

Esteemed graduates friends, families, distinguished guests

With Aunty Violet's guidance and permission, I acknowledge, recognise, and pay my respects to the Ngunnawal and people of the land we are gathering on today. Prior to colonisation, this was home to people and communities who valued and governed from a place of connection and respect.

In the short time since colonisation, that connection remains and is evident in Aunty Vi's welcome. I also acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

Before anything else I am a proud Aboriginal and South Sea Islander woman with strong ancestral ties to Northern NSW, Bunjalung country. My father is of Irish descent, and I live and work on Yugerra, Turbul, and Yugumbah country in Mugandgin Brisbane.

As a graduate of International Relations and Journalism in 2012 I was also a young and determined cadet with the ABC... I went on to become a fully fledged Journalist and Content Producer, and I continue to work there to this day. More recently I made a decision to also create Independent content outside of the ABC and start my business in Media and governance. My work has taken me to places I never realised I would go and I am incredibly grateful to the people I have connected with along the way, including those of you at Canberra University. Those who have helped me, supported me, challenged me and given me strength and courage when I've needed.

I am most proud of the work I've done with and for community. This work speaks to my values. I have found fulfilment in advocating for success and cohesion in a world and country too often marred by violence, injustice, and dysfunction. I'm driven by culture and connection, and I recognise my community and my ancestors who are with me every step of the way. When I make decisions whether in a governance or leadership capacity or a personal one they are with me. Today as I stand here looking out at all of you wonderful graduates I am sure many of you are accompanied by the same. Keep those people close, honour them and for some remember them.

May I suggest you use today an opportunity to connect with them.. to those who gave you love support and guidance and of course MONEY throughout your journey getting here... My niece actually sent me a video last night of her WONDERFUL achievement. She cleaned her bedroom... the video was followed with a request for money for her achievements. When I look out at you all I am compelled to take a photo and send it back with a Memorandum of Understanding around remuneration but I wont.

The work I do is the result of a long and at times challenging but mostly invigorating from and with my people. Including my biggest job to date a single mother to two children and carer of my beautiful nieces and a few extras in the periphery.

When I graduated I made a very conscious decision to dedicate my professional and personal life to contributing to a stronger future not just for my people but for all people. Through governance, story telling, leadership and business, something my people have been doing for millenia.

Growing up I loved my life. I had a strong single black mother who instilled a strong sense of identity and self in me. She gave me the strength to move through adversity and to act on integrity and values always. She is gentle but staunch, honest but unassuming and she cares deeply for people.

But Like too many First Nations women she was subject to extreme violence. She raised me and my three siblings, five grandchildren and five great grandchildren. She taught me what it means to truly be resilient. More than that though she taught me the meaning of truth and understanding. A teaching I only got from her. For me seeing and experiencing the violence I did led me to confront that very issue in the work I do.

My former colleague Stan Grant would say, "We must confront the past, lest we be condemned to repeat it."

I am proud to say that only a few months ago, after a 28 million dollar MUCH needed and long awaited renovation, I got to see and be part of building, advocating and opening the same women and childrens shelter that both my mother and myself fled to as a child and young adult.

This required work and a lot of it but for me it required meaningful approach to rebuilding a sector that has traditionally not worked in favour for our community.

As a Journalist, a Non Executive Director and most importantly as a mother and carer moving beyond confronting those truths has been so incredibly important to mine my families and my communities healing.

But today is about you... and your achievements...Today marks a significant milestone in YOUR journey—a moment of reflection, celebration, and anticipation for the future. You too have the opportunity to take what you have learnt and use it for good.

I am encouraged by the possibility of a new cohort of graduates who hold their own values, who have passion, integrity and who will contribute to a cohesive future in whatever field you choose. However It is not a given, it takes work and it requires us to be aware always.

It is clear that each of you know and understand hard work, dedication, and perseverance or you wouldn't be sitting here. That is a testament to your resilience and commitment to excellence and subsequent success.

When I think about the concept of success I think about where that idea comes from, how its developed over time and where it is going. You are in a position where you can define your own

For me, the pursuit of success often has led me through challenging and complex circumstances that I never thought I would face. It required me to uphold boundaries, navigate through uncertainty, but mostly for me staying true to our values and principles have been at the CORE. My Indigenous cultures, deeply rooted in connection and integrity, remind me always of the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with ourselves, others, and also the place we find ourselves.

As graduates, I urge you to embark on your own quest for success. Seek out opportunities that align with your values, engage in introspection, and embrace the journey of self-discovery. Success is not a destination but rather a continuous process of growth, learning, and adaptation. Success is not just cleaning your room but doing it

with love in your heart and good intent, It is through this pursuit of success that I hope you find meaning, fulfilment, and purpose in your personal and professional lives.

Further It is incumbent upon each of us, as human beings, to foster a sense of connection and belonging within our communities—to bridge the divides that separate us, to build bridges of understanding and empathy, and to cultivate a culture of inclusivity and respect.

In our pursuit of knowledge and excellence, let us never forget the transformative power of education. Indeed, as you stand on the precipice of a new chapter in your lives, let us harness the knowledge and skills we have acquired to effect meaningful change in our communities and beyond. Let us be beacons of inspiration, advocates for justice, and champions of YOUR success.

As you embark on your post-graduation journey, remember you are not alone. You are part of a vast network of individuals who have walked similar paths and overcome similar challenges. You are among Let us lean on each other for support, guidance, and inspiration. Your classmates, professors, mentors, and alumni are valuable resources that can help guide you through the uncertainties and opportunities that lie ahead.

Take this time to reflect on the knowledge and experiences you have gained during your time at Canberra Uni. Each lecture, assignment, and conversation has contributed to your growth and development as a scholar, professional, and individual. Carry these lessons with you as you venture into the world, and never underestimate the power of lifelong learning.

In closing, let us remember that our actions today will shape the world of tomorrow. Let us strive to leave a legacy of compassion, understanding, and positive change. And may we, as graduates of Canberra Uni, embark on our respective journeys with courage, humility, and a steadfast commitment to making a difference in the world.

As you transition into this new phase of your life, remember to stay true to yourself and your values. In a world that is constantly changing and evolving, it can be easy to lose sight of who you are and what you stand for. Take the time to reflect on what matters

most to you and prioritise those things in your life. Whether it's family, community, or personal growth, stay committed to living authentically and with integrity.

Finally, I encourage you to embrace the challenges and opportunities that come your way with an open mind and a courageous and brave spirit. With adversity comes opportunity and it's often the unexpected moments that lead to the greatest growth and transformation. Trust in yourself and your abilities, and never be afraid to take risks or step outside of your comfort zone. Remember, the journey is just beginning, and the possibilities are endless. Congratulations once again, and may your future be filled with success, fulfilment, and joy.