

Citation for the Award of Doctor of Science (honoris causa) to Professor Edwina Cornish AO, FTSE

Professor Edwina Cornish is nominated for the award of Doctor of Science (honoris causa) for her exceptional contributions to molecular biology and genetics, her pioneering work in the field of commercial biotechnology and her highly distinguished academic leadership.

After obtaining a PhD for her molecular microbiology research in the Microbiology and Biochemistry Departments of the University of Melbourne, Edwina Cornish took up a post-doctoral position with Professor Adrienne Clarke in the University's School of Botany, where her major contributions to defining the genetic and molecular mechanisms of self-incompatibility in flowering plants led to a number of high impact publications. In 1988 she joined the newly established plant biotechnology company, Calgene Pacific (later Florigene), playing a prominent role in developing the company through various leadership positions. During this time, she was responsible for developing and commercialising the world's first genetically modified flowers. Her leadership established global research and development and marketing operations in the biotechnology industry which significantly enhanced Australia's expertise in the commercialisation of science.

In 2000 Edwina Cornish was recruited to the University of Adelaide as Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (DVCR) where she was instrumental in increasing the competitive research funding for the university and the establishment of a number of research centres, leading to a rapid improvement of the university's research performance. Then from 2004, over a period of twelve years as DVCR at Monash University, she oversaw a dramatic increase in NHMRC and ARC grant funding, the expansion of research activities and facilities across science, medicine, nanotechnology, engineering and climate science and the establishment of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory Australia headquarters at Monash. Her impact is reflected by the dramatic rise in the university's Academic Ranking of World Universities rankings from outside 200 to within the top 100, an improvement in rankings based primarily on research outcomes. Her outstanding leadership was recognised in 2012 with her appointment as inaugural Provost and Senior Vice-President at Monash, a position she held until retirement.

Edwina Cornish has made a number of valuable and distinguished contributions to the governance of community and government organisations including Museums Victoria, the Australian Biotechnology Association, the Australian Research Council, Forestry Tasmania, the South Australian Innovation, Science and Technology Council, the Victorian Government Science and Engineering Technology Taskforce, and the Prime Minister's Science and Engineering Council. She has made similar contributions on an international scale to the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre and the International Society for Plant Molecular Biology and continues to serve the community in governance roles with the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and La Trobe University.

Awards and honors which readily attest to the community's appreciation of Edwina Cornish's scientific and leadership contributions, include her appointment as Officer of the Order of Australia, the award of the Centenary Medal and her induction into the Victorian Honor Roll of Women. Her generous contributions to this University include spending time with students and early career researchers and providing welcome advice on engaging industry and government stakeholders.

Professor Edwina Cornish is recommended for the award of Doctor of Science (honoris causa) for her exceptional contributions to the advancement of science and biotechnology in Australia, for fostering important partnerships with government, industry and the community and for outstanding leadership in the Australian higher education sector.