

**MARCUS OLDHAM COLLEGE
GRADUATION CEREMONY SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER 2018, COSTA HALL, GEELONG**

Good afternoon everyone and thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. May I acknowledge the Aboriginal community, the Wathaurong people who have survived invasion and dispossession and yet continue to maintain their culture and indigenous rights.

May I also acknowledge among you:

- Bruce Wilson, Chair of the Marcus Oldham College Council;
- Simon Livingstone, Principal Marcus Oldham College.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today, some 50 years since I was last here attending a Woolshed Ball with my husband Dick, who graduated from here in 1970.

What an achievement this College has made to educating the agricultural sector in Australia. From its commencement in 1962, Marcus Oldham College has led the way in presenting graduates to the market who are work ready, capable of managing in the rapidly changing world of agriculture. Whether it is managing the family farm, managing a corporate farming business, working in finance, logistics, marketing, processing or the equine industry, Marcus Oldham equips individuals well.

Including today's graduates, there have been 3459 graduates from all Marcus Oldham courses and included in that tally are 176 Tasmanians. And 969 students completed the Equine management course, which commenced in 1979. Women commenced studies at Marcus Oldham also in 1979.

I know also that the business management emphasis embedded into the Marcus courses has enabled many graduates to find successful careers away from agriculture.

Agriculture is facing unprecedented challenges, with the global population expected to reach over 9 billion by 2050. In addition, it is estimated that another one billion people will move out of poverty into middle class living standards in the same period – further increasing demand for food.

This means that in the first half of this century the world will need to produce more food than we have in the rest of the history of human civilisation. This does not mean simply growing more, because farming needs to take into account restrictions on land and water use; meeting environmental concerns; and maintaining what is termed a social licence to produce.

Our Australian farms and farmers are very efficient, but they will of necessity need to become ever more efficient in the future. We will need to grow more with less, and also decrease waste throughout the food chain.

What does all this mean for the graduates of 2018? The Australian Council of Deans of Agriculture found that for each graduate of an agriculture-related degree there are six jobs available. As new technologies radically improve efficiencies and outputs of our farms, they also create a new reality where those who do not embrace these changes face the risk of being left behind.

Vertical farms, smart farms, and factory farms may not be as romantic as rolling green hills, but they are efficient and they are a glimpse of the farms of tomorrow. Already we have driverless tractors, and drones helping to monitor animals and conditions in the field.

And in Japan for example, Toshiba is growing 3 million heads of lettuce per year in a room where air pressure, water, light, temperature, bacteria and dust are strictly controlled. While here in Australia, the University of Sydney is developing a range of robots to work field crops and orchards.

The likelihood of a food crisis directly affecting Australia is remote given that we have enjoyed cheap, safe and high-quality food for many decades and we currently produce enough food for 60 million people. However, put into global context, we produce enough to feed only 2% of the Asian population.

Australia will continue to play an important role in the provision of food security worldwide. Our farmers, with support engendered world leading research and development programs, will continue to provide innovation and productivity gains in all sectors.

According to the Agribusiness Bulletin, a newsletter of Deloitte Access Economics, it is that sector – agribusiness – which is now a key sector in driving growth opportunities for the Australian economy. I quote from an article this year:

”Of all the sectors in the Australian economy, agribusiness [is] the sector with the strongest combination of playing most to Australia’s competitive advantage and being a sector producing what the world increasingly wants.”ⁱ

And in this regard Deloitte has identified the ‘fantastic five’ of Australian agriculture as being beef, lamb, aquaculture, dairy and oilseeds.

Tasmanian graduates make up 5% of all Marcus graduates and many have gone on to do remarkable things. Tasmania is a small-business State with high level of dependence on niche marketing. Tasmania has developed strong ‘brand’ resilience and is quickly developing a reputation for high quality products which attract premium prices necessary to offset logistical challenges.

Many of the Marcus Oldham Tasmanian graduates have made significant contributions towards Tasmania’s renewed agricultural prosperity and just to name a few: Matthew Pooley is prominent in the rapidly expanding Tasmanian wine industry; John Sadler helped significantly put Tasmanian floriculture on the Australian market; Howard Hansen is doing extraordinary things with cherries and apples; Emma Sutherland is business manager of Burlington Berries, one of Tasmania’s fastest growing and sophisticated horticultural businesses; and George Mills is showing the way in sustainable cropping and livestock production.

The current Tasmanian State Government has implemented an agricultural growth strategy to lift the gross value of agriculture from \$1.5 billion to \$10 billion by 2050. That is a serious challenge and one which will provide opportunities for many graduates into the future.

I am aware that Marcus Oldham College – Australia’s only independent agricultural and equine business management college, has not only survived but thrived and has moved with the times by adding new courses, including postgraduate studies.

Further, the College conducts a Leadership program which is supported by NAB Agribusiness. Over 780 students have now graduated from the five-day intensive course which commenced in 1992.

Leadership is I think a vital attribute to being able to deliver the outcomes so necessary for agriculture to achieve its potential in the years ahead. Marcus Oldham College delivers that very well indeed.

My congratulations all who have made this College such a successful and important part of Australia's agricultural education framework. You have contributed enormously to agriculture development in this country and will continue to do so. The task ahead remains significant as only 7% of Australian farmers have tertiary education compared with 20% in New Zealand and 40% in United States.

In conclusion let me quote Mr Don Lawson OAM, a former lecturer here in the late 1960's:

"We need to attract people to all sections of the agricultural supply chain. We need young people with academic qualifications and hands on skills. It is disturbing that 25% of the Australian community has tertiary qualifications, yet in the agricultural sector it is about 7%. I would suggest that after China and the mining industry have dug a big hole in Australia, what are we going to have left? Agriculture. Practical agriculture needs people with both practical skills and tertiary education and that is why we are here today."

Thank you.

ⁱ <https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/where-are-growth-opportunities-australian-agriculture.html>, accessed 4 December 2018.