

ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY PROFESSOR LYN PARKER, recipient,
Philippa Maddern Awards 2019

Thank you. It's an honour to receive this award. Philippa Maddern was one of my heroes, or rather heroines, and I am really chuffed to have been seen to follow in her footsteps in some way.

These are not easy times in which to be an academic. For me, the outstanding pressure has been time: I have felt time-poor for decades, and that meant I felt I could not do my work to the level I wanted. The pressures of work feel contradictory – one must be an excellent teacher, but also an excellent postgrad supervisor, researcher, grant applicant, advocate of discipline and university citizen. And there are broader “ought-tos”: one should “seek wisdom”, to borrow our University's excellent motto, one ought to fight for social justice, Indigenous rights, equality, safety and justice for women, and children, and for environmental sustainability, and fight against a host of social violences. And then there is the fabled “work-life balance” – I am told it is a thing, but I do not believe it. And that is why I am retiring next year.

The current dark times make it difficult to practise the values that I believe an academic should hold dear. Values of integrity, truth and of generosity... It's so hard to be generous with one's time and understanding when one has every minute of every day accounted for. And it certainly doesn't help that we waste so much time on meaningless administrivia – of wrestling with Concur, of learning yet another online learning system – Web CT, Moodle, or whatever it is this year - or of filling in forms in online systems that require a new format each year or that don't speak to one another – none of which goes any way towards guaranteeing true accountability, value for money or high quality education, as far as I can see. And such things usually eat away at the academic's flexibility, responsiveness, urge to care, and autonomy.

But I have been fortunate with my family, my colleagues, my students and the Indonesian community. My partner, Greg, was at least partly responsible for me taking up Anthropology; his modelling of intellectual curiosity, his impossibly high standard of writing, his empathy and kindness, integrity and understanding of what is truly important were important gifts. My daughters – here today – grandson and son-in-law, are very dear to me. They have kept me grounded – in earlier years, in understanding what is urgent for children and teenagers, in learning how impatient I can be! and more lately in helping me understand the

significant problems of disability and mental ill health. Their love and support are great treasures.

Asian Studies has been a lovely second home for me for the last 20+ years – including, of course, our wonderful colleague, Romit. As a junior academic I don't think I sufficiently realised the importance of great colleagues, but nowadays I think selection panels should pay great heed to the collegial qualities of job candidates. I see now how the virtues of colleagues rub off on one, and trigger further acts of kindness, thoughtfulness, inclusivity and generosity. Romit was an everyday practitioner of such virtues. I would also here like to mention two academics at ANU who were formative for me in different ways: the late Ian Proudfoot, a wonderful scholar who really cared, and Margaret Jolly, an inspirational feminist scholar.

It is gratifying nowadays, when I go to Indonesia: it seems I have a lovely former PhD student in every port. It is an honour to be invited to visit their homes and universities and help with their research and journal publications. It feels like I have a far-flung Indonesian family. Over the last 20 years, my PhD students have been a great and unexpected source of pleasure in being an academic – it's been wonderful to have been able to help them discover the world of scholarship and to make their own contribution. Many of them face challenges I never had to face: periods of unemployment, a university culture that does not foster a research culture, an atmosphere marked by the jealousy and apathy of fellow-staff members. I can only hope that they carry on the values I treasure – of intellectual curiosity and integrity, generosity, and kindness.

Finally, a note of thanks to the University that has been my home for the last 22 years. While many of us decry the increasing commodification of education, and the increasing managerialism and bureaucratisation of universities around the world, the University, as institution, is still a wonderful collection of clever and talented people, interacting and learning from each other, and developing and passing on their knowledge and understanding of our marvellous world. It's a unique and important civic institution, and it's been a privilege to have worked in one. Our particular University continues to provide a beautiful and historic place of learning, and in many ways I will be sorry to leave. Despite leaving, and despite the dark times, I hope we can all continue to nurture and practise its core virtue: to seek wisdom.