



**Centurion**  
**UNIVERSITY**

*Shaping Lives...  
Empowering Communities...*

# CENTURION UNIVERSITY

*5th*  
*Convocation*  
*2017*

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Commencement Address

**Mr. Steven Herbert**

Former Minister, Skills and Training, Australia

11 December 2017

**CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT**  
**PARALAKHEMUNDI, ODISHA.**

(Estd. Vide Odisha Act 4 of 2010 & u/s 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956)



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Your Excellency, **Dr. S. C. Jamir, the Hon'ble Governor of Odisha** and the Visitor of Centurion University of Technology and Management;

**Guest of Honor, Professor Ruth Wallace, Director, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia**

**Distinguished Members of the Governing Board,**

**President, Vice President, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor,**

Members of the Academic Council, Board of Studies, Pro Vice Chancellors, Directors, Deans, Faculty and Staff of the University, Parents, Distinguished Guests, Representatives of Electronic and Print Media and most importantly our Graduating students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me begin by acknowledging that this is my very first trip to India and say that I am delighted to be here in a country with such a rich history and culture, and at a ceremony with so many young people full of hope and aspiration for their future and that of their country.

I am pleased to be at a university that is at the pinnacle of an exciting new approach to education and which will be a vital tool in developing the workforce needs of a country that is developing so rapidly – a country which holds so much hope of prosperity for a whole new generation of Indians.

In accepting the invitation to speak here today, I wondered what I could possibly say to add meaning to your lives.

- Should I talk about my country's education system?
- Or about the changing nature of the world's economy?
- Or the fact that advances in health and medicine will soon add fifty years life expectancy to the average person?
- Or perhaps the impact of technology on our lives no matter where we live/the impact that another billion people accessing high speed internet this year will have on the future of developing nations?

All of these are worthy topics of discussion, but as this event is a very personal part of your lives, I've decided to tell you a little of my personal journey and how I have come to be here today.

In telling you a little of myself, I hope to share with you the powerful messages I've learnt about the value of grasping opportunities, acquiring skills, of the benefits of education, of hard work, perseverance, determination and belief – of values which will do you well no matter where you live, no matter your religion, social status or gender.

I was born in 1954 to laboring parents – my father was a dockside worker – who earned a living on the docks of Melbourne, shifting cargo, doing hard, backbreaking work before the days of containers and mechanisation.

Tragedy struck early in life and at the age of 10 I was adopted by my aunty and uncle.

My pathway to employment was mapped out. I was to follow in the footsteps of my uncle and become a metal machinist.

So rather than attend a normal high school, off to a trade school I went: Glenroy Technical School, a very large trade school in Melbourne's Northern suburbs. Its motto was "With Skill and Honour." A motto which had little meaning for me then, but later, as a Minister for Skills and Training it meant a lot.

Now in those days, young people who attended a technical secondary school would generally leave school at 15 and begin an apprenticeship with a qualified tradesman.

Well, whilst those basic trade skills I learnt at school have done me well, I quickly realised that I wanted to follow a different pathway – I wanted to go to University.

So I studied hard, worked hard, won scholarships and eventually was accepted into Swinburne University.

In those days this was a large bridge to cross, both academically and financially.

But after much hard work the opportunity to achieve this came in the form of a government scholarship – a scholarship which paid tuition and living expenses – a scholarship which set me on the path to a very different life - a path to success.

Out of 500 students in my year group at school, four students completed their year twelve, two went on to further study and one completed their tertiary course – that was me!

Likewise, years later, I was fortunate enough to be able to assist to a young, unemployed girl in country Victoria.

I met her at a ministerial visit to a youth centre. She was a very poor, shy, uncertain, young 16 year old who left school early and had been thrown out of her home by her very strict parents.

She had a dream of becoming a hairdresser but could not afford the college tuition fees.

She had a good heart and I felt sorry for her – she had a tough road very early in life - so I contacted the college director who kindly waived her tuition fees, organized a hairdresser's equipment pack and enrolled her to start the next day. She broke into tears when told the good news!

With a poor education and no permanent address, success was difficult, but she never gave up, worked twice as hard as other students and succeeded in her dream.

My story and hers is repeated thousands of times each day, because opportunity is the greatest gift a person can receive.

In your lives, you will receive many opportunities – Appreciate them, Never squander them! If you grasp them and make the most of them your lives and careers will flourish.

