

AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS

SIR WILLIAM DEANE

William Deane was born in Melbourne in 1931, and received a Catholic education in Canberra and Sydney, before commencing tertiary study at the University of Sydney. He graduated BA and LLB from that institution, before going on to postgraduate study at Trinity College, Dublin and the Hague Academy of International Law in the Netherlands, graduating *summa cum laude* with a Diploma in International Law from the latter.

After brief employment as a solicitor at a leading Sydney firm, he was called to the New South Wales Bar in 1957, and appointed Queen's Counsel in 1966. He was first appointed to judicial office as a Judge in Equity of the Supreme Court of New South Wales in 1977, and later served as a Judge of the Federal Court of Australia and President of the Australian Trade Practices Tribunal.

Sir William was elevated to the bench of the High Court of Australia by the Fraser Government in 1982. In that year he was also made a Knight of the British Empire, and in 1988 was made a Companion of the Order of Australia.

He has been described as a leading member of the High Court under Sir Anthony Mason's chief justiceship. In his long and distinguished judicial career, Sir William delivered many important and still-quoted judgments across the diverse range of areas of the law which comprise the High Court's responsibility. Perhaps none was more notable than the compassionate, well-reasoned and much-respected joint judgment that he co-authored with Justice Mary Gaudron in the *Mabo* case, in which their Honours described the dispossession of indigenous peoples as 'the darkest aspect of the history of this nation'.

Sir William stepped down from the High Court bench in 1995 to serve as the Commonwealth of Australia's 22nd Governor-General. As Governor-General, he not only ably fulfilled his constitutional functions as the Queen's Australian representative, but arguably transformed the office like no other viceroy before him, believing firmly that in the discharge of his duties he should attempt to unite the nation and give expression to its essential values. Sir William's tenure as Governor-General, which continued until his retirement in June 2001, will be especially remembered for his passionate advocacy on behalf of marginalised groups in Australian society, his ceaseless endeavours in furtherance of the cause of reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, and his and Lady Deane's unstinting commitment to a vast array of charitable institutions, a support that continues to this day.

Sir William is indeed a person distinguished by eminent public service to the Australian nation.