



## **Vice-Chancellor's Investiture Ceremony, 24 February 2014**

### **Professor Deborah Terry's speech**

*I too acknowledge the Noongar people on whose land we meet and thank Associate Professor Ted Wilkes for his warm welcome to country, and I acknowledge His Excellency Mr Malcolm McCusker, Governor of Western Australia, and Mr Colin Beckett, Chancellor, and thank them for their kind words. I also acknowledge Minister Collier and other distinguished guests.*

I am deeply honoured and humbled today to be before you all, being formally recognised as the fifth Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University.

I am honoured that I have been trusted to lead this fine Western Australian institution through the next phase of its development and understand the immense responsibility that such an honour and privilege entails.

At the same time, I am humbled because I know that I wouldn't be here today without having had access to a wealth of opportunities; the support of many; and the foresight, vision, and hard work of those who came before me.

I particularly recognise the contribution made to Curtin by my immediate predecessor, Professor Jeanette Hackett, who achieved so much in her term as Vice-Chancellor. To be following in her footsteps, as a woman, is indeed very special.

I also acknowledge the other past Vice-Chancellors and Chancellors who laid the very significant groundwork for what is now such a successful and highly regarded institution.

To Professor Lance Twomey, I am aware of the very significant role you played as Vice-Chancellor for so many years, especially in expanding Curtin's international profile and reputation. I hope that I meet your expectations during my term as Vice-Chancellor.

Welcome too, to Professor John Maloney, who as Vice-Chancellor had the vision and drive to create the John Curtin Centre, which gave the campus, and the community, the renowned John Curtin Gallery and Australia's first prime ministerial library.

Professor Don Watts is also here today. He is one of the great characters of Curtin's history, and led the drive to achieve university status for the then Western Australian Institute of Technology and who played such an important role in the transformation of the Australian higher education sector in the 1980s.

Sadly, Professor John De Laeter who served as acting Vice-Chancellor for just over a year is no longer with us, but is represented here today by his wife Robyn. John was an internationally renowned researcher, and I know his memory continues to be treasured and honoured by the University.

And, to the present, I thank sincerely and use this opportunity to publicly acknowledge Professor Colin Stirling, our MC today, who has been Acting Vice-Chancellor since August 2013, and who I am looking forward to working with in his new role as Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University.

As many of you know, I was born in Western Australia, and although my father's career meant that we grew up elsewhere, our strong family ties over many generations to Western Australia were one of the defining features of my childhood. My grandmother was deeply proud of our Bussell heritage, and taught me from an early age that education and the pursuit of knowledge are gifts that should never be taken for granted.

On a more light-hearted note, I attribute to her the view that being engrossed in a good book is, indeed, a legitimate way to spend one's time, even if chores and other tasks beckon! It is therefore for personal, as well as career reasons, that this move has such deep significance for me.

And on a personal note, I am delighted that my husband, Ottmar; my children, Nicholas, Harry, and Sophie; my mother and sister and other close family members, as well as a number of my friends and Western Australian relatives are here today – I thank you all for your tremendous support over so many years.

I would also like to thank those members of the Curtin community who I have been fortunate enough to meet already, for their warm and generous welcome. I am very much looking forward to meeting you all and to working together to ensure Curtin meets its vision of changing lives and having impact through leadership, innovation and excellence.

As I told incoming students earlier today, like them I am new to Curtin, so I understand that they might be daunted by unfamiliar places and faces, but they, like me, should be excited by the possibilities of the future and the opportunities the Curtin experience will unlock for them.

Unlike the students, I have the advantage of being very comfortable in the higher education environment. My whole career has essentially been spent in academia, a path that I have pursued since my undergraduate days when I first experienced the tremendous rewards and excitement of being involved in research and discovery.

As Western Australia's largest and most international university, Curtin is now well positioned to meet its ambitious goal of being a genuinely research-intensive university that works in partnership with industry and government to strengthen the



State's economic pillars, and to drive the knowledge-based industries that will underpin future growth and sustainability.

Creating new knowledge and driving innovation are core responsibilities of universities and I am committed to working to ensure that Curtin reaches a new level of success in these areas.

To do so, will require us to play to our strengths; to recognise and support excellence at the highest international levels; and to strengthen, very deliberately, our industry and government partnerships, particularly in those areas that will shape the future prosperity of the State and our region.

Of course, the world's top universities value and celebrate success in teaching as much as they do in research. Indeed, to understand the impact of universities, you need look no further than the some 10,000 students Curtin graduates each year, or to the many examples of lives and communities that have been transformed through access to educational opportunities.

My commitment is to ensure that graduates leave this University with the knowledge and skills they need to make a difference in their chosen professions, not only locally and regionally but globally given the diversity of our student body and their capacity and motivation to work internationally.

Equally importantly, it is essential that Curtin students graduate with the leadership capacity, the passion, the values, and the confidence to shape a better future for the global community and to thrive in a time in which the challenges and pace of technological change will be at a scale that few of us can really grasp.

Ensuring that research-intensive universities deliver on their dual mission of producing high quality research and teaching outcomes is something that has been core to my recent leadership roles. Curtin's development of a career path for academics who are focussed on teaching innovation, pedagogical leadership, and student learning is one that I am committed to supporting and championing.

At the same time, to be a genuine global player of significance our teaching must be research-led and we have a responsibility to ensure that the student experience is enriched by the university's research strengths and its global profile.

As the Chancellor has indicated, Curtin has a clear sense of its mission and an ambitious vision for its future. I was attracted to this clarity and to the fact that Curtin is fundamentally a global university with a strong international presence, but at the same time understands its responsibility to deliver both local and regional impact.

I applaud the fact that, as well as being future-oriented and externally focused, the University community has recently come together to clarify Curtin's core values, and I was pleased to participate in part of that process late last year. Embedding



clear and shared values into every aspect of life at Curtin will build the strong and successful culture needed for us to realise our future potential.

As we do so, I agree with the focus on John Curtin's sentiment: *"the great university should find its hope in the future; it should look ever forward; for it the past should be but a preparation for the greater days to be"*.

When I tracked down the 1932 article in the West Australian in which John Curtin expressed this view, the other statement that resonated strongly with me was the view and I quote: *"... above all things, the University must have a soul. In it the divine spirit of service, and sacrifice for service, must pervade all its works"*.

By doing both – striving for excellence and impact in everything we do at the same time as ensuring that the University has a soul and a strong sense of purpose – we will realise our immense potential and meet the expectations of all our stakeholders: our students; our staff at all of our sites, regional and international; our alumni; and our government and industry partners.

I look forward to working with you all to take Curtin to the next level in terms of its global reputation and standing and I commit to doing this in a way that is performance-driven but values-led. It will be a focus on the latter, combined with a bold and ambitious vision and an agile mindset that will get us where we need to be.

Thank you.