

Alumni Friends of The University of Queensland

Centenary Celebration Reception

4th July 2010

Chancellor, Mr John Story,
Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Paul Greenfield AO,
Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Keniger,
President, Alumni Friends of the University of Queensland, Ms Dalma Jacobs and members of the Executive Committee of the Association,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow UQ Alumni,

A very warm welcome to you all, to Government House and to this reception.

It is Sunday evening, after a busy period of celebrations and a quite hectic round of reunions, during this long-planned and long looked-forward-to Centenary Alumni Reunion Weekend. There have been many speeches, many announcements, many expressions of appreciation, many reflections on UQ's journey over the past 100 years, and also, I hope, lots of satisfying catching-up with former fellow-students and friends, sharing recollections, swapping stories, exchanging cards and contact details; storing up more memories for future reunions.

At this point in the Reunion weekend - and this mid-point in the University's Centenary Year celebration - it is not my intention to deliver a major address tonight. The idea this evening is for everyone to relax, wind down a little and enjoy our Government House hospitality, while continuing the networking and the conversations that the Alumni Reunion Weekend was designed to stimulate.

I do want, however, to make a few remarks that I believe appropriate to the occasion.

Firstly, to express regret that the Patron-in-Chief of the Alumni Association, Sir Zelman Cowan, could not be with us this evening. It is well over a year since I last saw and spoke to Sir Zelman, when I travelled to Victoria to represent Queensland at the national memorial service for the Victorian bushfires, and he appeared quite frail then, so I appreciate that it was not possible for him to make the journey to Queensland for this occasion. However, I am sure everyone here joins me in wishing him and Lady Cowan well, as a much-admired couple who made a great contribution to the University during his tenure as Vice-Chancellor in the 1970s.

When Sir Zelman became Vice-Chancellor, the Alumni Association of the University of Queensland was in its infancy, having been set up in 1967 by Sir Zelman's predecessor, Sir Fred Schonell.

1967 was the year that both my husband and I completed our studies and graduated from UQ, so the Association has, in a sense, travelled with us in the time since - mainly through the Alumni News newsletter, which together with the *Contact* magazine always managed to find its way to us, through the diplomatic bag, in locations all around the world. They were both publications we valued greatly, as a means of keeping our connections with the University which had set us on our respective career paths, of staying in touch with Queensland and enabling us to follow the fortunes of both the University and of many of our fellow alumni.

Tonight, I want to pay tribute to all those who have worked to build the Association, to keep it going - and growing - through its four-plus decades, through various challenges and changes, including its name change in 2008 to the Alumni Friends of The University of Queensland Inc, to avoid confusion with the newly-formed UQ Alumni network. Frankly, I'm not sure, still, whether everyone appreciates the distinction, but what is certain is that AFUQ - to use the easier shorthand acronym - has worked with great determination, steered by a succession of hard-working, imaginative and dedicated Presidents and Executive Committee Members, to develop a distinctive identity and role within the large - indeed, increasingly large - and diverse University community, and as it has pursued this course, has succeeded in adding real value to the University and has made a very real difference in the life of many students and many graduates.

I am thinking here of the remarkable number of scholarships, bursaries and prizes that the Association has funded over the years, worth thousands of dollars annually - much of the money raised during the Association's marvellous, trademark Annual Book Fair.

I am thinking also of the grants and donations to University departments and University-based organisations - sponsoring lectures, conferences, contributing to concerts, endowment funds, functions, meeting the costs of framing photographs of graduates, helping to purchase musical scores, produce a CD, even meet the administrative costs of a Museum of Medical History. Small amounts in some cases - \$200 - much larger in others, all greatly appreciated I am sure, by the recipients and beneficiaries of this generosity, targeted to niches and points of need in the system, but also, I suspect, largely invisible and unnoticed in the wider community.

One area of activity by the Association which DOES draw greater attention from the wider community, the media and the general public is the annual Alumnus of the Year award, whose 2010 winner was announced last night at the "Courting the Greats" Gala Dinner at the University.

This wonderful initiative, begun in 1992 to mark the Association's 25th Anniversary Year, not only attracts considerable interest, but has prompted the University itself to introduce two associated awards, of Young Alumnus of the Year and International Alumnus of the year and has also spawned offshoots, off-shore, for example the UQ Australian Alumni Awards, Indonesia. I hope there may be more in other countries where UQ graduates are making their mark, as the University becomes increasingly more globalised in its outlook and reach.

As one of the earliest recipients of the award - and the first woman graduate awardee - in 1994, I have a very direct and personal appreciation of the Award's significance and, 16 years later, still remain deeply grateful to the Association for the recognition it chose to confer upon me, and the Association may be gratified to know that I have on many occasions since, drawn inspiration from the wording on the Award and in the citation that was presented with it. For those here tonight, who may not have had the opportunity to see the Award up close (and it is here in the room for those who might wish to do so later) it is highly symbolic - a bronze pinnacle, symbolising achievement, based on a Helidon freestone pillar - hewn from the same stone as the University of Queensland (which means it is also very heavy - not easy to carry as hand luggage, I can assure you!). It also has a bronze fountain motif, recalling the natural world and its chief element, water (so evocative - at least for me - of UQ's St Lucia campus, cradled in the curve of the Brisbane river) and another spiral motif, designed to represent the creativity of the human spirit.

The Citation features a quotation from the Bible, Proverbs 4:7:

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom:

And with all thy getting, get understanding".

Wonderful advice to carry with one through life and something that I believe every UQ Alumnus, in whatever discipline, area of study or of work, can understand and appreciate and is capable of achieving in their lives, armed with the education and values that this great University provides.

We have all had occasion, in recent months, weeks and days, to reflect on - and appreciate - what the University has done for us as individuals, for Queensland and Australia - but tonight is the opportunity to express appreciation specifically and particularly to the Alumni Association - now the Alumni Friends - for what IT has done for the University, in so many ways, over the years.

To President Dalma Jacobs and her fellow Executive Committee members, representing also your predecessors (including former President Steve Pappas, who I am very pleased to see is with us tonight), thank-you for your hard work, for your unstinting, generous loyalty and commitment to the University and to your fellow Alumni. I am happy to have this opportunity to pay tribute to you, and I invite everyone here to do the same, joining me in a toast of thanks and appreciation to the Alumni Friends of the University of Queensland.

Ladies and Gentlemen - "The Alumni Friends"!