Well, it's wonderful, a great pleasure to be here. I also begin by acknowledging the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations and pay my respects to their elders, past, present, and emerging. And in particular, uncle Ron, who addressed us earlier.

I also pay my respects to the Taungurong and the Jajowrong people, whose land QUT occupies, and any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people here this evening. So chief scientist, Alan Finkel and Elizabeth Finkel, academy president, Hugh Bradlow and Elizabeth Bradlow, CEO Margaret Hartley, so many colleagues, distinguished fellows and your guests. I particularly want to acknowledge Dr. Susan Pond, who's a QUT council member and a key teacher answer elect, Dr. Charlene Lou and her husband, Dr. Human He. This is the first official event with my new boss and I'm sure it will be the first of many, many dinners that we share together. It's an honor and a pleasure to be able to address you this evening.

I had considered the topic as both relevant because international education is critical to the national research and innovation system, but also because to some extent it feels particularly from within the international education sector that we're under some threat and criticism. Yet the minister for education, Dr. Dan Tehan, in his remarks to the tech conference this morning emphasize that the government and the sector are also working together to continue to grow international education in a sustainable way. He noted that international education contributed 37.6 billion to the Australian economy last financial year, representing a growth of 15% year on year. The sector supports 240,000 jobs, business opportunities and economic growth. Australian universities, public and private, educated around 1.6 million Australian and overseas students in 2018. 90% Of undergraduates are in full time employment three years after completing their degree, 85% of employers expressed satisfaction with their graduates. I don't know what happens to the other 15, 80% of domestic undergraduates and 76% of international undergraduate students rate their higher education experience positively.

The minister noted that seven Australian universities ranked in the top hundred of the three main ranking schemes and I might add that there are a number of others in the next band including my own institution. And many countries are looking to Australia and trying to understand the secrets of the success of Australian universities. Just this week alone at QUT, we had a visit from a leading Japanese university keen to learn about how we did things and how we're managing to improve. Earlier in the same conference this week at The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, the CEO referred to sector rates of progression and retention, noting that across the sector both the retention and progression are better on average for international students than domestic students. Depending on what happens with Brexit, an immigration policy in Britain, we could soon overtake the UK as the second most popular destination for overseas students.

Yet in the great Australia tradition, it feels like we're experiencing higher levels of attack for that success. And the commentary from both extremes of the political spectrum is reflecting a wider concern or a new round of even more strident xenophobia. In fact, when I was on one of those panels that you get asked to do from time to time last year, and I was asked to reflect on what I was most worried about, I replied at that time, which was early in 2018 that I was most worried about rising levels of xenophobia, but I thought given Australian's history that we might've learned something and that we might've seen something more subtle then we've seen in recent times. So I want to use this opportunity to reflect on the history and importance of international education to our economy, to the national research effort and perhaps to refute some of the claims that we've seen in recent media.

And finally to pose some issues that may actually be a greater risk to us both in the short and the long term. It's not a comprehensive picture and it's one where I'll use a number of examples, not just from QUT, but I've drawn from some of my former institutions as well. So when talking about national research and science policy, I routinely refer to the national research system as an ecosystem. It is in fact

a community of interacting organizations, individuals, complex set of individuals, governments, businesses, all of which interact and depend on each other and need to be sustained by that dependence and by investments in that success and renewal. I often use this analogy in the attempt to discourage any one part of the system to seek advantage over the other, especially when they're lobbying government. So it does no one any good if they go into the government and say that ARC is better than the CRC or the NHMRC, that the CSIRO should not be funded compared to universities.

Business needs more of the investment than universities and so on. Or indeed that engineers need more money than scientists. Perish, the thought. So I often use that as an example, but it also is critical, I think that ecosystems are fragile and they can be threatened by external threats or by lack of substance. And I fear that if we're not careful, that could happen to our highly successful international education system. The success of which must involve some level of risk just as any truly successful venture should and does, but we're at greater risk if we don't continue to support it. So I thought I'd start with some history. And this history affects some of my own personal journey and also some of my concerns about the current debate. So many of you will have driven past the university of Melbourne where I had the privilege of being the provost for just under six years.

