



**Emmanuel
College**
EST. 1911

Emmanuel College Papers

by
Professor Deborah Terry AC

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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.

Author

Professor Deborah Terry AC is a highly experienced leader in the Australian university sector – and an internationally recognised scholar in psychology.

Since August 2020, Professor Terry has served as Vice-Chancellor and President of The University of Queensland (UQ). Prior to this, she was Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University in Western Australia, from 2014 to 2020.

Having grown up in Perth and Canberra, Professor Terry completed her PhD in Social Psychology at the Australian National University in Canberra. She moved to Brisbane in 1990 to begin her academic career in UQ's School of Psychology. Between 1990 and 2014, Professor Terry progressed through a range of academic positions at UQ before moving into senior university leadership roles, eventually becoming Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Professor Terry is a Fellow and past President of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and an appointed member of the Australian Research Council Advisory Council. She currently serves on the Boards of AARNET and Westpac Scholars, and she is also a member of the Universitas 21 Executive Committee.

Professor Terry has previously served as Chair of the Board of Universities Australia.

She was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in January 2024 for “eminent service to tertiary education as an institutional leader and academic, to the strengthening of higher education through collaboration and innovation, and to the community”.

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This speech was delivered at the Emmanuel College Convocation Dinner on 15 February 2025.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we meet today and pay respects to elders past, present and emerging – as we walk together on the path to Reconciliation.

I would also like to formally acknowledge:

- Ms Emma Szczotko, Chair – and members of the College Board
- Mr Stephen Peake, Principal – and College staff
- Pastor Mandy Smith, Uniting Church
- Emmanuel Kelly, President of the Students' Club
- As well as students, parents, guardians, and friends of the College.

On behalf of our entire team at The University of Queensland, it is my great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to Emmanuel College's 2025 Convocation Dinner.

This is, of course, a very special occasion.

It is truly one of those 'rite-of-passage' moments that will live-on in your memory – long into the future.

And I'm sure that's particularly going to be the case for the 141 first-year College residents, the five new postgraduate residents, and the 37 Associate Members, who have arrived here, at Emmanuel, for the first time today.

While this may still feel like an alien environment to you right now, let me assure you that pretty soon it'll feel like home.

And, similarly, while most of the people in this marquee may feel like strangers to you at the moment.

I promise you that before too long, many of them will feel like family.

Of course, the change that you're experiencing today can also be difficult and it can be nerve-racking.

As someone with an academic background in Psychology, I want to assure you that feeling anxious is a completely natural response to change.

So, if you're feeling a tinge of anxiety this evening, rest assured that you're not alone.

The great American basketballer Michael Jordan was once asked how he handled nerves in the midst of a high-stakes game.

He famously responded: "Being nervous isn't bad. ... It just means something important is happening."

To me, that quote seems completely fitting for this occasion.

Because something very important is happening to those among you who are beginning your experience here at Emmanuel today.

You're embarking on one of the great adventures of your life.

And you'll soon discover that the new life you're beginning this weekend will open all sorts of new doors for you.

Obviously, it's going to open the door to your university studies.

But it will also open the door to your independence ... to new opportunities ... new experiences ... and friendships that'll last a lifetime.

I have no doubt that Stephen and the Emmanuel team have done a wonderful job of welcoming you to the College.

And I'm here this evening to broaden out that greeting – by welcoming you all to The University of Queensland, and to Brisbane, for those of you from elsewhere.

So, welcome – and I mean that very sincerely – it is a joy for us to welcome new people – both students, and their families – into the UQ community.

I also want to extend that welcome to those amongst you who will be travelling from the college to study at one of the other Brisbane-based universities.

Living here at Emmanuel, you will undoubtedly make good friends who are studying at UQ – so I hope that you always feel like our neighbouring St Lucia campus is a welcoming place for you, too.

And I really do hope that you'll get involved in the life of the campus – including by representing, or supporting, Emmanuel in the Inter-College Competition.

I feel very fortunate to have been part of the UQ community for the past 35 years – saying that, does make me feel quite old!

In fact, I arrived here for the very first time in 1990, to take up a position as a postdoctoral researcher and academic in the School of Psychology.

And I've spent my entire career working here at UQ – except for a five-and-a-half-year stint, when I was Vice-Chancellor of Curtin University in WA.

I returned to Brisbane in 2020 when I was offered the opportunity to lead UQ.

To me, that was an opportunity that was just too good to refuse, given that this is truly one of the world's great universities – and certainly among the top few universities in Australia.

During my time living in Perth, I had the privilege of meeting a wide range of people working in leadership roles – across academia, business, the arts and politics.

And one of those people was the then WA Premier, Mark McGowan.

I saw Mark at various functions and meetings – and we struck up a good rapport, partly based on our shared history, here, at UQ.

Mark studied a combined Arts/Law degree at UQ in the late 1980s – and he has an enduring fondness for this University.

But from my conversations with him, it's apparent that he has an even deeper and more abiding affection for Emmanuel College, because of the strong anchor and support the college provided for him as a student from Northern NSW.

