide the opportunity for "the child of every class, to become great and useful in the destinies of this country"

and now a university that serves the world.

Those founding words mean a lot to me as I'm a first genner, the first in my family to complete my school education and the first to go to university. Some of you may be the same, and I am sure that many of you would be the first to obtain a post grad in your family and that's exciting.

It was because of a courageous alumni of this university that I was given the chance to go to university –

Australia's 21st Prime minister, Gough Whitlam abolished university fees because he believed "that a student's merit, rather than a parent's wealth, should decide who should benefit from the community's vast financial commitment to tertiary education"

So, I am grateful for the investment that Australia made in me. That shift in this country to encourage higher education – as my education enabled me to achieve so much.

My education is mine forever and valuing education is a core value of my family's.

When I walked out of this great hall in 1983 I went on the graduate journey of speed-dating the firms who were on campus recruiting and before I could even contemplate what I wanted to be I had a graduate offer with Deloitte that gave me a terrific foundation for what became a long career in banking.

A long way from my unambitious dream of being a sign writer when I was 16 years old, and fond memories of my father who carefully nudged me towards an economics degree knowing full well that I had the potential to do well.

But life is not about career, life is about the mix... and as Phd and Masters graduates you know it's about continuous improvement. Investing in self, investing in our families, investing in our tomorrow. Thinking about the type of world we want to live in and the impact we want to have.

There's never been a more important time than now for leaders in business. Your curiosity about all stakeholders; your customers, your employees, the community, your suppliers and your shareholders... building sustainable businesses is so much tougher, and satisfying, than the old fashioned simple math of managing only to maximise shareholder returns.

There has never been a more important time to truly understanding all of the component parts of finance, understanding what it takes to motivate

people, to innovate, to create space to provide aircover to grow in new markets... As professionals we know that accounting and finance management is so much more than money in, money out. After 5 years as a chartered accountant and 28 years in banking I challenge myself constantly to understand the cause of the numbers...

I am doing my Masters of Human Resources because as a leader in large businesses in banking I know that organisational psychology is complex and how we mobilise teams around strategy and superb customer service is enormously challenging and critical as we wake up each day to an everchanging world

A world of intense competition, and for me, in an industry going through a Royal Commission where the focus on numbers has lost sight of the why we do what we do...

Knowing the why and being clear on the how is enormously hard to bring to teams every day. For the last 4 years I have led NAB's Private Bank and that was such an extraordinary opportunity... where I was brought into the personal lives of people, amazing leaders across this country... the business builders and the wealth makers, the professionals and the dreamers, the new money and the old.

When you have the privilege to cross into a world like private banking the whole corporate mask comes down, as it must. Families have struggles, day in and day out, and its relationships that matter, so much more than money. I've always been a person who truly enjoyed relationships in teams, I've always found energy in working with people, for people and my time in private banking was incredible. And as tough

as the Royal Commission has been I know there is no more important time to serve my industry than now.

So Knowing my true north, having my guiding principles has been so important

For me it's as simple as doing the right thing

It's the test of sleeping well at night because you know you have been open, honest, a technician when needed and having to make those tough decisions when it matters.

No matter what tough decision's you face in business always remember you are dealing with people's lives. Business is relational.

Knowing your true north will hold you in great stead when tough decisions have to be made. Knowing your true north also means bringing your values into the room, to influence, to challenge, to create... your educated voice is so critical.

Equality and inclusion are still a long way out of reach in our business world. Many of you will be parents one day, and some of you are already...

How are you going to make sure that the business world is ready for your child... that your daughters are not going to earn less than your sons, that your daughters aren't going to be overlooked for promotions. What do we think we do to a young women's confidence when she sees a world with few credible role models.

As a young banker I was very fortunate to see a senior banking executive in the industry, at Citigroup, Belinda Hutchinson, now the Chancellor of Sydney University. A working mum with three kids... These are the straws that people look for to give them a hint that it's possible that they can succeed. As a mum of 3 daughters I am committed to continuing to bring my voice to this important discussion.

How are you going to build your courage muscle so that one day when you have to lead the tough decision you have already developed your curious mind so that you can interrogate and mine all the wisdom in the room.

I want you to want to be a voice in big decisions, here in Australia and abroad...

I want you to create the right space for you to thrive and then get on quickly and create space for your colleagues to thrive and then, and only then will our global community benefit from the education you have received.

And on that note I will pause, congratulate you on attaining your degrees and trust you to take your Sydney University education to the world, to do as the founders so desired, to be great and useful in the destiny of Australia

and for those leaving our shores, I trust that your education will serve you and make you great and useful in the destiny of your home.