**Speech by Australian High Commissioner
HE Geoff Tooth
at the Hot Sun Kibera School Graduation**

**Saturday 1 March 2014, Rowallan Camp, Nairobi**

As a film fan, a Kibera fan and a Hot Sun fan, I am delighted to be here today. But I am sorry it has taken four years - I have been invited before and sadly have been in one or another location elsewhere in East Africa at graduation time.

Ladies and gentlemen, graduates,

The Australian High Commission is proud of its long association with the Hot Sun Foundation, of the equipment we have provided and the collaborations we have had. We are particularly proud of the founders Nathan Collett – the prize winning filmmaker – and Pamela Collett. They first came to Kenya in 1997 in the company of James Lindsay, the then Deputy High Commissioner at my Mission and someone I have known and admired for many years.

There is much to admire about the Collett’s vision for Hot Sun. But perhaps above all for me is its inclusivity, its embracing of all no matter what their socio-economic or other background. So much talent is lost to this world because society has been unable to provide opportunities to use that talent and build on it through education and work experience. By embracing talent where-ever it can be found, Hot Sun is helping to build a bigger community of much needed creators in Kenya. You graduates may not stay in the film sector, but I’m sure your experience with Hot Sun will make you more valuable and innovative contributors to what ever projects, what-ever careers you engage in.

Ladies and gentlemen, graduates

The future of Australia’s involvement with Hot Sun is rosey. We are very excited that in late March the famous Tropfest film festival is going to make its first appearance in Kenya. Hot Sun will be an important part of that visit. Tropfest is the world’s largest short-term festival. It is also widely recognised as the world’s first truly global film festival seen live in Australian cities and by satellite, television and webcast to 100,000s of others.

There is now a Tropfest South East Asia, Tropfest New Zealand and Tropfest USA. And now it is coming to Africa and Kenya for the first time.

I hope all of you here today will all be able to see some of the films from the 2014 Tropfest and meet one of the creative team behind it. I hope you will learn about how the festival encourages new film, helps establish careers and provides an outlet for creativity in film.

Appropriately the theme for this year’s Tropfest is change.

Film can change the world in important ways. The images it contains, the stories it tells in words and action has become a vital part of the development process. And you are in part of the world that is full of stories, stories of growth, of social injustice and its victims, of heroes driving change. Last year the Economist magazine described Kibera as possibly the most entrepreneurial place on earth. There are many stories here that can inspire and help lift thousands of people out of poverty and into more productive and full lives.

Graduates … you can be part of this change story, you can bring about positive change. If I have one lesson for you from what I have seen and experienced in my 50 years on the planet it is not to fear failure. Creators make mistakes, but they learn from their mistakes, they take risks to break through seemingly insurmountable walls and barriers. Creativity most often comes from those not afraid to fail, not afraid to let go of certainties, not afraid to trust their instincts, not afraid to look at things in new ways.

Look to build on this start. Look to enhance the skills you have learned. Look for opportunities to try new things. And above all never stop learning from your surroundings, and from those who have gone before you whether they be the alumni of graduates you have now joined or the great Hollywood, Bollywood and Nollywood directors or those that are making the Kenyan film and media scene so innovative and vital.

Ladies and gentlemen, graduates

Let me finish there. My congratulations again to Nathan, Pamela and James, my congratulations to all those involved in the organisation of today and above all my congratulations to all those graduating today. Well done but this is just the start for you. You are at the very beginning of your relationship with the creative process. I wish you all luck and exciting times ahead as you join the ranks of those using this wonderful medium to be creative, have fun and change society for the better.