

Richard Arthur Woolcott

Richard Woolcott's breadth of diplomatic service is without parallel in Australia – it is aptly characterised in one colleague's description of him as 'diplomatic adviser to every Prime Minister since Sir Robert Menzies.

The young Richard Woolcott became a member of the Australian Diplomatic Service shortly after completing his Arts degree at the University of Melbourne. He rose to hold senior positions in Australia's High Commissions in Malaysia, Ghana and Singapore, and to be appointed as Australia's ambassador to Indonesia and to The Philippines. He has been described as one of the architects of Australia's transformed relationship with Indonesia and has since been awarded the Mahaputra Utama Star by the Indonesian Government, in recognition of his service to Indonesian-Australian relations. He was the Australian Ambassador to the United Nations from 1982 to 1988, and served as the President of the UN Security Council in 1985.

In 1988 Richard Woolcott took office as the sixteenth secretary of Australia's foreign policy department since its establishment as the Department of External Affairs in 1901. His appointment, however, was as Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), an amalgamation of two previously separate departments which had taken some pride in their differing cultures. The creation of a successful entity from this initially uneasy merger was a significant achievement in rationalising the international affairs activities of the Australian Public Service.

Richard Woolcott led DFAT over a period which coincided with many dramatic developments in world affairs. He made a direct personal contribution to the maturing of Australia's role in international affairs, through his negotiations to transform the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation from a glint in his Prime Minister's eye to an effective forum of 21 countries. (Its members now represent around 40% of the world's population, and a somewhat larger proportion of world trade.) While his formal public service career concluded in 1992, he has continued to serve Australian governments (and Prime Ministers) whenever called upon. In 2008 he was appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy to develop an Asia Pacific community concept.

Since 1997 he has also been the Founding Director of the Asia Society AustralAsia Centre, a membership-based organisation which aims to increase business and community leaders' understanding of, and involvement in, Asian affairs. He is the author of two books, *The Hot Seat: Reflections on Diplomacy from Stalin's Death to the Bali Bombings* (2003) and *Undiplomatic Activities* (2007). He is a Fellow of Trinity College and was awarded the Asialink Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop Medal in 2008.

For his services as a diplomatic representative Richard Woolcott was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1985, and in 1993 he was appointed a Companion of the Order in recognition of his services to international relations and Asia Pacific economic cooperation. In July 2008, he was selected as one of the inaugural fellows of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, chosen for their very high-level and distinguished contributions to Australia's international affairs.

In view of his eminent public service, The University of Melbourne has pleasure in admitting its distinguished alumnus, Richard Arthur Woolcott, to the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.