

Citation for Honorary Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*)

Emeritus Professor John Alexander McKenzie, BSc La Trobe PhD La Trobe FAA

Professor John McKenzie has left an indelible mark on the University of Melbourne. He is 'The Complete Academic', someone who over his career has demonstrated brilliant qualities in every area - leadership, research, teaching, interaction with industry and the community, and in mentoring the next generation of scientists, teachers and research supervisors.

After secondary education at Ivanhoe Grammar School, John graduated with an honours Science degree, receiving the DM Myers Medal from La Trobe University in 1970. He obtained a PhD from La Trobe for studies on ecological genetics in 1974, and undertook postdoctoral research in the Research School of Biological Sciences of the Australian National University. In 1977, after lecturing at La Trobe, he joined the University of Melbourne to work on the evolution of insecticide resistance, beginning an association with the University spanning more than 30 years. John became Head of the Department of Genetics in 1981. He was awarded a Personal Chair in 1993 and served as Dean of the Faculty of Science from 1998 until his appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) in 2006.

In each of these roles John's integrity, leadership and unstinting application to the task at hand earned him the deep respect of his colleagues. Students and staff across this University have been touched by his influence, directly or through his quiet but determined contribution to the fabric and ethics of Melbourne.

In 1998 John was asked to take on the Deanship of the Faculty of Science, following a Review that highlighted serious difficulties within the Faculty and the need for focused leadership. At the time Professor McKenzie was enjoying research life and pursuing his great love - supervising honours and graduate students. Persuaded reluctantly to become Dean, he led the Faculty's transformation into the leading Science faculty in Australia, all in remarkably short time.

John pursued a clear vision for the Faculty, insisting the BSc remain a broad generalist degree providing training for scientists in many disciplines, but with the most rigorous pre-requisites anywhere in Australia to ensure quality. Through his collegial, selfless and straightforward style he managed to bring together not just Faculty departments but numerous academic units beyond the Faculty to add real substance to Science@Melbourne.

It was an approach which also enabled him to play a pivotal role as a member of the initial Management Committee of the Bio 21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute. By securing the agreement of faculties to the new arrangements for the Bio21 Institute, John McKenzie fostered interdisciplinary research within the Science Faculty and across the University.

In 2004, John was appointed as Assistant Vice-Chancellor, to work with then Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor Frank Larkins on a review of the University's research performance. As DVC Research since 2006, and particularly as chair of the Research Quality Taskforce, John has continued this work to measure research performance, developing detailed metrics and planning for continuing improvement.

Contemporaneously with his management roles, John has managed to maintain an active research program. He received continuous ARC and industry support from 1977-2006. He has published extensively, particularly on issues related to insecticidal and genetic control of sheep blowfly and insecticide resistance.

John's influence in the University extends far beyond the research sphere. His clarity of thought, ability to discern the critical issues and to set strategic priorities has seen his talents in demand across the institution. Throughout his association with the University John has shown an extraordinary level of commitment. He has served on a daunting number of University committees encompassing areas from Teaching and Learning Quality Assurance to Human Resources Management, Planning & Budget Committee and various Senior Executive Committees. He is a Board member of a number of organisations including the Howard Florey Institute, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and Bio21 Australia.

Widely respected for his mentoring of staff and students within the University, John has demonstrated his passion for science education in many roles outside the campus. He has served as judge for the BHP Science Teachers Awards, for the Young Australian of the Year Award, and as a member of the VCE Biology Examiners Panel.

In 2003 he was involved in the development and launch of Primary Connections - a professional learning program for primary school teachers supported by quality curriculum resources that links literacy and science. Primary Connections has now become part of the Education Strategy in most states.

John is a past President of the Genetics Society of Australia, a member of the American Society of Naturalists and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. His outstanding contribution was recognised with the award of a Centenary Medal in 2003.

The achievements of John McKenzie reflect more than three decades of dedication to the University of Melbourne – and a lifetime of commitment to science.