

AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS

PROFESSOR CHRISTOPHER WALLACE-CRABBE

Chris Wallace-Crabbe has a distinguished career as poet, essayist, literary critic, teacher, cultural ambassador and advocate for the humanities and creative arts. Educated at Scotch College and the University of Melbourne, he completed his B.A. in 1956 and a M.A. in 1964. He was Lockie Fellow in Australian Literature and Creative Writing with the Department of English at the University of Melbourne from 1961 to 1963. After various subsequent appointments, he served as Head of the Department of English from 1974 to 1976 and 1984 to 1985, and was promoted to Reader in 1977. In 1987 he was appointed to a Personal Chair, and since 1998 has been Professor Emeritus in The Australian Centre.

Wallace-Crabbe's first volume of poetry, *The Music of Division*, appeared in 1959. Since that time, he has published a novel, *Splinters* (1981), and a further fifteen volumes of poetry: This major body of work has earned Wallace-Crabbe an international reputation as one of Australia's most important poets.

His achievements as creative writer are complemented by his work as a literary and cultural critic, whose chief preoccupations include questions of the possibilities opened by, and the limits of, modern poetry, contemporary culture and language. He has published six volumes of literary criticism. He has also edited or co-edited twelve volumes on topics ranging from contemporary poetry to multicultural Australia. He was the general editor of the Oxford *Australian Writers* series (1990-96), associate editor of *The Oxford Literary History of Australia* (1998) and author (with the painter Bruno Leti) of a series of eight Artist's books.

In 1989 Wallace-Crabbe became the Foundation Director of the University's Australian Centre. With the late Dinny O'Hearn, he created a framework for interdisciplinary studies of Australia's unique (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) cultures and of their place in international contexts. The Centre offered Wallace-Crabbe an important opportunity to act as a cultural ambassador, interpreting Australian culture to international audiences. Complementing his work with the Australian Centre, he has travelled on behalf of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, or on behalf of the Australian Council, to Venice, New Delhi, Trivandrum, Tokyo, Jakarta, Toulouse, Moscow and St Petersburg.

Wallace-Crabbe is a gifted and innovative teacher, often at the forefront of developments. He was one of the first Australian writers to teach creative writing in a university context and amongst the first scholars to give serious attention to Australian literature. His teaching has been marked by a combination of wide and deep learning. There has been an ongoing exchange between the creativity of his writing and that of his teaching. He has brought to bear, in the classroom as on the page, an attention both to the distinctive qualities of Australian writing and those of an array of other countries and cultures.

Wallace-Crabbe's achievements have been recognised by prestigious prizes, medals and visiting fellowships. He was Harkness Fellow at Yale University (1965-67), visiting fellow at the University of Exeter (1973), and visiting Professor at the University of Venice (1973 and 2005). He was appointed to the Harvard Chair of Visiting Professor of Australian Studies for 1987-88. Other honours include the Grace Leven Prize for Poetry (1992), the Dublin Prize for the Arts and Sciences (1987), the Human Rights Award for Poetry (1992), the D.J. O'Hearn Prize for Poetry (1992), *The Age* award for Book of the Year (1995), the Philip Hodgins Memorial Medal (2002) and the Centenary Medal (2003). In 1984 he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

In recognition of Professor Wallace-Crabbe's substantial contribution to creative writing, literary studies, and the humanities, Professor Wallace-Crabbe is a very worthy recipient of the degree of Doctor of Letters.