

# Message from the President and Vice-Chancellor

Professor Ian Jacobs

**Thursday 28 January**

Dear colleagues

2020 was a difficult year for all of us, requiring many, including me, to make difficult choices.

I am writing to let you know that I have made a difficult and emotional decision. After seven wonderful years at UNSW, I will step down from the role of Vice-Chancellor and return to the UK at the end of January 2022.

When I accepted the role of UNSW Vice-Chancellor, I explained to the Chancellor that as long as I was still wanted at UNSW the only reason for leaving would be pressing family issues. In 2019, my wife Chris and I became concerned about the health of our parents in the UK. We were able to manage the situation at that time because we were able to visit the UK several times a year and knew we could get back within 48 hours in an emergency.

Unfortunately, my Dad became ill and died in July 2020. Because of the pandemic I was unable to travel to the UK for his funeral and have been unable to spend time with my Mum and family over this difficult time. At the same time Chris' parents are also in need of increased support. These circumstances are similar to those experienced by millions during the last year and they inevitably lead to re-evaluation of longstanding plans.

After careful reflection I have concluded that I cannot reconcile the leadership needs of UNSW in Sydney with the level of support I want and need to provide to my mother in London at this stage in her life. I have therefore made the decision, to step down after the next academic year at the end of January 2022, so that Chris and I can be more accessible to our parents and family. I have informed the Chancellor and Council of this decision well in advance to allow ample time for the appointment of my successor. My heartfelt thanks to our Chancellor David Gonski for being so understanding about my decision and for his unfailing support, wise advice and friendship throughout my time at UNSW.

I have had an enormously fulfilling and memorable time at UNSW and I will always be grateful to the UNSW staff, students, leadership team, Council members, alumni and supporters who made me feel so welcome, have delivered such stellar work for the University and made the years so satisfying and successful. There is still more to do

to deliver Strategy 2025 but the achievements of our community are many and are captured in the latest Strategy 2025 progress update just circulated. I am especially proud of the progress we have made in equity and diversity, the partnerships we have nurtured and the array of successful educational and research initiatives that have led to UNSW's rising global reputation. Thank you to everyone who has worked so hard to deliver those achievements before and during the challenges of the pandemic.

During 2021 I will start to explore opportunities for the next phase in my career in a charity, NGO or public service role where I can feel the same passion that has motivated me at UNSW. I hope to find a role back in the UK which can utilise my experience in healthcare, research, higher education and leadership. I know that it will be almost impossible to find somewhere that combines the ethos, camaraderie, ambition and quality of UNSW.

My years as Vice-Chancellor at UNSW have been the most exciting years of my career, so I will leave a year from now with great sadness but also with deep gratitude for the opportunity I have had. Chris and I are now proud to be Australian citizens. We love this country and hope that we will be back to live here at some time in the future.

Colleagues, it has been and continues to be an extraordinary privilege to lead this great University and I assure you that I will give 100% of my energy to the role until my final day in post. I will then be a staunch supporter of UNSW, your ongoing work and the efforts of whoever is fortunate enough to secure the role of my successor as Vice-Chancellor.

Best wishes

Ian

**Professor Ian Jacobs  
President and Vice-Chancellor**

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