

**Speech delivered by Rob Bonner at the UniSA Graduation Ceremony – Monday 16 April 2018 in Pridham Hall, Hindley Street, Adelaide**

I would also like to acknowledge the traditional owners of these lands the Kurna people and pay my respects to elders and to any Kurna people or other first nation's people in the room today. It is particularly timely to do so given the recent federal court decision acknowledging the Kurna people's traditional ownership of the greater Adelaide region.

I also acknowledge the Chancellor, Mr Jim McDowell, Vice Chancellor David Lloyd and other academic staff and thank you for the invitation to address the graduating students today.

Let me begin by congratulating each and every one of you on the completion of your studies. To those of you completing your first qualification in nursing or midwifery, welcome to the nursing and midwifery workforce.

You'll be pleased to hear that this is an exciting time to enter either of the professions.

The health (and community sector) workforce is planned to grow over the coming years largely to meet the demand for care and treatment in areas of acute care, primary health services and, notably, in the aged care sector.

At the same time, large numbers of nurses and midwives will leave the workforce with some of the estimates anticipating around 50% will be leaving over the coming decade.

This means there will be significantly more opportunities to enter the workforce and to carve out your new careers more quickly than may have been possible in the past.

Areas of clinical specialisation will be under particular pressure to attract and retain skilled staff. We are already seeing undersupply emerge in areas such as critical care, peri-operative nursing and mental health. Outside the metropolitan area, midwifery is also experiencing difficulty in attracting appropriate staff.

Many of the nurses and midwives we will lose from the workforce in the years ahead are leaders in their current roles, whether those roles are in advanced clinical practice, management or education.

Fast tracking your careers will be a priority to filling these gaps.

So what does all this mean for you sitting here today?

It means there will be renewed focus in the coming years on workforce planning and development. There will be a greater attention paid to recruitment and retention and to the acquisition of knowledge and skills that will meet the needs of the health and aged care systems as we move forward.

We are presently working with the SA Department of Health to finalise a strategy that can support this renewal across the Nursing and Midwifery workforce.

Part of that plan will be focussed on people like yourselves. People who, in the first years of practice, stand out as future leaders and clinical specialists so will be assisted to progress or fast-track careers.

For you this means greater opportunities for support in career development in a much more structured and supportive way than has existed in the past.

It means coaching and mentoring programs by more experienced professional leaders, scholarships and other supports to help with further study and continuing professional development.

Further study. Probably two words you'd prefer not to think about having completed the hard slog in the last few years and not yet having time to even officially celebrate.

But while this isn't something you'd necessarily sign up for today, it is important that you consider the completion of your professional entry program as the *start* of your preparation for work rather than the end point.

Your degree certainly opens the door to the world of work and professional practice - but that access is only to the entrance hall.

Continuing education, whether it is in the form of formal postgraduate studies, professional development activities or even simple actions such as monitoring journals and research reports, is critical to you entering into the full extent of the variety and richness of roles and activities that the nursing and midwifery professions offer.

Just this month, at the South Australian branch of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation, we expanded our own online professional development program in partnership with the International Council of Nurses. This collaboration provides ANMF (SA Branch) members with free access to more than 700 seminars or courses and over 3,000 hours of learning activities.

As someone who began work preparation as a primary school teacher and who has been exposed to, and taken advantage of, opportunities to develop knowledge and (hopefully) skills in areas of management, industrial relations practice and the healthcare system, I can only say that I could not have developed my own career without pursuing a variety of professional development paths throughout the journey.

Like me, you could become one of the many who will change jobs and careers. Indeed today may be the beginning of one of those switches for you. The current suggestion is that people will change careers more often into the future with some 5-6 distinct roles or

change to careers over their working lives and about double that number, 12 different jobs within single or multiple work roles.

That sheer potential for change may seem daunting, but isn't it exciting too! Although please don't get too excited by this prospect. We don't want any of you changing careers away from nursing and midwifery any time soon. We need you all.

Instead, welcome the opportunities for further learning, to share knowledge, to improve your practice and indeed your capacity to meet the needs of the people for whom you care and support. And, you'll no doubt benefit from a fulfilling and rewarding career that improves the delivery of positive health outcomes in South Australia and beyond.

On behalf of our 20,000 members who are working across the South Australian nursing and midwifery workforce, congratulations on your achievements that have brought you to this point today—and welcome aboard.