

Occasional Address
Royal Exhibition Building, 12 December 2018, 5.00pm

Professor Adrian Little
Pro Vice Chancellor (International)
University of Melbourne

Thank you to the Presiding Chancellor, Presiding Vice Chancellor, Presiding Academic Board Officer and the Presiding Dean. I too would also like to pay my respects to the Wurundjeri people on whose land we gather today, acknowledge their elders past and present, and pay respect to any Indigenous people in the audience. Importantly, I want to acknowledge that sovereignty over this land was never ceded.

It is my very great pleasure to deliver the address at the graduation ceremony today and I am especially pleased to do so as I am a member of the Faculty of the Arts, having spent a decade until the end of last year as the Head of the School of Social and Political Sciences.

It is wonderful to see another cohort of diverse Arts graduates about to bring a remarkable set of skills and knowledge into the world. You are the best ambassadors that the University of Melbourne has and I hope that your experiences during your degree travel far and wide with you in your forthcoming endeavours ... but that Melbourne stays close to your heart.

In the second half of this year, I became Pro Vice Chancellor (International) at the university. Given my own tertiary education experience, this might seem slightly odd. Like many people who grew up in Northern Ireland during the Troubles, I couldn't wait to get out of the place. While the violence I grew up with was unpalatable, I found the everyday sectarianism even more oppressive. As was the translation of every political issue into an ethno-national and religious prism. It wasn't a place that valued diversity, lest it upset the simplistic, divided paradigm through which every issue had to be addressed. As an undergraduate in England – Nottingham to be precise - I experienced a multicultural and ethnically diverse student body but it was, at that time in the late 1980s, almost entirely from the UK.

I returned to Belfast to do my PhD at Queens University - it just so happened that the best supervisor for me was at Queens - and encountered an even less diverse environment. I was a lone political theorist amongst a group of Irish people doing PhDs on Irish topics – not surprisingly, mainly focused on the Troubles. I couldn't really blame anyone for not wanting to come to Belfast at that time. If people like me who were born there didn't like it, it was a bit much to expect many other people to embrace it! In short, it wasn't an environment set up to welcome international students and this was reflected in many of the things that were taught and researched.

It is not that long ago that the University of Melbourne like most Australian universities contained a similarly narrow constitution and outlook. However, nowadays, we aspire to a much more international perspective on everything we do. Unlike some of the negative media coverage about international students as the cash cow of the Australian tertiary education sector, at Melbourne, we actually aspire to have international students *and an international curriculum*, because we want all of our students to have an international experience. We want our students from wherever they come from in the world to work with and learn from their counterparts from other countries with very different experiences.

Importantly, we want that diversity to be reflected in the curricula we teach and we aspire for our workforce to be comprised of outstanding international scholars.

Therefore, the internationalisation that informs our strategy as a university is no longer just about enticing overseas students to Australia as some of the negative media agenda implies. Important as that is, increasingly, our strategy is about providing opportunities for our students to study with our overseas partners through, for example, teaching intensive overseas subjects, international internships and engaging with government programs such as the New Colombo Plan.

There is much ongoing work to do in these areas to meet our aspirations, but our commitment to increased internationalisation of the student experience either here in Melbourne or overseas is relentless. Our commitment to ensuring that we provide diverse experiences in the lecture theatre and the seminar room that enable our students to go into the outside world equipped with skills and knowledge that will help them to flourish in a global environment is continual. This is as much a reflection of the contribution of domestic students to the learning of international students as it is the other way round.

Congratulations again to our students graduating today. As I said, you are our most important ambassadors, reflecting the Melbourne experience, and, perhaps, sometimes inadvertently, promoting the benefits of your studies with us without knowing it.

Today is a day to celebrate your achievements and it is a great pleasure to be part of that celebration. At the same time, we celebrate the international experience that is part of coming to Melbourne and to which you have all contributed. Enjoy your day today and congratulations!

Vice-Chancellor's Introduction

This afternoon I am delighted to introduce as guest speaker the University's Pro Vice Chancellor (International), Adrian Little.

Adrian is Professor of Political Theory in the Faculty of Arts, where he previously served for ten years as Head of the School of Social and Political Sciences.

Adrian is a graduate of Nottingham Trent University in the UK, where he completed a Bachelor of Arts with Honours, before going on to receive his PhD from Queen's University, Belfast.

*Adrian has a strong research background in democratic theory and British and Irish politics. Among his books are *Democracy and Northern Ireland: Beyond the Liberal Paradigm?**

He has been Chief Investigator on an ARC Discovery Project exploring lessons from South Africa and Northern Ireland for Australia's Reconciliation movement.

It is a pleasure to call on him to speak today. Please welcome Professor Adrian Little.