The historical connections to the great institutions of Oxford and Cambridge are on display in the architecture of many fine residential colleges that that grace College Crescent. However a little further along Royal Parade, sits International House and a comment from former Vice Chancellor Kwong Lee Dow and former Dean of Education at Melbourne that in fact International House was the most Australian of colleges has always resonated with me. The residents of International House typically hail from over 40 countries with around 40% Australian nationals. The house was one of the first Melbourne to become co-educational and to achieve equal gender balance and it drew its residents from all levels of society. International house reflects the truth of the rich, diverse and largely migrant Australian society that we are. Fewer than 3% of our population can claim to trace their Australian heritage back further than 250 years.

Immigration has been growing since the postwar period and now we have at least 7.3 million people living in Australia or around 30% of our population born overseas. In contrast, at least up until the introduction of the new Melbourne model in 2008 many of the other colleges facing College Crescent drew from a more limited section of society, predominantly an Anglo Celtic, middle-class Melbourne and regional Victoria, and this was true of many similar institutions in other States. So given my own Anglo Celtic background, which is a little bit obvious from my appearance, and having been born in the 1960s into a middle class family where my father was an engineer and my mother was a nurse, it should have been the case that I would have been much more likely to feel comfortable in a college such as this in my father's Alma mater, the University of Sydney, except that when my parents returned to Sydney in 1967 following a period of service in the country and usually for their contemporaries, they didn't join their friends and family on the then white leafy North shore of Sydney.

Instead they built their home on the hill of a new housing estate that was surrounded by public housing to just a budding estate and it was a very short distance, less than a kilometer from what was then Sydney's newest Margaret hostel in South Coogee Endeavor Hostel. So many of my friends were in fact the children of post-war European migrants and my exposure to international education and the cultural understanding that comes from that commenced early as routinely students from Poland, South America or the former Yugoslavia would arrive in our classrooms often with little and no English. So when I finished high school, it was too late for my father to convince me I should go to Sydney University. So I followed my brothers and friends to the University of New South Wales. So in 1980 when I went to the University of New South Wales, both Sydney and New South Wales were home to around 18,000 students.

University of New South Wales had a few more, Sydney a few less. New South Wales natives made up the majority of each student cohort. The campus at UNSW was home to over 1600 international students and Sydney had fewer than 700. UNSW had actively sought out, encouraged international students at the time where as Sydney just found a few by accident. You were three times more likely to meet an international student than one from another state at UNSW when I was there and equally over that same period, the university of Sydney and Melbourne, this was true of Melbourne as well, tended to recruit their own alumni rather than... Because they had them to recruit. Whereas the newer institutions did not, so they had the opportunity to attract a vast array of international talent. Many universities in Australia benefited from the Colombo plan which brought many future leaders from Asia, from our region to study and I just included in this slide just a few examples of some of the outstanding UNSW staff who've contributed massively to our outcomes in science and engineering and commercially.

Michelle Simmons, Australian of the year in quantum computing from the UK. Zhengrong Shi , who was a PhD student with Martin Green from China. Veena from India working on incredible problems in waste and recycling. Rosa Mar from Indonesia and Christopher Barner-Kowollik from Germany, who I'm very happy about him coming to UNSW because then he went home to Germany and came back to QUT and we've just appointed him as our deputy vice chancellor of research. I could go on and cite many examples of Nobel laureates, prime ministers, prize winners, discovers of new drugs, all part of this amazing talent pool of scientists and engineers who've made their careers in Australia and contributed to our health and wellbeing. So despite that, however, and all that long standing evidence in favor of the benefits of transnational collaboration, public fear, particularly of Chinese influence on Australian research and universities has been stoked in recent months or recent years. And there've been a number of media reports of perceived threats to our education system to Australia because of the numbers of Chinese students in Australia and cybersecurity attacks and so on.

