



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF NAVIGATING FAKE NEWS AND ALTERNATIVE FACTS

Kirsten Rose, Deputy Chief Executive, CSIRO

The Deputy Chief Executive of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Ms Kirsten Rose was the eminent speaker who presented the 2024 Modernian Oration. She spoke on the very current topic The art and science of navigating fake news and alternative facts.

Kirsten explained that although she worked at the CSIRO, she was not a scientist by training. She had studied art history and European history at university, subjects which gave her critical skills like analysing perspectives and questioning narratives. Both skills were relevant in her current role.

A strong point made by Kirsten in her half-hour delivery was that, 'Ultimately, curiosity and critical thinking are the tools that will help us navigate these challenges', and that, 'Being curious means going beyond what's presented at face value and asking: Where's the evidence? Who supports this? Why does it matter?' She challenged the students to 'Stay curious—but don't stop there. Use your curiosity to ask tough questions and actively combat misinformation.'

Kirsten ended her address with the advice, 'I know that your school motto means Knowledge is Power. I couldn't agree more, and my call to action for you is to use that power to help navigate the uncertainties of today and ask how we can build a better-informed society for tomorrow?'

The power of Kirsten's address provoked many questions from enthusiastic students the answers to which explored her topic more deeply.

The Oration was given in the Cyril Tyler Auditorium before an audience of Year 11 students, members of the Sphinx Society and their parents, Modernians and staff.

Kirsten took the opportunity to speak with individual students at morning tea which was served in the Sir Paul Hasluck Foyer. About to leave, three students cornered Kirsten with a final question, 'Why and how did an Arts person like you migrate across to Science?'

Kirsten sent a note to the Principal and Peter Farr with these gracious words:

I am so grateful for the opportunity to provide the oration and to meet the Modernians, members of the Sphinx Society and of course your phenomenal students. The students were absolutely fantastic, and their engagement and insightful questions were a testament to their interest and understanding of the topic. I flew to Canberra later in the week to front Senate Estimates — and I assure you, the questions from your students were more insightful and challenging than those from the Senators. Thank you again for the opportunity and please let me know if there's any way I — or CSIRO — can support the school in the future.



Kirsten Rose responding to questions moderated by the joint MCs

HISTORY

The tradition of the Annual Oration was inaugurated by the Hon. Justice Michael Kirby in 2011, and distinguished speakers since have included Modernians Janet Holmes à Court AC, Emeritus Professor Ross Garnaut AC, Elizabeth Gaines, Professor Shirley Randell AO, Professor Bruce Armstrong AM, His Excellency the Honourable Chris Dawson APM, and Eric McCrum OAM. It is organised each year by Modernian Fellow Peter Farr.



Pictured with Kirsten Rose (centre) and Principal Mitchell Mackay (second from left) are Modernians Peter Farr, Ruth Barrett and Hon. Julian Grill

REFLECTION

Since its official opening three years ago, the Cyril Tyler Auditorium has proven to be a winning venue for events such as this, with its splendid acoustics, comfortable seats, exceptional IT facilities and large stage, supported by the orchestra pit, foyer and green room.