AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF ENGINEERING

DR PETER GEORGE THORNE

Dr Peter Thorne has over 40 years of valuable contribution to the computing field both within the University of Melbourne and in the broader community.

Peter was born in England, and moved to Australia as a child. He grew up in the country, and started a BSc in the late 1950's after moving to Melbourne. As a student in Physics, he was introduced to CSIRAC, the first computer in Australia, and was captivated. He was soon recruited to provide technical support on the computer on weekends. Peter stayed on to do a PhD in Physics on the topic of amplitude switched subharmonic circuits and their application to computer storage systems. The degree was awarded in 1967, and was arguably the first thesis on computer engineering in Australia, before the field was recognised.

Dr Thorne was appointed a Senior Lecturer in the University of Melbourne in 1968 and an Associate Professor in 1986. Over the years, he taught classes in a wide range of subjects from Programming to Intellectual Property and from Digital Logic to Computer Forensics. He taught in the Faculties of Engineering, Science, Education, Arts, Law, Architecture, and the Melbourne Business School. He spent 1968 and 1969 seconded half time as a staff member in the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University, where he had a particular responsibility for the development of computer based education at the University. Thereafter he played a leading role in the development of the use of computers for teaching. In 1975 he developed a new course on the social issues of computing, since extended to include business and ethical issues. Other universities have followed the lead of Melbourne and such subjects are required in most IT courses. In 1997 he introduced a graduate course in Computer Forensics, another pioneering step.

Peter's skills were acknowledged in his leadership in policy development when he was appointed Chair of the Computer Education Technology Committee for the Victoria Institute of Colleges (1975-1978), where he was responsible for the development of policy and the initiation and conduct of a major project to develop computer based education for electrical engineering education. During the 1980s he was instrumental in the instigation and development of projects in the field of computer based education in tertiary institutes, TAFE and the Victorian prisons system. He provided strategic advice on the planning, acquisition and development of IT systems to numerous Commonwealth, State and local government agencies, most significantly the Australian Tax Office.

Peter has been a leader in the discipline of Computing. He served as Deputy Head of the Department of Computer Science through most of the 1980's. Peter took over as Head of Department in 1990 and served the Department well in that role until the end of 1996. In 1997 and 1998 he served as Deputy Dean of the faculty of Engineering.

Peter's research was originally related to computer hardware. He took an increasing interest in policy issues, and more recently in computer security. He founded a Computer Forensics lab within the Department in cooperation with the Victoria police. He is a well known consultant on legal issues in computing, and has served as an expert witness in many important cases. Another important area that Peter has pioneered is in the history of computing. He was responsible for convening a colloquium on the early days of computing, which led to the refurbishment of CSIRAC, the oldest intact first generation computer, now proudly displayed in the Museum of Victoria. The importance and prominence of Australia's computing history would not have happened without Peter's invaluable contributions. He edited 'The Last of the First', a collection of articles about Australia's oldest computers and he is a Board member of the Museum of Victoria.

He retired from the University at the end of 2000 to continue his career in consulting.