

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



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New Colombo Plan 5th anniversary event

Western Sydney University
Kingswood Campus

Speech – check against delivery

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Vice-Chancellor and President, Western Sydney University

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Ladies and gentlemen, good morning – and welcome to Western Sydney University's Kingswood campus for this special event to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the Commonwealth Government's New Colombo Plan.

I am Professor Barney Glover, Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University. On behalf of the University, I am delighted to welcome you here today.

We are honoured to have Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Marise Payne, with us for this celebration.

Minister, welcome.

I would also like to acknowledge the distinguished guests who have joined us this morning, including:

- representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- many New Colombo Plan students and NCP alumni;
- colleagues from universities including the University of Newcastle, the University of Sydney, Southern Cross University;
- members of the business community; and
- my colleagues from Western Sydney University.

We are meeting today on Dharug land of the Boorooberongal clan, the land's traditional custodians. I am pleased to introduce Aunty Sandra Lee, one of the University's Elders on Campus.

Aunty Sandra is a proud Dharug Elder and descendant of Gomebeeree, chief of the Boorooberongal clan of the Dharug nation.

Aunty Sandra works to promote Dharug heritage and culture with her family's centuries-old connections to the Blacktown area. She visits many local schools complementing the work of teachers in the dissemination of Dharug education.

In 2012, Aunty Sandra received a Western Sydney University Community Award, and was a joint winner of the Blacktown International Women of The Year award. She was also granted Life Membership of the Western Sydney Community Forum. Aunty Sandra is a strong advocate of First Peoples' sovereignty, changes to the Native Title legislation, education, and the welfare of Aboriginal youths.

We are very pleased she can be with us this morning to deliver a Welcome to Country. Aunty Sandra, I invite you to the stage.

[Aunty Sandra delivers the Welcome to Country]

Thank you, Aunty Sandra.

To begin this morning's ceremony, we would like to play for you a short video, that has been put together by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the New Colombo Plan program team. This video celebrates the success of the program over the last five years, and showcases some of the life-changing experiences of some of the students who have taken part in the program since its inception.

[Video plays]

It now gives me great pleasure to invite the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Marise Payne to the stage to address you.

The Minister is a highly valued friend and supporter of the University. She is also a strident advocate for our region and an exemplar of its potential on the international stage. We are incredibly proud of her and grateful she could be here today.

Minister.

[Minister addresses the audience]

Thank you Minister.

We are also very pleased to have with us today a number of the New Colombo Plan students and alumni who have been part of the program.

I am pleased to welcome Sonia Parulekar, a New Colombo Plan Alumna, to the stage.

Sonia undertook a Bachelor of Commerce Co-op (Information Systems and Management) at UNSW Sydney between 2014-2017, graduating with Distinction.

As a 2015 NCP Scholar in Malaysia, Sonia studied commerce and information systems at the University of Malaya. She also undertook an internship at PwC in Singapore. In 2017, she received a NCP Mobility Grant and interned at CK Hutchison in Hong Kong.

Now working as a management consultant at A.T. Kearney Australia, Sonia continues to be active in the NCP alumni network as the NCP Alumni Ambassador at UNSW Sydney, and is the current alumni representative on the NCP Reference Group.

Welcome Sonia.

[Sonia Parulekar addresses the audience]

Thank you very much Sonia.

Of course, the success of the New Colombo Plan program is also due to the support it receives from the Australian business community.

I would like to introduce Mr Doug Ferguson, NSW Chairman KPMG, Partner-in-charge, KPMG's Asia and International Markets Group. Doug is a New Colombo Plan Business Champion and a member of the NCP Reference Group.

Doug leads KPMG's five offices and 3,300 staff in NSW, as well as KPMG's Asian client business covering Japan, China, India, Korea and ASEAN business practices. He also leads Access Asia, KPMG's trade advisory services business, which helps Australian companies succeed in Asia.

He is Chair of the Asia Society Australia, a member of the Business Council of Australia's China Leadership Group and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Sydney Business School.

Welcome Doug.

[Doug Ferguson addresses the audience]

Thank you Doug.

Minister, Western Sydney University was pleased to take part in the New Colombo Plan pilot program when it first began in 2014.

What began as a pilot, has grown significantly over the last five years, and at Western Sydney University, we are very proud to play our part in the success of the program.

Western Sydney is a culturally diverse region, with residents coming from more than 170 countries and speaking over 100 different languages.

