

Chancellor John Stanhope's Investiture Speech

Deakin University, Costa Hall

15 February 2016

I would like to acknowledge the Wathaurong people of the Kulin Nations, the traditional custodians of the land on which we are gathered. I would also like to thank for been here today the following people:

- Her Excellency the Honourable Linda Dessau AM, Governor of Victoria
- Professor Jane den Hollander, President and Vice-Chancellor
- Members of Deakin University Council
- Distinguished guests
- Deakin colleagues
- Family and friends.

It is a great honour and privilege to be invested as the sixth Chancellor of Deakin University. As many of you know, I have a long term attachment to this University being one of the first Bachelor of Commerce students commencing my studies on 1 April 1977 the first day of the Commerce Degree at Waurin Ponds. My attachment has continued as an alumni in the business world and in recent times with my participation as a Councillor.

It was a very different place in 1977 with two buildings at the Waurin Ponds Campus. What spectacular growth and change has taken place led by Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and Councillors over the 41 years of this University's existence.

The last five years have resulted in significant change and growth under the leadership of David Morgan, the last Chancellor and current Vice-Chancellor, Jane den Hollander.

Against a backdrop of major change in the higher education sector, and indeed in the economy as a whole, Deakin has developed a reputation as being dynamic, accessible and responsive to change; increasingly differentiating itself in the complex and crowded global market we are all having to become used to as business as usual.

This is a great University and I am passionate about its continuing place in the region, Victoria, Australia and the world.

It is easy to say that this growth will continue but it will take the continuation of hard work. It will need us to be alert to how business communities and the environment changes and what new skills need to be taught, what new relationships need to be formed.

I was fortunate enough to visit PACOM in Hawaii 18 months ago. This is the US and allies command that focuses on the pacific region i.e. – 52% of the earth's surface and 54% of the earth's population.

The Commander said to me their fundamental belief is that improving prosperity leads to stability which leads to peace. I replied that I agree but we must recognise that prosperity is driven by skills and innovation that come from education.

Education also leads to cultural understanding also contributing to peace. So education in the Asia-Pacific Region is very important as it is in the world and we in Australia play a huge role – Deakin is very much a part of this.

So what in particular am I passionate about and what will be my focus over the next five years?
(Setting aside dealing with and adjusting to any re-regulation of the sector.)

First, I am passionate about making sure our students are truly job ready. The world continues on a digital revolution or evolution. New skills and ever changing skills are required.

Having said that, there remain some basics that are equally as important in making our students job ready. This is what employers are telling me as I meet with many of them in my other roles.

These basics are:

- communication
- collaboration
- project management
- teamwork
- customer centricity and client / patient relationships
- innovation in product / services and business models.

We as a sector do not do this well enough in preparing students.

Deakin can lead in this area and attract students to the University because employers want well prepared Deakin students.

My second area of focus or passion is research and its translation or commercialisation.

I believe there is fantastic research done in universities including Deakin that could be commercialised to create new jobs and growth in Australia.

Over the last few years as a Councillor of this University and on the board of an independent medical research institute and during my time and experience on company boards I have been disappointed by the weak links that exist between industry and universities with regard to research funding and commercialisation and the building of relationships.

The government has recognised the importance of this for Australia in its recent innovation statement, allocating additional funding for collaboration between industry and universities but beyond this, the key signal is that innovation, and entrepreneurial attitudes to commercialise our ideas for the wider good are key strategies for the medium to longer term.

Industries say universities don't talk to them and universities say industries don't talk to them. There are exceptions but these are few. We have so much to offer each other for the good of the nation.

I also believe that we at universities don't teach researchers the value of intellectual property translation, how to package it and how to present a commercial offering.

Now before I attract a lot of criticism, I do recognise that there is a place for pure or applied research but we need to get the mix right.

It is about driving and unlocking innovation that will lead to skilled job creation and sustained growth. We need efficient ways to commercialise research, we also need to evaluate and recognise commercialisation in our rankings and recognise and reward those in academia who do it well.

Innovation is competitive and a global necessity so we must get it together and do it right to be globally competitive.

There has been some steps in the right direction such as the establishment of the Australian Advanced Manufacturing Council and the creation of ten industry led “innovation precincts”.

Often these things depend on government decisions and the political environment of the time.

We must drive this ourselves.

We must form relationships where both parties see value that continues and we do realise the fantastic innovation that occurs in universities.

Enough of my areas of passion and yes they are driven by my background in business. I recognise that this University must be a centre for learning and the discovery of new knowledge. We as a University need also to be customer centric. To be customer centric means to have an offering that is competitive.

We as a University have two customer segments:

Our students:

- we must continue to satisfy their learning needs and equip them for new / changing roles
- we must provide them with the best learning environment be it in the cloud or at physical locations.

Then there are – employers:

- we must provide job ready students and be the best provider of the right skills in a very competitive environment for skills
- of course predicting skills gaps and employment shortages in a period of significant change is notoriously difficult – in our fast evolving technology landscape new jobs appear and others disappear at a confounding rate.

But what will matter for Deakin, is that if we get it right for our customers (students and employers) and get our research / industry relationships right we will be the best we can be.

I have accepted this role knowing we have very good people at Deakin, staff who always strive to be the best at what they do.

I look forward to the challenges as I take on this very privileged and responsible role and I look forward to working with the Council, Vice-Chancellor, the Executive and the staff of this great University.

Thank you.