



Massey University

Graduation Address

**Regent on Broadway
28 November 2008**

Hon. Steve Maharey
Vice-Chancellor
Massey University
New Zealand



Te Kūnenga
ki Pūrehuroa

This is the first time I have addressed you as Vice-Chancellor of Massey University.

Let me say at the outset – thank you having me.

I have been with the University for a few short weeks.

During that time we have, as a Massey community, set about the task of reinvigorating our sense of purpose, which is to make a defining contribution to New Zealand and the world.

We are defining in a number of ways.

- **We embody the central traits of what we think of as the New Zealand character – innovation, honesty of purpose and a certain egalitarian idealism.**
- **We are representative of the nation because of what we teach where we are and the make-up of our staff and students populations.**
- **And we shape New Zealand through the creation and dissemination of knowledge.**

We are a young University. Our history reaches back eighty-one years to the time when we were an Agricultural College established to transform the land-based industries of New Zealand.

Our teaching programme was designed to lift the capacity and capability of farmers. Our research programme provided the evidence needed to bring about change.

It is this commitment to outstanding teaching and research connected to the real world issues facing our nation and the world that has been the hallmark of Massey ever since.

When we became a University in 1964 our first Vice-Chancellor, Sir Alan Stewart, noted that “Massey doesn’t

conform to the standard pattern in many ways. The University is young and so can easily embrace change and retain a less conservative attitude. I hope this can continue forever”.

We have embraced change by leading the way in new areas of teaching; building a multi-campus university; establishing the first Chair in Te Reo Maori; advancing learning for Pasifika students; leading Centres of Research Excellence; hosting the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching and reaching out to partners around the world.

I want to acknowledge the achievements of the staff and students who have brought our University this far.

Outstanding teachers like Dr Lisa Emerson winner of the 2008 Prime Minister Award for Tertiary Teaching.

Outstanding students like Mark Pennington admitted to the Creative Arts Hall of Fame last week and known throughout the world for his work.

Outstanding researchers like Dr David Parry, who received the Royal Society’s Rutherford Medal this year.

Outstanding staff like Dave Bull whose work has made the Manawatu campus of Massey one of the most beautiful in the world.

These and thousands of other people established Massey University’s reputation as a defining university and a world centre of learning: we stand on their shoulders.

Our role of contributing to the shape of our nation’s and the world’s future is even more important today.

We live at a time of unprecedented change. The world economy is being reshaped. Reliable access to food is a concern for all nations. We need to know how to combine prosperity with sustainability. Our future depends on our ability to be creative, innovative and flexible. And, against the backdrop of recent events, we must learn to live in peace.

Universities have the responsibility to respond to these challenges.

At Massey, we need to:

- **set ourselves the task of leading changes in learning;**
- **focus our research on areas where we can make the greatest impact;**
- **reach out to our partners and work with them to apply what we know to real world issues;**
- **commit ourselves to advancing the rising ambitions of Maori, Pacific Island and new migrant communities to enter and succeed in tertiary education;**
- **show how both prosperity and sustainability are possible.**

These are significant challenges for any university

But we are not an ordinary university.

In our recently released strategic plan, the Road to 2020, we have set out bold goals to advance our research, learning, connections, responsibilities, resources and excellence.

We have committed ourselves to excellence in all that we do and identified agri-food, creativity and design and innovation within the new economy as areas of specialisation.

We have a clear sense of our purpose and of the contribution we can make.

This is why when I look out here today at the staff and students of Massey University I know am looking at the future.

I was asked recently at a school what kind of student goes to Massey. I said they are of course intelligent. But they are also the kind of man and woman who people turn to for advice, they have already started a club and maybe a business, they want to make a contribution to resolving a local issue, they are the ones who get things done.

Why do these kinds of people come to Massey? Because at Massey we produce leaders; people who make a difference during their lives. They have vision. They are the people who understand the issue and have a solution. They stand out and they are amazed by the opportunities in front of them.

They do not see limits they see new possibilities.

When you come to Massey you don't join a university, you become part of a tradition.

You are defined by becoming part of Massey and you in turn are expected to become defining.

I want to thank the staff, students and the partners of the University for your warm and generous welcome over these past weeks.

I am humbled to have been invited to be part of Massey University. I feel a responsibility to those who have preceded us to continue their work. I am ambitious for what we are yet to achieve.

To the graduands here today – I wish you well for your future. Make it count.