

Good morning Hon. Tony Abbott..... Academic staff, parents, friends, and esteemed colleagues;

My name is Jan Rusman,

I am a medical student of Notre Dame University.

On behalf of the inception cohort of medical students, I would personally like to welcome you. Welcome you, and thank-you all with as much joyous vigour as is afforded under such formal circumstances; not merely for your presence here today, but more importantly, to thank-you for your vision, your conviction and your persistence that has brought myself, and my fellow 80 colleagues from all over Australia, here to Fremantle for our medical training. We know you've had to fight to get us here, that the greater vision of providing doctors for Australia can be often confounded, muddled, and sidetracked. Lets face it - the new kid can be inconvenient. Existing institutions, and arrangements need to make accommodations, the whole exercise can be down-right awkward. But you were right in your greater vision. And I want to take this opportunity to thank-you for your persistence. Thank-you from all of us. We will make you proud.

Our medical training here is a post-graduate course. And so, all the students are older than perhaps you might expect. I'm 29. Until last year, I was a specialist engineer, working in optics, making robots move, and publishing the occasional patent that was going to make a few people rich. Patent Lawyers mostly. My working life was 9 to 5, fiddling in labs, and banging my head against a computer.

What a difference a year makes.

I'd like to introduce your 80 member, medical student body to you. I say 'yours', because it has become clear to me that in many ways, doctors belong to their communities. We range in age from 20 years old to our 50's. Our average age is 26. We all have previous degrees. Some of us have studied and practiced the fine arts of economics, nursing, accounting; we have worked, paid taxes, and some of us are even in the process of raising families. But we all, for a variety of reasons, suffer the insatiable, altruistic desire, to become doctors. And not just doctors, but the best doctors we can be.

And so, here we all are.

We are only 6 months into our medical degrees, but we have already spoken to patients, visited rural townships, given flu-vaccines, and begun serving our communities in a very personal and often intimate way. By simply being allowed to follow a doctor around at their surgery; to be allowed into peoples personal space in their times of pain, and concern is not just intellectually fascinating, it is a deeply human experience, something beautiful. It is the greatest privilege. We work long hours, we survive on coffee and casual wages when we aren't sleeping. Me? I get \$10 an hour driving a doctor on her house calls at 1am on a Saturday morning. But we are here, and we are loving it.

And now, because my mother always told me that if I were to speak, I should try to say something worthwhile, I would like to add one more thing.

Dear Hon. Tony Abbott.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank-you specifically for your support of Notre Dame, and more generally, the health community both here in Western Australia and nationally. Hon. Tony Abbott, I urge you to again reconsider boosting the FEE-HELP scheme to more adequately reflect the total financial burden of medical programmes upon the full-fee paying students..

Thank you Hon Tony Abbott,

and thank-you all

for all you have done so far.