

**This is the transcript of a speech given by Mr Rob Campbell, Executive Director of Screentime Pty Ltd at the 2009 UWA Alumni reunion in Sydney**

Vice Chancellor, members of the alumni in this distinguished place and before this distinguished and doubtless occasionally critical company, it took me a while to come to a decision as to what to speak about tonight.

When Meredith Eddington rang and asked if I would do this gig (as we say in the entertainment industry) I went home and explained to my wife Denise that it has been suggested I only need to speak for five minutes, so far so good, and that I should include some anecdotes about the University Football Club and the social events surrounding the Economics and Commerce Faculty.

At this point the blood drained from Denise's face as she had visions of me reminiscing about various atrocities on University Football Club inter-varsities or the *Bulls and Bears* annual picnics. I hasten to add these so called atrocities are minor in today's terms, particularly when benchmarked against the professional winter football codes.

Brevity was again reinforced for me when I was reminded by Alan of the advice provided by an unnamed Vice Chancellor to a prospective orientation week speaker who advised: "Think of yourself as the body at an Irish wake. They need you to have the party but no one expects you to say very much."

It was getting a little clearer, no Football, no *Bulls and Bears* social events... so what about the subject of my four years at UWA – economics. I reflected on this for a while and then remembered the famous question posed by the American President Lyndon Johnson who asked: "Do you ever think that making a speech on economics is a little like urinating down your leg? It seems hot to you but never does to anyone else."

So, economics was off the list of songs.

The subject matter was narrowing and the blank screen on the laptop was getting blanker.

The script writing team at Screentime were consumed with the task of keeping us all out of gaol while they wrestled with the first drafts for the third series of the Underbelly franchise - the weekend press would seem to reinforce the need for great care in this regard - so they were of no help.

So eventually I thought the most instructive thing I could say in relation to UWA and my enjoyable time there was about the people.

But first let's paint a mental picture

- It is 1968, you're seventeen and bullet proof,
- Most of us rode a bike to Uni or borrowed our deeply anxious mother's car to get to the Crawley campus
- Five dollars a week was the comfortable allowance that provided for our every need
- Poseidon went from an issue price of a dollar to \$250 in a year
- The mature age law students were playing poker for thousands of dollars a hand from the dubious gains of share trading while the rest of us were vigorously trading penny dreadfuls on the advice of the groundsman at James Oval

Funny how some things change but not very much.

Oh and for those who were interested there was a war on... but it must be said not many were particularly interested, at least not until your marble was drawn out.

So what did the alchemy of this uncomplicated, some would say by today's terms, undemanding era at UWA produce?

Well a lot in people terms

- the twelfth Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia
- a leader of the Federal Opposition
- a Federal Treasurer
- four State Premiers
- two Chairmen of the big four Australian banks
- a brace of eminent surgeons, judges and businessmen
- and to the best of my knowledge not many recidivists to the convict ancestry

But rather than dwell on their positions in life or society it is always more interesting to see how the UWA alumni are drawn together.

Dr Peter Newman, the man best known as the coach of the victorious 1968 B Colts premiership team (and incidentally the man who introduced the notion of carbon neutrality for 46 cents a day), at a recent University Football Club reunion remarked how interesting it was to have two '68 teammates Michael Chaney and Rod Eddington sitting alongside him on a Federal Government Advisory Board, as they worked out the future requirements of the country's infrastructure requirements alongside the places environmental needs.

In a former life I had the real pleasure of working closely with Kim Beazley on quite important changes to the Broadcasting Services Act. No easy task for any of us with Kerry Packer, Frank Lowy, Alan Bond, Christopher Skase and the Fairfax family jealously guarding each last blade of their hard won and precious turf.

The common bond of UWA certainly made some vigorously held and diametrically opposed views get negotiated with good grace and often good humour. It certainly gave us a better starting point than trying to pretend how we missed the good old days of the Builders Labourers Federation on Melbourne building sites which was the starting point with a number of Kim Beazley's ministerial colleagues.

Let me digress for a moment at the risk of incurring the wrath of at least half the people in this room.

In Kim Beazley I saw someone who, in my view, had the highest of ideals and the most honourable of intentions of any politician I have come across. He is no doubt relishing life after politics. However, there are some of us who saw him close up, to this day, wonder what might have been had he ever got to The Lodge. I will forever believe he would have made a great PM who would have done a lot to heighten the standing of the national debate, particularly if someone early in his term hid the dictionary deep in the bowels of Parliament House.

Infrastructure, the environment and thwarted political careers aside, the UWA alumni for me is an important part of many aspects of my life.

Whilst I had the good fortune of marrying a Queenslander, have lived away from WA for 36 years, never practiced anything I learned and quickly forgot from my Economics degree, I happily bump into UWA staff, and more importantly, the alumni a lot.

For example two weekends ago in Canberra sitting alongside Alec O'Hallaran watching the Swans being lacerated by some team from Melbourne; in London twice a year over a meal with Richard Porter, Richard Parry and Geoff Laurent; following a godson's progress through UWA as his parents and our great friends had done 40 years ago; or simply marvelling at Cate Blanchett performing at the University as part of the Festival of Perth. It's a long way from lunchtime concerts by *Max Merritt and the Meteors* at the Octagon.

For me there are two tests in relation to UWA Alumni:

- If there's a graduate from UWA who comes through the door at Screentime looking for an opportunity, the other applicants could be Stephen Spielberg and Russell Crowe and they would come second and third respectively. I'm pleased to see a young UWA law graduate Robert Potter making his way in film production after a bit of uncharacteristically sound advice from Screentime,
- If I need to know something, or help someone find out something, or get to see someone, there will be a UWA graduate willing and able to help.

In short, I think the best way one can give something back to this great place is money certainly, but also a little well intended and well placed bias towards the alumni, particularly the recent graduates and via occasions such as this to ensure the maintenance of a current and lively network both professionally and personally.

When you look at this great Sydney Uni campus it makes you stop and think... great to live and work in Sydney but Crawley v Newtown? aged 18, the beers cold at Steve's and way back then it about 10 cents a glass, there's full employment and petrol is the equivalent of 8 cents a litre.

Yes we are lucky and remain lucky to be attached, however remotely or occasionally, to this institution and its alumni that has earned a special place in all our post graduate lives.

### **Screentime Pty Ltd**

Screentime Pty Ltd was established in May 1996 by Rob Campbell and Des Monaghan. It is a specialist independent television production company operating in Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. The company produces drama, reality, infotainment, entertainment, games shows, documentaries and children's television. The company has produced programs such as *Popstars* (seen in over 40 countries), *Stuart MacGill Uncorked*, *Underbelly* and *Underbelly: A Tale of Two Cities*, *The Society Murders*, *MDA*, *Mary Bryant*, *Jessica*, *My Husband My Killer* and *Project Greenlight*.