

**ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies**  
**Recognition of Excellence Ceremony**

**Monday 12 December 2022**

**Keynote Address**

**Roberta McRae OAM**

**BSSS Chair**

Minister Berry, Katy Haire, Ross Fox, Andrew Wrigley, Board members, Principals, Parents and Carers, and most importantly students.

Good morning and welcome to the 2022 BSSS Recognition of Excellence Ceremony.

Here we are at the end of 2022. Many of you will be looking forward to a well-earned break and opportunities in the new year. At the same time, you may also be reflecting on the changes that have occurred over recent years and what it means for the future.

2022 marks my fourth year as Chair of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies. It is an enormous privilege to work in partnership with Board members, principals, teachers, government and non-government sectors, universities, CIT, and industry to make a difference to the lives of students in ACT schools. I feel part of something unique and special – a system that is working in unison to enable all students to succeed.

This sense of shared responsibility and partnership was further demonstrated when we went through COVID. Being flexible and able to talk with schools about what they need to support students to maintain standards ensured continuity of teaching and learning.

Our productive partnerships are no accident. The premise of our system is that we trust teachers' professional judgement. Teachers play an integral part of the ACT senior secondary system story. They enjoy flexibility to address the needs of diverse learners. While there are common curriculum documents, teachers choose how the material is taught, and the focus of the material; for you receiving awards today, this means you have had an opportunity to study topics, events, movements, and texts that connect to your lives.

The BSSS leads quality assurance processes – Moderation Day and the Scaling Test to give the community confidence that teachers judgement meets BSSS standards. The Standard being a demonstration of critical and creative thinking, collaboration, deep engagement, and transfer of learning to new contexts. In the ACT, teachers are positioned to play a central role in upholding the BSSS Standard – locating them as key actors in the ACT senior secondary system story.

The emergence of an information and technologically rich global economy has changed the way we work and think. Education a generation ago was structured for simpler times. The scenario, admittedly a stereotype, whereby a teacher stood in front of a class and students sat and worked from a textbook was the standard opportunity to learn. We can no longer only work like that.

Today, education operates in a more complex world. Challenges that emerge from this complex world are clearly identified in Minister Berry's *Future of Education* strategy. The *Future of Education* tasks the BSSS to maintain equity, agency, access, and inclusion.

The Board is well placed to support equity, agency, access, and inclusion in ACT senior secondary education.

The purpose of the Board in a modern world is not only to maintain the Standard but also to ensure that all students can succeed. How we certify students can significantly enhance equity, agency, access, and inclusion.

Our non-competitive, respectful approach underlies the ACT education ethos of teachers and provides a model for life's challenges.

Our quality assurance processes are powerful levers that guarantee equity and access for all ACT students.

The ACT Senior Secondary Certificate places equal importance on multiple pathways including those for students seeking an ATAR for further tertiary education and students wishing to pursue a vocational qualification. Our curriculum makes provision for a range of pathways and is inclusive of all learners.

The ACT Senior Secondary Certificate is flexible, enabling students to construct a qualification that connects to their future. We hope that this model has provided you with a sense of ownership over their education. We hope that our world class curriculum has informed your decisions on where you want to go and that it has equipped you with skills to collaborate with others, listen to and act on feedback, and always do your best.

How can our certification process further enhance equity, agency, access, and inclusion?

This current world raises questions on the role and purpose of the Certificate and more broadly senior secondary education. We know that when students receive an ACT SSC it can make an enormous difference to outcomes in life.

We know that universities and industry look to young adults to have discipline-based knowledge, but also students who can demonstrate lifelong learning capabilities including critical and creative thinking, self-regulation, metacognition, deep engagement, and transfer of learning to new contexts. Recent social and economic change seems to suggest that a senior secondary certificate needs to be more than a ticket, rather it needs to genuinely say something about the student.

Many of you here today have demonstrated many of the capabilities I have mentioned. The Certificate must connect a student's learning to the future and present the individual student's capabilities as demonstrated through their senior secondary education.

To progress the conversation on equity, agency, access, and inclusion – we should consider a way forward that has the potential to communicate a broader picture of the what the student knows and can do. Together, we must ensure that the ACT Senior Secondary Certificate continues to serve all students.

The Board congratulates you, the graduates of 2022. This milestone is a great testament, not only to you and your families and carers, but also to the principals, teachers, and school administration that have supported you along the way.

Serving on the Board is a privileged opportunity to contribute and create better outcomes for schools and students. Members of the Board generously give their time and I thank them for their efforts and dedication. I would also like to specifically acknowledge the significant contribution of two Board members who have completed their terms on the Board. My sincere and genuine thanks to Lucy Marchant and Dr Louise Mayo AM for their work on the Board for the ACT senior secondary system.

I would also like to thank the BSSS Executive Director, Martin Watson, for his leadership and his team for their application and dedication to achieving the best outcomes for the System and students.

The support and positive working relationships with Katie Haire and the Education Directorate team (with special mention of Deb Efthymiades), Ross Fox and the Catholic sector, and Andrew Wrigley and Independent sector have once again been a hallmark of senior secondary education in the ACT.

Collaboration is a core value that we strive to achieve in all that we do. Schools and our community partners allowed us to accomplish all that we have this past year. We are proud to work alongside you and very grateful for your ongoing support, commitment, and engagement. Together we can and do create new opportunities for all students.

I wish you all well, and a safe and happy holiday season.

Thank you.