

Occasional Address
Royal Exhibition Building, 11 April 2018, 4.00pm

Mr Jack Heath
CEO, SANE Australia

I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land – the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, teachers, GRADUATES

Thirty-two years ago, I graduated from this fine University with degrees in Law and Arts. It took me seven years to get there and I dealt with some mental health challenges along the way. In fact, just a few months before I was to sit my final law exams I was going to throw it all in. It was only thanks to a very kind Sub-dean of the Law School that I was convinced to stick it out and complete my degree - thank you Sally Walker. So, for those of you graduating today who have faced similar challenges, I have a sense of what it's like and I salute your simply being here today.

Coming back to this building brings up mixed emotions. Over the years, I think I must have sat more than 30 exams here – the nerves haven't gone away. But the main emotion I feel today is relief – no more exams! And for all of you graduating here today I suspect the feeling might be mutual.

I am deeply honoured to address you today and do so on behalf of the many members of my family who graduated from the University of Melbourne in arts, law, medicine, commerce, science, veterinary science and agricultural science. Apologies to the architects, engineers and others! My wife Catherine and I started dating at the University - 34 years later she is still beautiful, still fiercely intelligent. And while our daughter is set to graduate from two Sydney Universities to follow in the footsteps of her great grandmother, our son Jamie will head this way after his gap year.

Today as we celebrate your graduation, I ask you to consider FOUR invitations.

My first invitation is to BE GOOD. It was always the last thing my father would say to me whenever we parted company be it heading off to boarding school or back to Uni – BE GOOD. My father graduated in Ag Science in 1958 two years before I was born. He was a cricket tragic. Dad prided himself on ensuring his children had the best education possible even if that meant the only holiday we had each year was when we would drive down from Mooroopna for the Boxing Day Test. The last time I saw Dad alive was just over fifteen years ago – not too far from here. We had spent the day at the MCG watching the cricket. We left the members pavilion. I veered left towards the city and Dad veered to the right to his car. BE GOOD he said.

There are some events in public life where you can remember exactly where you were – like the time Princess Diana died. More recently, I was one of the many Australians outraged at the Australian cricket team's ball tampering in South Africa. I was dismayed when I read

it on my i-Phone as I was getting of bed. I was bewildered when I watched the first media conference Steve Smith gave. How could he possibly not realise the enormity of what had happened – as if you could just say you were sorry, that everyone would move on and you would remain as captain. He failed to appreciate that whenever we do the wrong thing there are consequences. And so, my invitation is to be BE GOOD. Doing the right thing is always the right thing to do. And as you pursue your careers, I beseech you - if something doesn't feel right, don't do it.

At the same time, I was very moved at Steve Smith's second media conference when he showed deep and genuine remorse. I suspect Dad might have forgiven him as well.

My second invitation for you to consider is BE GRATEFUL. My family made big sacrifices to send me to boarding school and I'm sure many of you are graduating today thanks to the generosity of your families both here in Australia and overseas.

Our family tradition of giving your children the best education, whatever the financial cost, stretched back to my paternal grandmother Nellie Frances Carrick whom we knew as "Gran". In April 1920 – 98 years ago this month– Gran graduated with a BA from the University of Melbourne. She then went teaching in Horsham before returning to the University to complete a Masters of Arts which was conferred in April 1922. She was one of only two women to complete her MA that year. Gran was an extraordinary woman. She had a consistency, depth, stoicism and grace that reminded me of the Renaissance sculptures she studied. At Christmas time, the only presents she ever gave her grandchildren were books - and we loved that.

It was only after she died that I came to understand how much Gran gave and how much she endured. When Gran was in her thirties my grandfather died unexpectedly leaving her with seven children, the eldest sixteen, the youngest nine months. Gran moved her family from Casterton to Melbourne. She would later teach History at Camberwell Girls High. She would see five of her seven children graduate from this University with the sixth becoming a priest and graduating from Maynooth University in Ireland and the seventh became a wonderful nurse. And whenever we went to visit Gran in Camberwell she would usually be outside..... gently, wistfully but thoroughly sweeping up the leaves as though she was raking up all our sins and making things right again. Whenever I think of Gran, I feel incredibly grateful and proud.

My third invitation for you to consider is to BE KIND. My inspiration here is my mother who never went to University but rejoiced that I did. Mum is now in an aged care home in Pascoe Vale. Like my grandmother, Mum endured extraordinary hardship and tragedy that led to her spend some time in a psych hospital here in Melbourne. At home, she always sought to be the peacemaker, often to her detriment.

A few years back Mum developed dementia and last year when our family felt we could no longer give her the round-the-clock care she needed we put her into Edith Bendall Lodge – a great home full of kindness. Many of you here will already have a family member who has suffered with dementia. Many of us here will end up with dementia ourselves.

Prior to Mum moving into care, my brothers and sister would rotate taking care of Mum often bringing her down from Tatura to spend the weekend in Melbourne while one brother and his family cared for her up in Tatura.

Dementia is so debilitating. I remember a weekend that I was looking after Mum and she could no longer manage going to the toilet. It was not an easy thing the first time I wiped my mother's bum. In fact, it took me a quite a few times before it suddenly clicked into my self-obsessed brain that Mum had spent many, many months, if not years, wiping my bum and this was the least I could do to repay her kindness. BE KIND.

My final invitation for you to consider is BE STILL – not something I'm very good at. Many of us graduate from this University with great energy and ambition. We sometimes rush to change the world because that's a far less daunting task than changing ourselves. It was the French philosopher Pascal who said "All man's problems are caused by his inability to sit quietly in a room with himself." My ambition drove me to become a Senior Adviser to Prime Minister Keating at the ripe age of 34. I thought I had arrived but I was struggling to stay well and keep it together. It was only a ten-day meditation retreat that led me to realise that I needed to stop, I needed to slow down. I'm still learning that lesson today. But what I do try to do every morning and night is to make time to be still. Even if I can't still my mind, I try to still my body.

What I've come to learn is that without a sense of stillness and calm, then it's virtually impossible to be truly kind or truly grateful. When we're rushing we often lose perspective and it can result in poor choices. So, I would strongly encourage you to find time to be still each day – make it part of your daily routine.

As you head out into this next chapter in your life – be it as a graduate or post-grad – I truly hope that each and every one of you makes the most of the incredible opportunity this University and its teachers have given you. I wish you every success.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if each one of us could see the benefits that will flow and the gratitude that will be expressed by your children and grandchildren 96, 98, or 100 years from now.

Be Good. Be Grateful. Be Kind. Be Still.

Thank you.

Vice-Chancellor's Introduction

Chancellor: this afternoon we are fortunate to welcome as Guest Speaker the CEO of SANE Australia, Mr Jack Heath.

After graduating from the University of Melbourne with a bachelor of arts (with honours) and a bachelor of laws, Mr Heath worked as a Legal Advocate on the Public Service Board, and later in foreign affairs.

He returned to Australia to work as Senior Adviser and Speechwriter in the Office of Prime Minister Keating in 1994 and 1995.

In 1996, Mr Heath founded the Inspire Foundation, now known as ReachOut, to use the internet to help address the problem of youth suicide.

He worked overseas for two years with Inspire. On returning to Australia he became Senior Advisor in the Office of then Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd, in 2011 and 2012.

Since 2012 Mr Heath has led SANE Australia, a national charity launched in the 1980s with former Chancellor Sir Edward Woodward as its founding chair. SANE is today a leading charity which helps Australians affected by mental illness to lead better lives.

It is a pleasure to call on its leader to address us today. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the CEO of SANE Australia, Mr Jack Heath.