My second advice is to always focus on the outcomes you wish to achieve. Whilst I never became a machinist, the lessons I learnt early at trade school were not wasted.

Every trades person knows at the start of the job what they want to achieve, what the finished product will be like. It matters little if it is a house, furniture or machinery, the tradesperson must envision the outcome, then plan how to achieve it, what tools and materials are needed, and how long it will take to make it.

This lesson of thinking about the final product, of knowing exactly what you want to achieve that I learnt at trade school, I have applied to all aspects of my career.

- As a teacher in the poorer suburbs of Melbourne helping disadvantaged students to learn and grow
- As Chief of Staff to a Federal State Minister
- In my role of growing International Education in Victoria
- And in the challenge of transforming my State's entire training and skills system – knowing what I wanted to achieve at the beginning made things easier.

So my second message to you is to think carefully about what you want to achieve in your career and your life. Put in the effort of planning your job, your career now, at the beginning, and your journey will not only be easier, but much more successful.

I've had a fantastic career in government and politics. I've been blessed by having the opportunity to make a difference in my country.

As Minister for Corrections I've been responsible for keeping our State safe from the worst and complex aspects of crime.

And as Minister for Skills, Training and Universities, I've had the opportunity of developing a new training system for our state which met the needs of a growing economy and the workforce needs of new and developing industries – something that I know the Indian Government is looking to Centurion University to achieve for India's changing economy.

As Minister for International Education, Victoria's largest export industry, I've had the opportunity to speak to and learn from students and teachers from around the globe – many from India.

These brave and often adventurous students who come to Australia for an education, of course sometimes face challenges – cultural, social, financial and educational. Most quickly overcome them and have a fantastic experience. Those who don't often fail to acknowledge their problems, they ignore them for too long or try to shift responsibility for their failure to other people.

As a Minister managing \$7 billion expenditure I've also faced huge problems. But like those successful young Indian students enjoying life in Melbourne, I've always believed that it helps no one to sweep problems under the mat; to

pretend that problems do not exist, or even worse, that they are someone else's responsibility.

It is important to face problems no matter how daunting, seek expert advice and be humble about doing so, and most importantly, be creative and bold in your solution.

After all, difficult problems always require difficult solutions.

So my third message is to be positive, become a person that does not run from adversity, be willing and able to solve difficult problems. – if you do this you will achieve great personal satisfaction and elevation in your chosen career will be assured.

Finally, I have attended graduation ceremonies like this throughout the world, and it is an honour to be here attending yours.

It is an honour to be at such an uplifting ceremony which is full of bright young people excited about their next adventure in life, excited about taking the next great step on their life's journey.

I wish you well. Work hard, persevere, be committed to achieving great outcomes, and never shy away from a difficult problem – you will do well.

**Thank you.**

## **STEVEN HERBERT**

### **Biography**

During his time as a Government Minister, Steven Herbert significantly shaped and transformed Victoria's training and International education system; implementing major reforms and overseeing government departments critical to Victoria's future prosperity.

With the election of the Andrews Government in 2014 he was appointed Minister for Training and Skills, the first ever Minister for International Education and later the Minister for Corrections.

Under his Ministerial guidance, Victoria's important training system underwent a major transformation, an innovative funding system which ensured that skills development linked to jobs, workforce and industry needs was introduced; the vital TAFE sector was modernised and; International Education in Victoria expanded significantly in both student numbers and value to the Victorian economy.

Steven has advised governments at both a State and Commonwealth level since first working as an advisor in housing and construction. He was Chief of Staff to a Victorian Minister for Education and the Minister for Finance.

In 2002 following his election to parliament he was appointed the Chair of the inaugural all-party Parliamentary Education and Training Committee. In this role he made major recommendations to government following major investigations into areas such as: teacher training, the unfulfilled demand for places in higher education institutions in Victoria; the promotion of maths and science education; training in the rail industry and the effects that social media and television can have on education.

During his second term, Steven was appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Conservation and Environment and in 2007 he became the Parliamentary Secretary for Education. He has also served as the Shadow Minister for Higher Education and Skills and as the Shadow Minister for the Teaching Profession.

After retiring from politics in 2017, Steven Herbert became a director in the family consulting business continuing to specialise in international, skills and training.

He loves spending time with his family, walking, renovating his home and enjoying Victoria's lively cultural environment.