

Prof. John M. Ward
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OCCASIONAL ADDRESS AT THE LAST GRADUATION CEREMONY, NEPEAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION, 2 May, 1989 - by Professor John M. Ward, AO, Baulkham Hills Civic Centre, Castle Hill.

Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Thank you for the honour of being your speaker tonight. Graduation is always an experience to remember. I congratulate you who have taken degrees and diplomas. I congratulate also the parents, relatives and friends who have pride in the occasion. I do not forget to congratulate the teachers who did their share in making the achievement possible. I include along with the teachers the administrators, the members of Council, all the staff and well-wishers of the College who are entitled to feel satisfaction in the work represented in the ceremony tonight.
2. Whatever our discipline or study, there is something common to us all who participate in higher education. It is that we work in the service of knowledge. It is our business to transmit knowledge by teaching and publication, to extend knowledge by research, criticism and enquiry, to preserve knowledge in our minds, in libraries and other places of record. Above all, we have a duty to put knowledge at the service of the society that nourishes us. These are objectives and duties of which we have every reason to feel proud, for we are in a noble calling, however irksome and difficult it may sometimes seem to be.
3. The Nepean College of Advanced Education was founded, as you know, in 1973. It was a multi-purpose institution, one of many colleges of advanced education, that were intended to supply particular forms of training in practical subjects. Nepean was intended also to supply some of the needs of the rapidly growing area of Western Sydney. Both sets of objectives were obviously good. The College progressed with extraordinary speed and won a reputation to be envied. The graduates and diplomates were relied upon to have real standing in their subjects.
4. Chairman, I am not going to go through the story of how one government decided to have a Chifley University and a Chifley University College for which The University of Sydney would be responsible. Nor am I going to

make comparisons between what might have been and what is happening now that the Chifley University proposal has been dropped and Nepean, together with the Hawkesbury Agricultural College, have been made the core of the new University of Western Sydney. I am simply going to congratulate Nepean and Hawkesbury on the opportunity that now opens before them, for they themselves have become the University of Western Sydney instead of having to watch a new university erected alongside them at Werrington. Whatever else might be said, it is clear that Western Sydney is established, that Nepean is an active network member (that is, partner in it) and my own University, Sydney, has the double privilege of having been present at the creation and now of helping the process.

5. In Australia universities in future must combine the functions of traditional universities and the functions of colleges of advanced education. Both ways of serving knowledge are relevant. Both need to be preserved. So far as I am concerned during the short period before the Foundation Vice-Chancellor of the new University is appointed, that is my objective. Western Sydney is to become a first-class University. It is also to be a University in the new compound sense that came in with the abandonment of the binary system of universities and colleges.
6. Those who have taken degrees and diplomas today and the new University alike face challenges, that need imagination, flexibility, hard work and good judgment to meet. I was a student during the great Depression of the 1930's and graduated only months before the Second World War broke out in 1939. My contemporaries at Sydney and I entered what was in some ways a hard world, but we had the confidence that comes of having measured ourselves successfully against good educational standards and except as a remote possibility we did not contemplate the prospect of national defeat. Here in Western Sydney, the fastest growing part of Australia with its own distinctive triumphs and difficulties, it is difficult not to believe in growth and opportunity.
7. The way forward for each individual is often through that word I used a minute ago **flexibility**. Whatever your training and however high the nation's demand for it, remember that you are more than a competent practitioner of what you have learned you have training on which you can build. The nature of business is constantly changing. New needs multiply with incredible rapidity and provide abundant opportunity for those with the initiative to take them.

8. Last year I opened the fifth world conference of the historians of accounting. I worked hard to prepare the kind of historical address that I was expected to give. Yesterday the address turned up printed in the journal **Abacus** and I read it last night. What is relevant for tonight is simple. The great founder of modern accounting was Pacioli, a Franciscan monk in the fifteenth century, who founded the art or science of bookkeeping. His great book **Summa** was published in 1494. Then for over three and a half centuries that Renaissance beginning of bookkeeping remained the supreme achievement in that art. Not until the late 19th century with the rapid growth of joint stock companies, international investment and complicated money systems was any real advance made in bookkeeping and the better bookkeepers founded the science of accounting. Today, of course, as I do not need to tell you, accounting ranks as both an essential part of industry, commerce and finance, and also as a social science in its own right. Accounting has been a way of looking at the achievements of institutions in more ways than profit and loss. In good hands it is a sensitive, subtle instrument for assessing choices in the use of resources. Anything you have learned here may have similar prospects of growth, so have you,
9. The fundamentals of the subject are being transformed by the vast expansion of knowledge in the world around us and the increasing complexity of our society. The world wants educated people. It wants adaptable people, able to keep up with change, willing to transplant themselves from one profession or occupation to another.
10. I congratulate you, wish you well and hope that you enjoy good fortune and good luck.