But I must mention, and I take Academy of Humanities former president John Fitzgerald, out of this comment because he has been a researcher on and lived in China for many years, but many of the other people that are making this commentary have either not had a very long career at all or are new to any real serious study of China. So it feels a bit like as a university vice chancellor in the current climate, not that I could play cricket as well as Steven Smith, but I feel like I'm being warned, the equivalent of being warned about the Pakistan bowling by a captain of the under sixteens and someone who's never played first-class cricket at all. And apologies to my international colleagues for that analogy, but it's a very Australian one. There's regularly a public commentary from a range of commentators, including Greg Melleuish from University of Wollongong who say Australian public universities should focus on Australia's interest.

I'll come back to Greg at the end and I'll address his comment at the end. It's worth noting that when I was CEO of the ARC eight years ago, China was our fifth biggest research partner. The partnership has now risen to fourth. China still sits behind the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany in the list of countries that are collaborating on ARC funded research projects. But given that China is the world's largest nation, the fastest emerging research power and the biggest industrial power in the Asia Pacific region, I think the threat is actually that it's in our interest and at risk if we're not encouraging Australia, China collaboration. And rather than that it occurs too often, it could be a risk if it occurred to rarely.

It's not only the higher education sector that's dependent on global talent. And if you read the report from Engineers Australia about engineers in Australia and where they come from, we're seeing a decline in Australian born engineers and to meet the needs of our businesses and economy, an increase in the number of engineers born overseas. And we could do this for a whole range of sectors.

So what are we doing about it? According to the press reports, we sit there doing nothing naively, but indeed most of us working in leadership or in fact all through higher education have always been involved in what is essentially an international endeavor. This slide just shows the publication pattern for QUT researchers in the institutions that we publish with, and I often use it to point out that our biggest publishing partner is UQ. So I like people to collaborate with them, but you can just see that the extensive range of networks in that diagram of the fast number of institutions and individuals that our researchers published with. Similarly, if you look at MIT and Harvard, if you put Melbourne and Monash up there, the pattern would be very similar.

Can I hold my hand on my hat and say that none of those publications are with an organization or being used for a purpose that may not always be in our interests? No, I can't, but that's the price of academic freedom and you can't realistically have a vibrant innovation and research system without that academic freedom. We are heavily regulated. In fact the defense trade controls act of 2012 which is work to prevent the transfer of sensitive materials to outside actors under this statute. We actually, Australian research is subject to more stringent regulations then our colleagues in the US and I think there's been one breach of that act reported in a recent review.

We also know that as that publications within international partners often have more impact and that those are more likely to occur where research interests with strong international connections and understanding are concentrated. And I've borrowed a slide from my dear colleague, professor Dough from Wollongong for the Institute for Civic Conducting and Electronic Materials and where he plotted the international collaboration of the institute and just pointed out just how many publications that are with co-authors from around the world and that the impact of those international collaborations has resulted in industry innovations, it's resulted in much higher impact publications and there's a great report. If you see Dough afterwards, I'm sure he'll share it with you. And I included this in particular because really my own understanding of China and the benefits of those collaborations and the nuances involved in who to collaborate with and which institutions we should collaborate with really began when he started to educate me when I was a new DVC researcher at the university of Wollongong. So I'm very grateful for that.

Another frequent commentary is that we're too dependent on fees from international students and the tone of that commentary is really well, like we're going out for money that we're spending as individuals, as vice chancellors and leaders. And it's true we are and not spending the money, but we do have a heavy dependence on international student fees, but also increasingly philanthropy and a whole range of other and national and international student contributions such that some institutions are only 30% funded by the Australian government. My own is closer to 40 and that we have relied on the revenue from students and elsewhere to fund capital development and a range of other needs that have made our universities infinitely better places for all our students, Australian and international. So a globally integrated Australian approach has been a key to the Australian university survival, I won't go through that. That just mentions... Just shows you where the breakdown is for QUT.

