I would like to acknowledge the Darug people who are the Traditional Custodians of this land. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present of the Darug Nation and extend that respect to other Aboriginal people here today.

Good afternoon
Deputy Chancellor Gillian Shadwick
Vice-Chancellor Professor Barney Glover
Members of the Council
Staff of the university
Families and friends of the graduates and, most importantly, graduates.

It is a great honour to be invited to deliver the occasional address celebrating the achievements of students from the School of Education at this fine university.

Congratulations to each and every graduate. Your education journey is a testament to the importance you place on your own learning – and the commitment and dedication required to get you to this point.

Many of you here today are graduating with a Masters of Teaching and, having completed a Masters of Education, I remember the hard work, the intellectual
challenge and the exhilaration of achievement. To those who are graduating as teachers, can I warmly welcome you into one of the world’s greatest – and oldest – professions.

Many of you have made this journey while balancing family responsibilities, relationships and work. University study is rigorous, it is demanding, it can require sacrifice.

So today we celebrate your achievements. Take time to reflect and enjoy this moment with pride. Know that all your hard work is worth it.

I chose teaching as a career because teachers in my home town of Tumut were important people in our community and valued for their knowledge.

I have stayed in the field of education because I have seen time and time again that education has the power to transform lives by providing opportunities and pathways. Education matters. Teachers matter.

I have the great privilege of leading the largest education system in Australia and my philosophy revolves around the premise that students are at the heart of every decision we make about their education.

The defining characteristic of our profession of teaching is that we understand the learning process; we understand the cognitive science and the neuroscience.

This is a critical characteristic because the role of the teacher is changing as the world changes. The rapid pace of technology, the challenges of globalisation and high community expectations means that teachers today require a deep knowledge of the learning process.
The traditional image of the teacher as the font of all knowledge, standing in front of the class and delivering content is fast disappearing when students can access information anywhere, anytime.

We must look beyond this year, the next five or even 10 years. The children who started school this year will be in the middle of their careers in 2050 and we must equip them with the skills they will need then, not just the skills that are needed today.

We want our students to develop learning skills, not just simply acquire academic knowledge through rote learning. We want them to be able to problem solve, think critically and have good communication skills. We now talk of the 4Cs as well as the 3Rs – creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration.

In this brave but exciting new world, we want to give our teachers the licence to innovate to continually improve their practice and to keep learning right throughout their career.

I urge you to trust your professional judgement as a teacher and to add to your skill set in a culture of trust and collaboration.

A culture of collaboration connects teachers to students to communities. A feature of high-performing education systems is that teacher collaboration is standard practice and includes mentoring, constructive feedback, collaborative lesson planning and assessment and classroom observation.

Teacher collaboration builds shared responsibility for student outcomes. Improving results across an entire school relies on a critical mass of teachers and school leaders committed to change and a willingness to work together to enact that change.
You will already know that the rewards of teaching are many and varied.

- It’s that light bulb moment when a child grasps a concept.

- It’s when you are on a train and a student from 20 years ago yells out ‘Miss’ and tells you of career success and family happiness.

- It’s when your colleagues are inspired and motivated by your innovation and ability.

- It’s when parents say, ‘Thank you, you really made a difference to my child’s learning’.

These are the intrinsic rewards of teaching.

May I offer you my sincere congratulations on your graduation and wish you the very best in your future endeavours as teachers, learners and leaders.

Thank you