

**FLINDERS UNIVERSITY GRADUATION CEREMONY
9 MAY 2022 | OCCASIONAL ADDRESS**

Kerry Heysen AM in response to the presentation of an Honorary Award of Doctor of Letters honoris causa from Flinders University

Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge special guest, High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus Her Excellency Mrs Martha Mavrommatis, the Chancellor – Mr Stephen Gerlach AM, Vice-Chancellor – Professor Colin Stirling, Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Professor Romy Lawson, Vice-President and Executive Dean – Professor Peter Monteath, University Council members, University staff, the family and friends of graduates and most especially you the graduates.

I am thrilled to be receiving this award especially from Flinders University as my time here changed my life. As I look at you all today on your graduation day I see that the student body has changed from my time here 50 years ago. When I came only a small percentage of the population went to University and the under graduates were all school leavers. You have come down many different paths to get here and I would like to share with you mine.

For a woman who has spent the majority of her working life in film you may not be so surprised that the two factors that played a part in my journey here were advertisements.

The first was a Macleans toothpaste tv commercial that caught my eye which showed a smiling teenager skipping down the steps of a University.

A few months later there was a tiny print ad in the Advertiser which had me travelling to a building on the other side of Adelaide. I approached the desk. I want to enquire about the Widow's Retraining Scheme.

When was mother widowed? came the reply. It is not mother I said it is me, I was 24.

Two years previously with an eight week old son I had been widowed.

It had not been part of the plan.

I was ushered into an office and the man behind the desk explained that the scheme had been set up to *"teach little old ladies to type again."* Well, I was short of stature, and I was a woman, but I could already type so three out of four I thought.

No that's not for me I want to go back to school and to University.

This man, Maurice, whose surname I don't think I ever knew. Just made it all happen.

He arranged for me to go to Saltash a Year 11 and 12 school, to do Matric over two years, covering fees and books and then to go to University with my texts and a small allowance provided. I don't know how he wangled it, but he did.

Sometimes you just meet the right people at stages in your life and this was one of them.

Flinders was taking "mature aged students" for the first time. By now I was the ripe old age of 26.

Son now 4 was a constant companion on campus often attending lectures with me. He was loved by the Refectory staff, the ground staff and student and academics alike. He was part of a very large University family.

What an adventure we had embarked upon.

Flinders gave me so much. The true second chance at life. Firstly, an Education, where it inspired a love of reading and learning. It gave me the introduction to film as a career. Provided me with lifelong friendships and most importantly fulfilled lecturer Murray Copeland's prophesy on the first day at University who said, *"look around as one of these people may become your spouse."*

I am so fortunate to have my husband Scott Hicks and my two sons Scott and Jett here with me today.

As you start your post university life remember whether you were the standout student or the one who just made it through never be afraid of failure it is part of success. For ten years we faced rejection after rejection as we tried to get Shine the movie made. When we did its success changed our lives.

Persist with your vision no matter what others think.

Thank you again for this award and Congratulations to you all and share with me a few moments of the journey that Flinders started me on.

9 May 2022