

**FLINDERS UNIVERSITY GRADUATION CEREMONY
11 MAY 2022 | OCCASIONAL ADDRESS**

Josh Cavallo in response to the presentation of an Honorary Award of Doctor of the University

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome to be here with you today.

I begin today by acknowledging the Kurna people, the traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today, and pay my respects to their Elders past and present.

A huge thank you to the wonderful Flinders University. I can't thank you enough for giving me this great honour. This honour means a lot to me. Thank you.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Chancellor – Mr Stephen Gerlach AM, Vice-Chancellor – Professor Colin Stirling, Deputy Vice-Chancellor – Professor Romy Lawson, Dean (People and Resources) – Professor Mary Katsikitis, University Council members, University staff, the family and friends of graduates and most especially you the graduates for this very great honour you give me today.

I would also like to thank my Adelaide United family, who are also with me today watching me receive this honour. As I've said previously, but want to say again, I wouldn't have been here today without their underlying support.

It's such an honour to be here with all of you — the graduates from the College of Education, Psychology and Social Work. How lucky am I to be in the same room today with a group of smart individuals and leaders who are going to help educate, shape and make the world a better place for the next generation.

Honestly, it's really strange for me to stand before you today and think I could impart any wisdom or advice to all of you because like many of you, at 22 I haven't been on this earth that long. Nevertheless, I'm going to do my best to share with you, what I have learned and the impact that all of us can make if we live our truth and our lives without fear.

This last year has been a very empowering and transformational journey for me to say the least. Last year, on October 27, my life changed in a major way when I came out publicly to my family, friends, coaches, teammates and frankly the world. Who would have thought the world would even pay attention to me coming out, but I guess this just explains why visibility matters for the LGBTQ+ community and the many that still live a life hiding in silence, especially in sports.

I don't like to show weakness, and that is why I took the courage to speak my truth and begin the journey of authenticity. Every time I take the field, I am proud of who I am and try to remind everyone that visibility and representation matters. I know Flinders University celebrates this and are proud of it. They share the same values

as me and the club I play for, and that is why it means so much more wearing the University's name on the front of my playing strip.

After coming out, not only has my playing career as a professional footballer benefited, but as a human I now feel like I can embrace all that life has to offer without hiding in the shadows. I can finally live my truth honestly and openly now. Never would I have thought that by coming out I would be able to make such a significant impact around the world for the sport that I love, while at the same time see my words and actions help change hearts and minds and experiencing in real time how meaningful my coming out has given hope to many, and in some cases truly helping to save lives.

As a professional athlete, I know all too well the hard work, commitment and sacrifice it takes to get to a winning place in life — a place where you are today. You should be commended for the bridges you have crossed and the challenges you have overcome. It shows the courage, fight, and resilience each one of you had to endure, even though you may have had days that seemed so dark and filled with grey skies. These are traits of a growth mindset. A winning mindset. Something that will be your best friend as you continue throughout your life of living your truth and making a positive impact in the lives of others.

You know, one of the things I was asked to speak about today was to impart some good advice or share some inspiring message as you begin a new chapter in your life. Well as I mentioned earlier, I'm just 22 and I'm not sure if I could share a lot of good wisdom or advice because like you, I'm beginning a new journey too.

But here is the advice I will give you today in hope that, maybe just maybe it will help you navigate this wonderful journey called life...

BE TRUE TO YOURSELF AND EVERYTHING WILL BE JUST FINE.

And here is my inspiring message for you...

CHOOSE LOVE, AND DON'T EVER LET FEAR TURN YOU AGAINST WHAT YOU KNOW IS RIGHT IN YOUR HEART.

In closing, CONGRATULATIONS fellow graduates! Best of luck to each, and every one of you. Go live your truth! And speak your truth out of love. Go out there and make life happen! SMASH IT!!!

Congratulations again, thank you, and love will always win.

11 May 2022