

## Occasional Address

**Royal Exhibition Building, Tuesday 17 December 2019, 5:00 pm**

**Professor Michael Saling AM**

*Melbourne School of Psychological Science, Austin Health, & Florey Institute for  
Neuroscience and Mental Health*

As a veteran supervisor of Higher Degree Research, I think I can lay claim to understanding what I might call the "Higher Degree Candidature Syndrome". It begins with a clear view of the highest peak of research excellence. But as you trudge through the foothills, hoping to make it through to the base camp of confirmation, you lose sight of that peak. Waves of elation alternate with exasperation, and sometimes despair. The grass begins to look greener everywhere and anywhere else. As you head towards the end, the thesis feels weak, crumbling in your hands - and you feel that you would give anything for one more piece of evidence, one more statistical analysis, one more month, one more year. Your supervisor begins to negotiate the conflicted and sometimes terrifying prospect of completion; you've done it, it's terrific, you can stop now! A look of complete incredulity crosses your face.

But here you are, on this evening of celebration, having achieved the seemingly impossible. So am I, having been accorded the honour and privilege of congratulating you all on reaching a milestone that you'll never forget.

But what happens next? In talking to you about the next phase, I hope you'll bear with me as I reflect on a moment of my own experience. On completion of my PhD, I decided to enter a field that no-one *I* knew had ever heard of - Clinical Neuropsychology. Here I want to share with you the simple philosophy contained in Robert Frost's poem *The Road Not Taken*, because when two roads diverge in the *yellow wood* of your future career, you might have *better claim to the one less travelled by*, and that might make *all the difference*.

And it did. I could never have imagined the expansion of our Professional Program in Clinical Neuropsychology in the Melbourne School of Psychological Science, which has trained most of Australia's professionals in the field, earning a significant international reputation as the "go to" School for specialised training in Clinical Neuropsychology. Over the years we have also trained students from Canada, USA, Columbia, Ecuador, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, Israel, China, Singapore, Indonesia,

Malayasia, New Zealand, and South Africa, some of whom have returned to their own countries to set up services that hadn't previously existed there, while other have stayed to enter prestigious teaching, research, and clinical careers. From my point of view, there are few things more exhilarating and fulfilling than to enabling the transition of young psychologists, imbued with a rigorous scientific mentality to become emerging clinicians, fully capable of wearing two hats.

Welcome to our new Doctors, resplendent in red, to our new Professionals and Biomedical Scientists. You have all reached a high level of distinction in the knowledge you have acquired, in the refinements of thought and ingenuity that you have developed, and the major personal transitions you have made to be here this evening. At this stage, and given my age, I feel that I should also mention one of the most important ingredients of all: *wisdom*. Thousands of years ago the Sages asked, "who is wise?", and answered "he or she who learns from *all* women and men and ". I am sure that your families, friends, and partners, who stood by you so steadfastly during the ups and down of the past few years, would want nothing less for you. And I wish you every success and fulfillment as you take the next step.

### **Vice-Chancellor's Introduction**

*Today the University welcomes Professor Michael Saling as guest speaker.*

*Michael is an academic in the Melbourne School of Psychological Sciences. He received a PhD and MA from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa.*

*Michael has authored over 180 research papers. These publications include detailed neuropsychological and neuroimaging investigations of the breakdown of human memory systems in temporal lobe epilepsy.*

*Michael's research has been called a "paradigm shift" by epilepsy experts. It has had a significant translational impact in early detection of Alzheimer's Disease dementia.*

*Please join me in welcoming Professor Michael Saling.*