

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you for the award of the degree of Doctor of Economics, Honoris Causa, Dr Neil Raymond Conn, Officer of the Order of Australia.

Dr. Conn was born in Sydney in 1936. He attended several schools in northern and western New South Wales before studying at the University of Sydney, from which he received, firstly, a Bachelor of Economics degree, with first class Honours in Economic Statistics, and then the degree of Master of Economics.

Between 1961 and 1975 he lectured in Economics at the University of Sydney. During this period his talents were recognised and sought by external organisations, and he was seconded for a total of two years' service in the Commonwealth Treasury and the Commonwealth Department of Secondary Industry. He also spent one year as the James B. Duke Fellow at Duke University in the United States, where he won his Doctorate in Economics, and gained membership of the elite academic society Phi Beta Kappa.

Dr. Conn left academia in 1975, to work for two years as Principal Administrator, Growth Studies Division, at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris. In this role he significantly increased the profile of Australia and Australians in the context of discussions and decisions about international economic affairs.

He returned to Sydney to become Deputy Secretary of the New South Wales Treasury for several years. In 1981 he came to the Northern Territory to become our Under Treasurer. He held that position until 1983, when he went back to Sydney to work for a Canadian owned merchant bank.

However, he returned to the Territory in 1986 to lead the government's Railway Executive Group, a body that was charged with developing and proving the technical and financial feasibility of the Darwin to Alice Springs railway. The Group thus carried the responsibility for charting the path toward practical achievement of a project, which had been dreamed about for more than a century, but had been tantalisingly elusive.

On successful completion of the Railway Executive Group's work, Dr. Conn was again appointed the Northern Territory's Under Treasurer. He held this position until 1996, and thus for a total of twelve years. In the process, he became the longest serving chief executive in the Northern Territory, and by far the longest serving head of any Australian Treasury.

During his terms as Under Treasurer, Dr. Conn served on a number of other government bodies, including the Treasury Corporation, the Territory Insurance Office, the Palmerston

Development Authority, and the Australian Statistics Advisory Council. His connection with the railway project continued through his directorship of Railnorth, and chairmanship of the Railway Executive Group.

He was a vigorous proponent of reform in the areas of budgetary and accounting processes, and was responsible for the conceptual development and the drafting of the Northern Territory Financial Management Act 1995, a keystone of the Territory's financial and administrative mechanisms. He was thus the central figure in the achievement of the Territory's financial maturity and stability, and in securing external recognition for that.

Dr. Conn's outstanding public service was acknowledged in 1996, when he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia, for "public service as Under-Treasurer of the Northern Territory, and to the community".

That service to the community included membership of the Council of this University from its inception. His counsel was invaluable during the University's formative years. He was also a Director of the Darwin Performing Arts Centre, and chairman of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra.

On 17 February 1997 Dr Conn was appointed the sixteenth Administrator of the Northern Territory. He filled this position with distinction and commitment through until the end of 2000.

The Northern Territory has had many notable Government Residents and Administrators, but the term of Dr. Conn at Government House will always stand out because of the initiatives he took to demystify the position of Administrator, and to welcome the general community to the Territory's most historic and important building.

His projection of the Northern Territory in Asia brought another new dimension to the offices he held. Dr Conn learnt Indonesian, and used this language during his travels through Asia to promote the Territory.

Somehow, he also found time while at Government House to accept the patronage of more than 75 organisations. These were no mere sinecures – Dr. Conn took a practical interest in each of these organisations, and always strove to encourage any activity which would make the Territory a better place.

Late last year, Dr. Conn returned to Sydney to live. However, his commitment to the Territory continues and we are gratified that he is regularly seen here in connection with his continuing business and community associations.

Chancellor,

In recognition of his outstanding service to the Northern Territory, in acknowledgment of the leadership and dedication shown in his many public roles in the Territory, in gratitude for his

contribution to the economic and financial administration of the Territory, in acknowledging his contribution to the foundation and growth of this University, I present to you for admission to the Degree of Doctor of Economics, Honoris Causa - Neil Raymond Conn.