



## **Emmanuel College Papers**

Academic Awards Dinner  
16 March 2023

Professor Kris Ryan

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## **Acknowledgement**

Emmanuel College acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the College is located, the people of the Turrbal nation and Jagera/Yaggera nation.

Our community lives, learns and grows together on these rich lands and waters that are, and have been, a place of gathering for thousands of years.

Emmanuel College is committed to honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the lands, waters and seas, and their significant contribution to society as the oldest living civilisation in the world.

Emmanuel College endeavours to promote reconciliation through education, respect and engagement.

## **The Author**

Professor Kris Ryan is Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), The University of Queensland. Prior to his appointment at The University of Queensland, Professor Ryan held multiple education leadership roles in student experience, diversity and inclusion, education innovation and education policy. He has published over 80 articles and book chapters with a focus on tertiary education and engineering research.

Professor Ryan has led multi-disciplinary teams to establish and implement the design of innovative learning and teaching spaces both within Australia and overseas. He has led the development of multiple education technologies including a novel eAssessment platform enabling multidisciplinary online assessment. These contributions have been recognised nationally and internationally and include an Australian Financial Review Education Award, the International Architecture MasterPrize™ (AMP) for Educational Buildings, and the International eAssessment award for summative assessment.

Professor Ryan holds a Graduate Certificate in Higher Education (2009), Doctor of Philosophy (2005), and a Bachelor of Engineering (2000) from Monash University.

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This speech was delivered at the Academic Awards Dinner, held on Thursday 16 March 2023.

Principal Stephen Peake, Mr Paterson Boyd, members of the Emmanuel College Board, distinguished guests, colleagues, supporters and most importantly, students.

Thank you all for making me feel so very welcome to tonight's proceedings where we gather to recognise the achievements of our Emmanuel students. My congratulations to all award winners this evening.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which Emmanuel College stands – the people of the Turrbal and Yaggera nations – and pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

I note that today is Closing the Gap Day, where we pause nationally, to learn, reflect, and demand improved opportunities for Indigenous peoples across our egalitarian land.

Our Universities and Colleges play such a vital role in leading such discussions – while today marks a single day to reflect on closing the gap, it is a core theme of research and education across your University every day of the year.

Attending academic award ceremonies is a great privilege of my position.

It is always a privilege because I am able to witness the energy, the opportunity, the creative ambition of a new generation of students, celebrate their efforts, and share the pride and joy of those around them.

For our students – I would like, for perhaps a moment, to impart a message that does not resonate as strongly as it could in our media; is perhaps not expressed enough to our current group of young change makers.

My message is simple. My message is this:

**Every generation has the opportunity to create its own golden age, and the enablers of our next golden age are sitting here tonight.**

Imagine that. Imagine your contributions now and into the near future across our diverse communities.

Your university years are the time to explore and to dream those dreams.

Your education and college experiences lay the foundation for how those dreams may be realised.

We hope we've encouraged you to reflect on what you have learnt so far, because collectively and individually, when you look back on what you hoped for, you must account (as we all must) for the things we have and have not done.

Each generation:

- must find ways to make their mark in helping to craft our own reflection of humanity by working for the betterment of all;
- must resist the temptation to mistake current learnings and ideologies for the eternal truths of their society; and
- must hold to values that support the contribution of knowledge to our society, the importance of a capacity to evaluate evidence, and to building an understanding of the world in which we live so that we can reach across boundaries.

I hope that your University and your College have so far enabled you:

- to ask and to seek answers to questions;
- to reason and untangle the foundations of beliefs; and,
- to be open to, and celebrate, the differences among those in the world around you.

As a University community, we are committed to setting our students up for success in the emerging landscape that 2032 brings, and investing in skills through the provision of quality education and experiences that will equip our students to be leaders and innovators throughout their careers.

For example, UQ will be establishing three new ARC Centres of Excellence focusing on Indigenous Futures - the first ever Indigenous-led ARC Centre of Excellence, Quantum Biotechnology and Green Electrochemical Transformation of Carbon Dioxide. These centres will seek to find solutions to intractable societal challenges and will be making their change in the world.

Some recent work enabled across Queensland has led to the development of wireless neurotransmitters for managing neurological disorders; the development of micro biopsy devices to take tissue samples and the development of an app to protect bird species worldwide.

Students - you may wonder why I focus on our research. But I note that the research of today forms a mainstay of industry in the next five years.

UQ is also aiming to make change through The Queensland Commitment initiative, which pledges to disrupt existent educational opportunities by providing more needs-based scholarships and opening pathways to level the playing field for a shared, prosperous future for future generations of Queensland students.

These initiatives, and numerous others like them, across every faculty and every discipline rely on excellent researchers, supporting organisations and vitally, students.

Emmanuel College provides such vital further opportunities, enabling our students by placing them at the heart of numerous opportunities afforded to you here. The values of inclusivity, teamwork, diversity, self-respect and consideration for others shape every aspect of the programs provided here, and further develop vital skills within you that are simply unavailable without such strong, considered community.

Combined, College and University ensure that your excellence is transformed into positive impact. Your era – the 2020s and beyond – will be defined by how your generation responds to the global challenges before us.

How will you create a world not scarred by climate change or major global conflicts?

How will you build the healthy communities and the good lives to which we aspire across the nations and the years of life before us?

Will you beat back the tide of ignorance and intolerance?

What will be the beauty you seek to leave?

What will you hope will be the spirit of your age?

People talk too easily as if there was once a golden age, now lost. Yet every generation should live its own life and seek to define its own future – it is a task for all of you, not for just some.

Standing here before you, I see that the great age is not behind us – it is *always* before us. It is sitting before me right now.

You are all developing your voice that can make change in our world. Remember that – you have that voice. Combine it with your imagination. Harness your vision to identify the challenges that drive your passion. And reshape your community in your own image.

Your education includes your learning, your experiences, and your perspectives; and I encourage you to remember during the remainder of your time at Emmanuel to think how you can play your part in being the steward and voice that can make this change.

I'm mindful of Emmanuel College's motto '*Fiat Lux*' – '*let there be light*'. This speaks of knowledge, evidence and illumination across our community.

It may also be reimagined perhaps. I see in our students here tonight – '*Tu Lux es*' – '*you are the light*'. Be the beacon – maintain your passion, combine it with academic excellence and moral fortitude.

We know you have everything you need at your disposal to realise your collective and individual promise – and to secure the enlightened progress of this generation ... and the next.

Congratulations. I wish you every success for the remainder of your studies.