23 June 2012
China Graduation Ceremony
Guest Speech

Michael Clifton

Good afternoon, Deputy Chancellor Mr. Dornbusch, Acting Vice-Chancellor Professor Layton, Professor lín Jiāng, Professor zhōu jǐn qí, distinguished guests, graduates and family, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a great pleasure for me to be part of this celebration of the achievements of the graduates of the University of Southern Queensland in the beautiful city of Hangzhou.

As you all know, China is one of Australia's most important bilateral partners. Education and training plays a vital role in this important partnership. The Australian Government places high value on Australia's excellent reputation as a reliable provider of high quality education to international students. We have a multitude of collaborations in education at government and institutional levels. The joint programs offered by the University of Southern Queensland with Zhejiang University City College and Zhejiang University of Science and Technology highlight the success of the rewarding partnership between the two countries.

In today's complex world, it is very important that people from different countries understand each other well. The challenges we face every day will only be overcome with strong relationships based on mutual respect. Educational relationships are particularly important in developing this understanding and respect, and in creating and transmitting the knowledge that we need to improve and build a better world. Therefore, I would also like to take this opportunity to formally thank the dedication and commitment of all the teaching faculties for their contribution.

Allow me to address a few remarks to today's graduates and begin by joining with all those present in extending my warmest congratulations to each of the graduates. You have worked hard to reach this point. Whatever challenges and setbacks you may have experienced along the way, take heart in the fact that they are now behind you. And success tastes so much sweeter when it is built on hard work and sacrifice.

And speaking as the proud father of three children, I would really encourage each of you to reflect on the sacrifice of your parents in helping to support and guide you along the path to today's success.

Ladies and gentlemen, a few years ago I attended a ceremony at which a keynote speaker encouraged the graduates to "go forth and do stupid things". Frankly I was horrified because in the case of my own children and their friends, I had invariably found that they did not need any encouragement whatsoever when it came to doing stupid things. So my advice is quite the opposite – "please don't feel the need to go forth and do stupid things!"

Friends, today marks the beginning of another chapter in your life. I hope and believe that the skills and knowledge that you have learned during your studies with the University of Southern Queensland have equipped you to move forward with confidence in these challenging times. The contributions you will make to your

families and to your communities will hopefully make you a proud graduate of USQ and proud Australian alumnus. Please stay connected with your University and your fellow alumni.

Congratulations once again to each of you and well done on a great achievement.

Thank you and good afternoon.