

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, distinguished guests, fellow graduates, university staff and guests. My name is Zerene, and I am honoured to be standing here today speaking on behalf of my fellow graduates of 2017.

I would first like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Wadawurrung, of which we stand here today to celebrate this momentous occasion. So, it is only right that we pay our respects to elders past, present and future.

I would like to thank all those involved - directly or indirectly - who have helped many students get to the platform of tertiary education. This extends from the support not only given by the university staff, of which we are immensely grateful, but also given by our extended community of family, friends, colleagues, and mentors that have helped us, motivated us, and inspired us. Without you, this mightn't have been possible.

Looking around the room today at the faces of each and every one of my fellow graduates, I see people who I have shared a journey with, which will always hold a special place in my heart. This experience, I sincerely believe, has changed me for the better and given me the tools I need to tackle whatever the universe throws my way.

This chapter in our lives began when we said yes to the possibilities of what could be, and said goodbye to 'what if's' and self-doubt. Each of us stands here today with our own experiences and anecdotes to share, that speak of a voyage that has been filled with trials, tribulations and everything in between. We have been challenged; personal limits no longer exist, and there has been plenty of blood, sweat and tears. The individual strength and identity gained, has made it all worth it.

We stand here today, united by the knowledge that we have achieved something spectacular. Our hard work and dedication has lead us all to this exact moment; a moment where we reflect on our achievements. These achievements in our diversity, creativity and individuality are a feat worthy of the utmost respect. Without artists such as these brilliant minds you see before you today the world would be a very different place.

We are taught, that it is better to be seen AND heard, in order to make your mark in the world. We are taught to cultivate and use the qualities we were not only naturally gifted with, but privileged to be provided with by Federation University and all of its staff. The opportunities, to be interesting, driven and passionate young people, who aren't afraid to venture out into the world and spread positivity and change through the power of education.

I want to once again congratulate my fellow graduates for not giving in, not giving up and for making the absolute best of what was presented to you. Now go out there and show the world what you are capable of.

Thank you.