

## **SIR WILLIAM DEANE**

### **Citation for the Conferral of Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*)**

William Patrick Deane was born in St. Kilda, Melbourne in 1931. He was educated at St Christopher's Convent in Canberra; St Joseph's College in Sydney; and the University of Sydney, where he graduated in arts and law and shared the University Medal with a fellow graduate. He worked for nine months with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in Canberra before travelling to Europe to undertake postgraduate study. He studied international law and was awarded the Diploma of The Hague Academy of International Law in 1955, the first non-European to graduate *summa cum laude*. He also spent time at Trinity College in Dublin; Lund University in Sweden; Louvain University in Belgium; and Paris University.

After his return to Australia, Sir William worked for a period with the Sydney firm of Minter Simpson and Co., and was called to the bar in 1957 when he was just 26 years old. During 1956 and 1957, he was acting lecturer in international law at the University of Sydney, and was Teaching Fellow in Equity from 1957 to 1961. He was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1966. During his time as counsel, he built up one of the biggest practices in Sydney, concentrating on equity, taxation, trade practices and commercial law. He was retained by companies such as the National Bank, the ANZ Bank and Ampol, and by the NSW Government. He represented companies such as Burns Philp, Pioneer Concrete and Angus and Robertson.

In February 1977 Sir William was appointed a judge in the Equity Division of the Supreme Court of New South Wales. Later in the same year he was appointed a judge of the Federal Court of Australia and the President of the Australian Trade Practices Tribunal. In July 1982 he was appointed a Justice of the High Court of Australia. In his 14 years on the High Court bench, Sir William favoured the rights of individuals over governments and led the push to recognise implied rights of the individual in the Constitution. He also advocated accessible law and argued in favour of wider access to legal aid. He sat in judgement over significant cases such as the 1983 Franklin River case and the 1992 Mabo case – these two cases in particular highlight his views, expressed in his judgements, that the rights of individuals should prevail over those of governments, and that the ongoing divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians is a particular source of injustice in Australian society. He retired from the High Court in November 1995 subsequent to the announcement of his appointment as Governor-General by the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating.

Sir William served as Governor-General from 1996 – 2001. During his term of office, he focused on the needs of Australia's disadvantaged, promoted the inclusiveness of multiculturalism, and strongly argued in favour of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. He has campaigned tirelessly against racism and in support of multiculturalism, launching the "Racism. No way!" project in 2000. During his time in office, he and his wife visited Aboriginal communities all around Australia and either participated in, or were invited to witness, many different ceremonies conducted by the local people. He has worked ceaselessly to develop and assist the running of projects designed to aid the homeless, particularly the "Youth Off The Streets" programs, which were designed to provide shelter, food and educational opportunities for homeless young people.

Sir William was greatly influenced by the ethics and values systems of his parents, both of whom were gentle people who displayed particular compassion for the disadvantaged of society. He has spoken in numerous forums about the issues of injustice, Australia's cultural isolationism, unemployment, abuse, multiculturalism, racism, Aboriginal reconciliation and many other social issues, and urged Australians not to put aside the egalitarianism that has been such a part of the history of the nation. His ability to empathise with people, and his debate about, and involvement in, social issues raised the profile of the office of the Governor-General to a point where more is now expected of it, and of the person in it. He has been definite in his views on leadership, stating that there is a need to define principles and objectives on the basis of clarity, decency and vision, and that these need to be followed with action that is worthwhile and consistent. During his term, he maintained both personal and political independence whilst expressing his views, and did not allow the office of the Governor-General to become politicised.

After his term as Governor-General, Sir William took over from Malcolm Fraser as head of Care Australia, and with Aboriginal tennis champion Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, was co-patron of Reconciliation Australia. Sir William was awarded the Sydney Peace Prize in 2001.

Sir William was appointed a Knight of the British Empire in 1982 and a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1988. Sir William was also honoured by the Pope in 2003 for his commitment to, and concern for, Aboriginals and the disadvantaged of society, having been made a Knight Commander con Placca of the Order of St Gregory the Great. He has been honoured by the University of New South Wales, Griffith University, the University of Technology, Sydney, the University of Queensland, the Australian Catholic University, the Queensland University of Technology and the Melbourne College of Divinity.

**Dated this Second Day of June Two Thousand and Six**