And indeed if we look at Australia's history and if you haven't read it, it's a great read, George Megalogenis published a book several years ago called Australia's Second Chance, where he goes through the history of the White Australia policy and immigration in Australia and points out that Australia is least productive and most divisive years have been those when migration was at its lowest ebb and that was in the early decades of the convict settlement and then in the half century long stagnation of white Australia from the 1890s until the end of the second world war, which really didn't... Either the policy was discontinued under Harold Holt, it didn't really start to take effect until the 70s. So we should be more worried about that I think than some of the other commentary.

So finally, what do I worry about? And it's not saying that I'm reckless in leading our institution, but there are a couple of other points that I would make, that do worry me. So it's not only state actors that often present threats and colonize or take over vast amounts of resources and the East India Company was an example of that in the days of the British Raj, but at the same time as I'm routinely told I need to take a burner phone if I go to China, I know that Google and Instagram and Uber, now absolutely everything almost that there is to know about me. In fact, I had a recent experience in Canberra when Uber popped up and suggested that they would like to pick me up at an address that I lived at before Uber existed.

I know that Instagram knows that I have a dog, that I like to shop for certain things. I won't tell you what they are, but usually fashion items, okay. Google knows where I parked my car, when I parked my car, what time I should get up, what time I should... No, no my iPhone tells me what time to get up. I'm sorry. And so I think we need to put this into perspective to some extent. And in fact my 26 year old daughter said, you know when you go to China mom, Google can't tell where you are so you're actually safer.

But what I do worry about is in fact, on a more serious note, that as a new resident in my adopted state of Queensland, another US owned corporation or owned in part by a US citizen, News Corp is essentially our only source of public media. So sky news is now provided free to air in regional areas. And most towns have a News Corp tabloid that even though nobody reads them, they sit with the headline in the front of every supermarket and every service station that you go into in Queensland. And these news outlets have relentlessly pushed an agenda that undermines science and undermines the scientists and the science of climate change. And that worries me a lot more than the potential that one or two of our publications might have benefited a different state. And whose interest that media is serving is... I'll leave it to your imagination or some of the photos that are there.

So finally I said I'd come back to Greg Malosh's argument that we don't spend enough time on Australian issues. And I think that's true and we haven't historically, but I don't think I'm talking about the same part of Australia that he has and where we have been deficient as is in our support and encouragement and the time and the amount of effort that we spend on research and education on issues that are of importance to the first Australians, the indigenous Australians. So we don't have enough indigenous academics in Australia. We don't have a very large STEM workforce despite them really being the first scientists.

And so QUT along with a number of institutions are investing heavily in supporting indigenous Australians in our recent blueprint which we released just this week, we have a very strong emphasis on indigenous research and education and indeed we're going to establish a new institute, the Carumba Institute, which means a special place in the Jajowrong language on the grounds of QUT, facing the Botanic gardens, which is a very significant site and that will be a location for the indigenous institute and also our law faculty and our school of justice because many of the issues facing indigenous Australians, particularly in urban populations such as we have in Southeast Queensland actually involve some form of interaction, not always positive with the justice system.

We also plan that the institute will offer a broader range of education programs so that all QUT graduates eventually leave QUT and go out into the real world with a much deeper understanding of Aboriginal culture and the issues facing indigenous Australians. So that's my only real plug for QUT. So I'm going to finish there and say we're not naive as institutional leaders. We do need to be aware of risks in various collaborations and so on. But the risks need to be balanced against an enormous strength that results from an international collaboration. And Australia has a wonderful opportunity to continue to build on that, but we need to be careful that we don't diminish that by being caught up in a geo-political battle that's not of our making, and that has the potential to do enormous damage if we're not careful.

So on that note, thank you very much for the invitation to speak, Margaret, and I'm sure you all look forward to the meal and the rest of the evening and congratulations to all the new fellows. Thank you.