

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AT TASMANIAN POLYTECHNIC
GRADUATION CEREMONIES IN THE SOUTH OF TASMANIA
ON WEDNESDAY 13TH AND THURSDAY 14TH MARCH 2013**

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this evening and to take part in the graduation ceremonies for students of the Tasmanian Polytechnic. Most, but not all, of the students at the Polytechnic are young people engaged in gaining vocational education qualifications in many different fields. It is sometime now since I addressed a primarily young audience, but whenever I do I am immediately reminded of an address I gave to a newly formed group of law students when I was the Chief Justice of Tasmania. Actually, I thought it was a really good address. The students nodded gravely when I made a serious point and laughed quite loudly at my jokes and, in the end, the applause can only be described as sustained. On the way out, the Society's President thanked me for my address and asked me what the fee was. I drew myself up to my pompous best and sternly said that judges don't charge fees for giving a public address, especially one to law students, and the President said "Oh, that's so good because we are a new society and don't have much money and we are saving up to get someone really good next year."

Well, tonight is an occasion of celebration. I am told that, in total, there are some 2,000 graduates attending the ceremonies in the south of the State. All of these graduates have been successful in achieving a qualification in 2012 ranging from Certificate I level to Advanced Diploma level, including a small number of TCE students. I am sure that many of you thought that this day would never come,

but it has arrived and to each of the graduates I say congratulations and well done. I extend my congratulations to the families of the graduates whose support and encouragement no doubt played a big part in the success of each of you. I also extend those congratulations to the teachers whose efforts and skills played a critical part in the education of every graduate. After all, the bottom line is that the quality of education cannot exceed that of the teacher in the classroom.

This year will see the last of the graduations from the Polytechnic and the Skills Institute and the introduction of TasTAFE which the Education Department web site describes as “a ‘one stop shop’ for public VET in Tasmania [which will] ... provide all Tasmanians with the opportunities to get the qualifications and skills they need for their future.”¹ I know you could be forgiven for thinking that post-secondary education is in a state of perpetual change, for it seems that we had no sooner had we embarked on the “Tasmania Tomorrow” reforms than we abandoned them. I was advised to see what this latest change was all about by turning to the Education Department web site². There, I learnt that “there are opportunities in changing how we approach vocational education training;” and that there is “an opportunity to build on past successes and move forward together” – which is just as well as we wouldn’t

¹ http://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents_carers/further_education/Pages/Reform-of-Tasmania%E2%80%99s-Public-VET-System.aspx accessed 5th March 2013

² Supra

want to move “backward separately” would we? And, to give you a warm, comfortable glow, “feedback from a wide range of stakeholders has been sought.”

Well, I am not sure what all that adds up to, but so far as this year’s graduates are concerned, what I am sure about is that it is very important to recognise and celebrate your success to date, not only because you now have a diploma or certificate in your chosen field of endeavour, but also because that certificate or diploma marks you as a person who has the ability to engage in life-long learning. By your graduation, you have proved that you have the capacity to learn and to embrace new ideas. There is absolutely no reason why you should not use that capacity on a daily basis for the rest of your life to increase your knowledge and your understanding of the world we live in.

The European Lifelong Learning Initiative defines lifelong learning as “...a continuously supportive process which stimulates and empowers individuals to acquire all the knowledge, values, skills and understanding they will require throughout their lifetimes and to apply them with confidence, creativity and enjoyment, in all roles circumstances, and environments.”³ The European Commission (2001: 9) found that lifelong learning has “Four broad and mutually

³ http://www.llcq.org.au/01_cms/details.asp?ID=12 accessed 5th March 2013

supporting objectives: personal fulfillment, active citizenship, social inclusion and employability/adaptability”.⁴

Life-long learning will certainly improve your earning capacity, but I am not only talking about earning more money. Life-long learning will also increase your creative capacity, make you a more interesting person and widen your social circle. Lifelong learning is essentially a state of mind; a readiness to question; a willingness to take a risk and move out of your comfort zone. If you are a lifelong learner, you will be a tolerant person, willing to see the other side of things; you will be a person able and willing to find a solution to a problem.

So, I say to you that you will not only leave the Polytechnic with a certificate or diploma. You will also leave with the capacity to be a lifelong learner with the ability to broaden your horizons, improve the quality of your life and make a worthwhile contribution to the community in which you live. Go for it I say. Tomorrow will be the first day of the rest of your life. Use it well.

⁴ Supra