

PRME SPEECH NOTES

Globally Responsible Education in Oceania

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It is an honour and a privilege to participate in this forum. As I begin I would like to acknowledge the collegial support of colleagues in Oceania, especially those at Griffiths Business School, The University of the South Pacific and Waikato Management School.

At Waikato we have begun a journey – a journey that parallels and is in step with the development of PRME. Progress has been made via: a commitment to global responsibility, the development of contextual confidence to address issues and the associated academic development. This journey has been motivated by the needs of our region and the world, our obligation to respond and the confidence we have that we can make a real difference. It has been a journey which is rewarding to both staff and students

We have begun to address the big issues. The challenge of climate change and associated interactions of business, science and policy; opportunities with indigenous people with interactions between culture, development and rights; and the reality of Asia in Oceania and Oceania in Asia. Again involving interactions of culture, commerce and policy.

We have changed our priorities. No longer is our focus academic excellence alone. Research led/practice relevant education does demand Corporate Social Responsibility. It also demands University Social Responsibility.

We have had to overcome obstacles. Our inherited intellectual heritage of “neutrality” and “academic freedom” can limit progress. Cynicism of business, government and other stakeholders can limit progress. “Messy problems” don’t fit neatly with academic disciplines but demand disciplinary expertise. Skill is necessary as well as good intentions. Empathetic academics are not always rigorous academics.

We have had to take ourselves back to School. Business School educators need to understand contemporary challenges. If we are to address global climate change we need to understand global climate change. If we are to engage with indigenous communities we need to be able to listen and talk with them. Business school educators need to understand wider policy discourse, not just business policy.

We have had to change our practices. Internally we have had to review all initiatives through a sustainability lens and review all opportunities through sustainability audits. We have had to nurture a culture of sustainability. Externally we have had to engage with our stakeholders – at times critically. We have learnt to engage with a wider set of institutions and we have learnt to more systematically engage with international agencies.

We have had to renew our curriculum. The curriculum across the board has required refurbishment. Foundational business education requires effective consideration of ethics, treaties and sustainability. Specialist disciplines require in depth consideration of new challenges. Challenging items are the business and economics of climate change and financial market regulation.

We have had to nurture our research programmes. We have allocated resources for sustainability research. We have engaged in diverse research programmes such as the business response to AIDS; and Maori, the Treaty, the environment and business. We have engaged in new ways with research partners

We have changed our thinking. We are no longer the distant professoriate. We are all students seeking to address the fundamental challenges of the age. Measures of graduation employment rates and academic publication rates are no longer the key measures of success.

Within Oceania many challenges remain. We need to sustain a culture of sustainability. The socialisation of academics is crucial. We need to keep pushing the boundaries of teaching, research and professional interaction and not be constrained by a narrow financial vision. We need to deepen our global connections to enrich relationships and facilitate knowledge flows.

We thank the United Nations, PRME and Emmanuel for their initiative. We anticipate ongoing investment. And as we invest we look forward to greater diversity within PRME with significant participation from Russia, The Middle East and Africa. We seek to see the PRME agenda effectively integrated in to the work of the European Academy for Business in Society (EABIS) and the Asia Pacific Academy for Business in Society (APABIS). We seek assistance as we wrestle with the challenges associated with the Head Offices of many businesses being outside our region. We look forward to greater attention to SMEs that are so important in our part of the globe and we look to complementary work – perhaps a PRLE- Principles of Responsible Labour Education.

Let us continue the journey together.

Thank you
