

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you for the award of Doctor of Arts, Honoris Causa, Judith Ann Weepers, teacher and musical event producer.

The award honours great achievement in the musical development of Northern Territory children through a notable contribution to music education in schools and the innovative and creative Beat productions.

Judy Weepers was born at Gawler in South Australia in the early years of World War Two. She went to school at Eudunda, where she displayed outstanding ability as a singer after having made her first solo appearance at the age of five. Her talent was nurtured at school and she was encouraged to undertake singing training at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in Adelaide. Judy first went to work to earn the fees and then proceeded to the Conservatorium to study part time

She joined the Glenlea Singers, a group which sang for radio shows and for live television appearances in programs which included In Adelaide Tonight. Before completion of her course at the Conservatorium she met and then married Ron Weepers. Soon after, Ron was transferred to Darwin to work and Judy came with him, arriving in January 1963.

Judy greatly regretted that circumstances had obliged her to give up her formal musical studies at the Conservatorium. However, she recognised the music that had given her great pleasure had enriched her life. She resolved to do her best to help others to gain some of those same benefits from music.

Her first contributions to music in Darwin were through the Darwin Amateur Musical Comedy Society. Between 1963 and 1974 she appeared in leading roles in sixteen Society productions. These presentations were invaluable in offering entertainment alternatives to Darwin people at a time when such alternatives were badly needed. Cyclone Tracy terminated the activities of the Society.

Judy's children Greg and Jayne were born in 1965 and 1968. Judy began her long association with children's music in Darwin in 1971, when Greg was in his first year at Parap Infant School. Judy produced a concert for the school and then she continued working for the Parap Infant and Primary schools on a voluntary basis until 1974.

Judy's musical talents, organisational abilities and commitment to working with children came to the notice of the Department of Education, which retained her as Music Instructor to work for

the department to create and foster an interest in singing among school students. For the next thirty years she taught not less than 500 children in her average working week.

Late in 1974 she produced a Christmas concert which involved children from six schools in a performance at the Darwin United Church. She continued this work in following years. In 1979 she trained 300 children from ten schools to create the Education Department's choral tribute to International Year of the Child.

The success of this event led Judy to conceive 'The Beat', an event that quickly became a Darwin institution. Originally called The Beat of Our Arts, The Beat brings together hundreds of students from many schools in a combined performance which is a total artistic expression of the singing, instrumental, dance and performing arts talents in our schools.

As Choral Director for the Beat from 1979 to 2006, and Artistic Director from 2000 to 2006, Judy has worked with two generations of Beat participants - the children of some of the performers of the early years have been in her more recent groups. From 1979 until her retirement at the end of 2006, Judy would visit schools in the early months of each school year. She would identify children who were keen to participate, then she would establish and train school choirs.

Then the repertoire for the annual Beat production would emerge and children would be brought together for combined rehearsals. The eventual productions, at the Gardens Amphitheatre, would involve the voices of as many as a thousand children, delivering presentations which were enthusiastically received by huge audiences.

A large part of the success of The Beat has been due to Judy's discerning choice of music and songs suitable for the children involved, and to her writing of linking dialogue to ensure a coherent dramatic presentation.

In addition to her work for The Beat, Judy has worked with other school choral groups, particularly to achieve concert and graduation night performances. It is estimated that she has through all these activities nurtured the musical development of not less than 30,000 young Territorians.

These achievements, sustained over a period of more than thirty years, have required total commitment as well as musical ability unflagging enthusiasm and creativity. Judy has these qualities in abundance. Although she recently retired from her formal work with the Education Department, Judy remains committed to children everywhere and her contribution continues.

In all her work, Judy's purpose has been to nurture the personal development of children by the enrichment of their abilities to express themselves through music and performance. She has inspired children and she has inspired her colleagues. Her success has made the Territory a better place and added to the creative environment and outcomes in the Northern Territory. For that we thank her.

Chancellor

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the musical education of Northern Territory children in particular, and to her general contribution to the cultural development of the whole community, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Arts, Honoris Causa – Judith Ann Weepers.