In fact, I think Mark identifies as an alum of Emmanuel College, first and foremost – and as a graduate of UQ, second.

And that's not at all surprising to me – because this College was his home throughout that enjoyable but, more importantly, profoundly formative phase of his life. Over the coming months, you will undoubtedly hear the inspiring stories of many other former Emmanuel residents.

For instance, the former Chief Justice of the High Court, Sir Harry Gibbs, lived at Emmanuel from 1934 to 1939.

The Founder of Flight Centre, Graham Turner, lived here from 1967 to 1970.

The former Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, Wayne Swan, walked these halls in 1972.

And, more recently, between 2011 and 2014, this College was home to Dr Jordan Cory. A leading campaigner for Indigenous health, Jordan was awarded UQ's Distinguished Young Alumni award in 2019.

This is just a tiny sample of the inspirational figures who have resided at Emmanuel over the past 113 years – stretching all the way back to March 1912, when the College welcomed its first intake of five residents.

On many occasions throughout its history, Emmanuel has been a pioneer.

To start with, Emmanuel was one of the first two UQ residential Colleges established – sharing that honour with St John's.

Emmanuel also shares with St John's the honour of being the first two Colleges to relocate here, to St Lucia.

That happened in 1956, just a few short years after UQ moved its main campus to St Lucia, from Garden's Point in the Brisbane CBD.

But I think the pioneering achievement that Emmanuel should be most proud of occurred 50 years ago, in 1975, when the College welcomed female residents for the first time.

By introducing that policy change, Emmanuel was the first of the original six UQ colleges to become a co-residential college.

And this year, I'm sure you will have plenty of opportunities to celebrate the 50 year anniversary of that momentous change.

Rather fittingly, we have a College alum, Emma Szczotko, who's attending this evening as the first ever female Chair of the College to preside over a Convocation Dinner.

So, congratulations to you Emma – and to the whole Emmanuel College community on reaching these milestones for the inclusion of women in your community.

I think that deserves a round of applause.

To the newly arrived Residents and Associate Members of the College, I have two main messages that I want to impress upon you, here, this evening.

Firstly, I'd like to make the point that universities are – and always have been – places that are intrinsically committed to freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and open debate.

At UQ, we always seek to uphold these values because open and respectful debate is vital to the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and truth.

I have deliberately stressed those words – respectful debate – because, as we all know, we're living in an era of heightened political and social polarisation, and geopolitical tensions. So, while you're in this community, you will undoubtedly meet people who you will not necessarily agree with on all issues.

Indeed, some of those people will hold views that you oppose passionately.

When you find yourself in those challenging discussions, please remember that our campuses are places of knowledge and dialogue – but that does not mean that we suspend courtesy, compassion or kindness.

Indeed, one of the enduring life skills that we hope you'll develop through your university studies is the ability to methodically argue your perspective – while respectfully refuting the ideas of those with whom you disagree.

Or to put that another way, I'd urge you to always aim to disagree well – indeed, you'll find that this is the most effective way to have those deep and meaningful interchanges that are not only intellectually stimulating, but help you to develop confidence in your own views and what defines you as a person.

The second point that I wanted to emphasise to the new students here this evening is ... please, get involved.

What do I mean by that? ... It's quite simple really.

If you want to take full advantage of the opportunities that are on offer here, then I encourage you to get actively involved in the life of this College, and your university.

I know that the team here at Emmanuel have organised a very full schedule of orientation activities for you over the coming week, but there's one other event on your 'Welcome Week' program that I'd really like to draw your attention to.

And that's an event that we host at UQ – called 'Market Day'.

Market Day is always one of the highlights of our O-Week program – and it's also one of the busiest days of the year at our St Lucia campus.

Because on Market Day, the Great Court is taken over by the 220-plus student-run Clubs and Societies.

It's an occasion where the wide diversity of the UQ community is on full display; so you'll get to see the glorious quirks and niche interests of our student body.

From the Dr Who club, the Underground Theatre Company, the Karoke club right through to UQ United Nations Students Association.

There are also clubs that are directly related to your area of study – such as Engineers Without Borders ... the Student Philosophy Association ... or the UQ Women in Business, Economics and Law.

So, whatever your passion might be, this Wednesday at Market Day, is a really easy way of meeting the people on campus who share your interests.

It's a chance to find your people! So, please, make the most of it.

As you get more familiar with your surroundings at UQ, you'll notice that we have a range of personal development opportunities and recreational activities that are offered outside of your program of study.

For instance, this campus has phenomenal sporting facilities – and there are also opportunities to receive grants to be involved in a summer or winter research program ... volunteer on campus ...

develop your entrepreneurial skills, through UQ Ventures, as well as a wide range of global study and exchange programs.

We offer all of these opportunities because we're genuinely committed to ensuring that you get a rounded education that helps you to prepare – both personally and professionally – for your future career.

So, my final message to you is to just relish the opportunities that are about to come your way.

Your university years are a time of great discovery and transformation.

It is a very special time in your life – so make the most of every moment.

I wish you all the very best for your life here at Emmanuel – and at university.

I hope that it is all that you wished for – and so much more.

Thank you.