**ANU: CELEBRATING 2016**

Welcome address by the Chancellor, Professor the Hon Gareth Evans AC QC FASSA, to the 2016 Annual Melbourne Gala Alumni Dinner, Parliament House, Melbourne, 25 November 2016

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Welcome, ANU Alumni and Friends to the Annual Melbourne Gala Alumni Dinner. It is wonderful to see so many of you back again – and so many of you demonstrating once again to our friends up the road in Parkville that they don’t have a monopoly on the best and the brightest in this city and state!

Looking back over the year since we last gathered, 2016 doesn't seem to have been quite such an *exciting* year for Malcolm Turnbull as the one he promised us. And so far as the United States is concerned I think we have had rather *more* excitement with the presidential election than any sane and rational person could possibly want.

But for ANU our 70th Anniversary year really *has* been an exciting one – in all the nicest senses of the word:

* Leading the charge has been our brand new Nobel Laureate Vice-Chancellor Brian Schmidt, who I told you last year we saw a brilliant, inspirational communicator, whose vision, vitality, and visible global stature we hoped and expected will take ANU to places it has never been before. We haven’t been disappointed. Brian’s leadership –with his willingness from day one to get down from the stage, roll up his sleeves, and engage in a truly genuine and collegial manner – has been extraordinarily well received right across the ANU community, and has already given a dynamic new dimension to our profile locally, nationally and internationally.
* There was a palpable buzz in the air when we celebrated our 70th birthday on 1 August, at a big ceremony in Llewellyn Hall, looking back at the vision of Nugget Coombs and our other post World War II founding fathers – that Australia was a nation able and willing to create a world-class powerhouse of analysis and ideas, of discovery and delivery – and the way that vision had been realised – with ANU rising in just seven decades to be one of the great universities of the world.
* There was a real sense of pride for all of us when the QS World University Rankings once again placed ANU at number 1 in Australia, ranking us 22 in the world, with ANU having 15 subject areas rated in the top 25 in the world. And it was music in the ears of our young alumni in particular to once again this year have the Global Employability University Ranking placing ANU graduates as Australia's most employable, and amongst the most sought-after graduates by employers worldwide.
* We are absolutely determined to maintain and enhance that reputation, tradition and culture of excellence which has so long defined us – in our research, teaching and learning, and our policy contribution to both national development and global public goods. To that end the Vice-Chancellor and his executive team have been working with me and the University Council over the course of this year to develop and announce first a new Vision Statement, and then filling that out with a detailed new Strategic Plan for the next five years and beyond, which we will be shortly unveiling. We know that in the intensely competitive national and international environment in which we operate we will have to be quick on our feet to stay ahead of the game, and there is no way that we will be simply resting on our laurels.
* The confidence in the vision for the future we have been articulating has been stimulating some fantastic, and unprecedented, new philanthropic support for the University. This year saw Graham and Louise Tuckwell adding to their already extraordinary generosity by funding a major expansion of the already fabled Tuckwell Scholarship Program and the construction of two new student residences on Daley Road – one replacing the current Bruce Hall, and the other brand new – in a gift which will be worth in total some $200 million over 30 years.
* Not only will the two new student residences dramatically change the vista up University Avenue toward Black Mountain, this year has also seen some other planning decisions made which will consolidate ANU’s standing as having the most naturally beautiful campus in the country, and the one that provides the best all-round university experience. The whole Union Court precinct – which has become a run-down higgledy-piggledy collection of not very functional and not very attractive buildings and spaces – is going to be completely replaced over the next two years, in a $200 million plus project, with a completely integrated and newly landscaped ensemble of buildings and open spaces along University Avenue and around Sullivan’s Creek which will include fantastic new student services, cultural events, teaching and learning spaces, student accommodation, sporting and recreational facilities, and bars and restaurants and shopping facilities – and an underground car park with 400 places!
* Add to all that a newly designed distinctive entrance to the University from Childers Street now being planned, and the Acton Ridge landscaping project we have just approved for a new walking and cycling path all the way up from the Union Court and oval area up to the Crawford School of Public Policy, and I think you’ll find yourselves going back to a campus which will be even more physically attractive, better integrated and alive than it has ever been.
* There are lots of other things going on with the development of new student recruitment, teaching and learning, staffing and outreach strategies that the Vice-Chancellor may want to say something about later on, but as Chancellor I wanted to mention one other development in 2016 that relates to the governance of the University and further reinforces our standing as Australia’s one and only *national* university: with Natasha Stott-Despoja, the former Senator, and Ambassador for Women and Girls, joining the Council we now have high-level representatives on our governing body from every state in Australia except Tasmania. And with Patrick Dodson, when he went into the Senate, being replaced by Peter Yu - a Yawuru Man from Broome in North West Australia with over 35 years’ experience in Indigenous development and advocacy in the Kimberley region and at the state, national and international level – we are continuing the tradition of having very strong Indigenous representation at the highest levels of university governance.

So all in all this has been an exciting year for ANU and one for all of us to be proud of.In 2016 ANU is the university our founders dreamed of, but didn't get to see: a genuinely national university – that now counts amongst its community nearly 100,000 alumni, 23,000 students and 4,000 staff. And one that is making, through both its staff and its alumni – who are holding important positions around Australia, the region, and the world – a big impact both nationally and internationally.

It is always a great pleasure to host this annual alumni function because it not only allows me to reflect on our successes, but to share these success with you – our Melbourne alumni. who continually wave the ANU flag here, ever more vigorously and visibly, in the state capital and beyond.

On behalf of the University thank you for your all your support this year, and for the important role you have played – and I hope will continue to play, with your time, your generosity, your loyalty and your commitment – in consolidating and advancing this great Australian National University of ours.