

**Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, fellow graduates, University staff and guests. On behalf of the graduates receiving their awards today** ... we would like to thank everybody who was involved in helping us achieve these pieces of paper. These pieces of paper don't just embody the last 3, 4, 5, or however many years of our lives; but a lifetime's work from our lecturers, our tutors, the support staff, the executive staff, even the admin staff. Not to mention all the encouragement, support, and compassion from our family and friends. So to all those who got us here: thank you.

As we progress through our courses it's easy to forget the number of students working alongside us, but looking around this room today I see graduates from all walks of life - of all abilities - each with their own story of how they made it to this day to be handed this piece of paper. And this is only the domestic students - there's a whole other graduation ceremony tomorrow for the internationals, not to mention ceremonies for the ones over in Gippsland and all the other partner locations! We're not just graduating from a regional Victorian university. We're graduating from a world-renowned, well-regarded, 148-year-old institution.

I think it's great that each of us is here today. This is a huge achievement because not only have we learnt the quantitative things from each of our subjects and grown into skilled graduates, but also a mountain of other more subtle things: working to deadlines, completing jobs up to a high standard, how to be an integral part of a team, it shows that we've got an ongoing commitment to learning, and that we're prepared to stay true to ourselves and stick to our goals. This piece of paper proves that.

So when Prof. Mark Sandeman - who I believe is retiring as executive dean after today - handed me this piece of paper just now, all I can do is reflect on the incredible legacy being left by all the lecturers, all the tutors, support staff, executive staff, admin staff, and everyone else involved in Federation University Australia. And we, the graduates, say thank you.

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