

Anna Meares AM, October 2019, occasional address speech

I'd like to begin by acknowledging

Pauline Carr, Chancellor

Professor David Lloyd, Vice Chancellor and President

Members of Council

Doctors, Emeritus Professors, Fellows, Senior Management and Staff of the University, Graduands, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am deeply humbled to be here with you all as you graduate after years of hard work, dedication, growth and learning. I graduated from High school and started University studies, only to defer them after one year to pursue my sporting career, never completing my tertiary education. Because of this it took me a few years and many a coffee and discussion with faculty, senior staff members and Professor Llyod, for me to have the courage to accept this honorary doctorate. I felt that honours such as this were reserved for people who achieve greatly in an academic field. I chose to accept this honour understanding this is an acknowledgement of this community of my work, effort and achievements, of which I am thankful, and it has given me the opportunity to speak with you all as you follow your career from this day forward.

I once listened to Julia Gillard state that 'Resilience is a muscle, and if you work it, it gets stronger' She is absolutely right.

I retired from my professional sporting career three years ago, an 11 time world champion, the most successful women in the world in my profession, something I am very proud of. However upon reflection of my career I realised that I have lost a further 29 attempts. I have realised that for me, success has not been about remaining undefeated and unchallenged but rather having faced adversity, handled defeats and learning from those moments in order to grow and succeed.

Today, you have your moment of success as you receive your certificate, your diploma, your degree, your doctorate. Today is a day that all of your hard hours of work, study and balancing life was worth

it. That success no doubt came with your own unique personal challenges, defeats, late nights, the worry of exams, assessments and assignments. You have faced your own adversity, you were resilient and in this moment, YOU have achieved your gold medal.

As you embark on your career there will be many more ups and downs. Being resilient is understanding that you don't always win. The degree you received today recognises this, it recognises more than expertise in your chosen field, it recognises your courage, your dedication and your desire to learn and grow past today into the future.

We as Australians are a tough bunch. We are fighters. We have a spirit and a character envied by the world. As you do move forward from today continue to make your mark on this world in a positive way with that spirit and character behind you. Have the courage to try something new, to try and fail, to try and be better than you've ever been, to try and achieve something great, perhaps something that's not been achieved before. Something that benefits us as a community.

I strongly believe the heart of our community is our children. And as I excitedly await the arrival of my own child, I know it will be my greatest achievement and biggest responsibility. We were all once a child. A young person who had not yet learnt fear, failure, pressure and doubt. We believed we could do anything. Walk on the moon, be the prime minister, a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, a scientist, or what I wanted to be... a wrestler in the WWE... we dreamed of anything.

Let's take a moment now, everyone, close your eyes, walk with me, in the gowns you're wearing today, as graduates, ready to make an impact on the world, imagine going back to your childhood home, knocking on the door, and your younger self greeting you. What do you think they would do, when they saw you, themselves as you are today? What would you say to them?

Me I'd say thank you. Thank you for being brave, for fighting, for believing, for being resilient, for never giving up, and I know my younger version of myself would be so proud and so excited for what she would become.

Be proud of yourselves.

Be proud of your achievement today.

Be proud of the mistakes you will make and challenges you will face.

Be resilient in knowing you won't always win, but know that when you do, it will be worth celebrating.

Be proud of the great endeavours you are to yet achieve

Be inspired from within a community perspective, for you are in a position to make a profound impact.

Be courageous in your actions.

You are our future and you can make it great!