International student mobility is a strategic priority for Western Sydney University.

In fact, we have written our commitment to ensuring students experience international opportunities into the University's 'Securing Success' strategic plan – one of the most important and transformative documents that will inform the University's future direction.

It states: "To offer an innovative and accessible range of student mobility programs with international partners to support the development of students as global citizens".

But what does this mean? Well, in 2017, 12 per cent of the Western graduating cohort – that is 1,019 students, including students across all levels of study – were reported as undertaking an international study experience.

This is up from 4 per cent – or 382 students – in 2014, when the New Colombo Plan Pilot was first launched.

It means Western Sydney University is ensuring our students have access to the same opportunities their peers have at other universities, and ensures we mirror the national growth in global experiences to enrich study.

Since 2014, more than 1,300 Western Sydney University students have become New Colombo Plan alumni, participating in study and internship opportunities in the Indo-Pacific.

The most popular New Colombo Plan funded study destinations for our students are China, India and Vietnam.

The growth in the number of Western students incorporating an international study experience into their degree can, in a large way, be attributed to the Federal Government placing a high priority on outbound undergraduate mobility. It is also underpinned by substantial funding support through the New Colombo Plan scholarships, grants and OS–HELP loans.

The impressive growth could not have happened without the support of our very passionate academic community – many of whom are with us here today.

These academics have taken full advantage of the funding offered through the New Colombo Plan program to develop a wide range of study and work opportunities for our students across 18 Indo-Pacific countries.

We are immensely proud that 13 of our students have been awarded a prestigious New Colombo Plan Scholarship since 2014.

Between 2014 and 2019, the New Colombo Plan has supported around 1,360 Western Sydney University students to take part in 95 mobility programs through funding worth \$5.5 million.

The increase in international mobility rates – both here at this University and across the country – is not surprising, given what the research says about the benefits of studying in another country.

Quite simply, we know the many and varied benefits that student mobility brings.

Studying at a partner university can expose students to new knowledge and new technologies.

Student mobility can also strengthen important international partnerships that may support research collaboration and networks, which creates meaningful cooperation in the future.

But most importantly, are the benefits to the students themselves, both on a personal and professional level.

Research shows that learning abroad improves academic achievement and graduate completion and, most notably, contributes to the development of employability skills.

By spending time studying overseas students are improving their communication, teamwork, problem solving and self-management skills.

Of course, we want to see increasing numbers of Western Sydney University students study internationally and develop a deeper engagement with our region.

That's because the experiences and relationships we forge through education permeate, inform and shape all our future endeavours.

Spending time overseas to study is a life-changing experience.

Not simply in terms of the scholarly benefits, which I've already touched on, but because of the friendships and connections that are developed; the leadership skills that are honed; and – perhaps most critically – the first-hand understanding that comes from experiencing another culture, and being exposed to and challenged by different ideas and different values.

Minister, I don't think we can place too higher value on this point.

Through initiatives such as the New Colombo Plan, we are indeed supporting the “development of our students as global citizens”.

The New Colombo Plan is guaranteed to enhance our students' personal and professional lives, long after they return home.

Without exaggeration, the NCP is one of the most transformative educational, cultural and socioeconomic policy initiatives we have seen in Australia. As a mechanism for soft diplomacy, exchange and understanding, few policy measures match its record of sustained achievement.

Since its development and inception by Minister Payne’s predecessor, the Hon Julie Bishop MP, the NCP has awarded 50,000 scholarships and mobility grants to 40 locations across the Indo-Asia Pacific region.

In Western Sydney, Australia’s most culturally diverse region, the program has proven a particularly beneficial way to reinforce old, and build new links into our part of the globe.

We heard today from NCP Alumna, Sonia Parulekar, who gave a compelling account of how the program was the “best experience” of her life, forging life-long personal and professional links.

It is also important we acknowledge the NCP’s corporate partners. With us today we have the Chair and Chief Executive of Mitsui & Co Australia, Noboru Katsu, and, as I mentioned, KPMG’s Doug Ferguson. They demonstrate the vital role industry play in making this program such an impactful and immensely positive initiative.

Minister, students, ladies and gentleman, thank you for joining us to celebrate five years of success for the New Colombo Plan.

That brings our official proceedings to a close, but please stay, continue to network, and join us for refreshments.

Thank you once again for joining us today.

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