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Address by the Hon. Justice M.D. Kirby C.M.G.  
Chancellor

INAUGURAL CEREMONY FOR THE CONFERRING OF DEGREES

WEDNESDAY 2 MAY 1984 10 AM

MACQUARIE - NEW OPPORTUNITY/EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

May 1984

MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

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The Hon Justice MD Kirby CMG  
Chancellor of Macquarie University

TO THE WORDS OF WELCOME

I am grateful to the Vice Chancellor for his words of welcome. My program notes enjoin me to be brief at this point. This is the day of the graduands and their families. As well, we will have an Occasional Address from the doyen of Chancellors, Sir Herman Black. But the Chancellor is the only person in a University who can defy the all-seeing Administration with complete impunity.

Sir Herman is the third in the lineage of Chancellors of Sydney University whom I have known. When I first came up to that University, the Chancellor who welcomed me as a freshman was Sir Charles Bickerton-Blackburn. His image, as Chancellor, is engraved on the collective memory of generations of Sydney University folk. He was Chancellor well into his 90th years, retiring at age 93. The first meeting of the Senate of Sydney University which I attended was his last as Chancellor. He was succeeded by that sweet gentleman, Sir Charles McDonald. Sir Herman succeeded him. In this way we see the continuity of education:

- . continuity from our origins in Western Europe, symbolised by these golden robes and festal gowns;
- . continuity by the links between the oldest Australian University and this younger, innovative place;
- . continuity by the connection which Sir Herman and I can offer through Sydney Senate with Australian University graduates, born in the reign of Queen Victoria.

When the Vice Chancellor informed me of the invitation, extended by the Council, for me to be this University's third Chancellor, he must have been aware of my mental image of a Chancellor — one wise and heavy with years.

Ever so gently, he let it be known that the University did not actually expect me to serve until beyond my 90th birthday. I was able to give him the proper assurances.

I have served on Sydney University Senate. More recently I have been Deputy Chancellor of another young and innovative institution, the University of Newcastle. Macquarie is thus my third University. There is no higher honour that a University can offer than the Chancellor's chair.

The Chancellor of La Trobe University in Victoria, Justice McGarvie, learning of my appointment, welcomed me to the 'Club of University Chancellors'. 'The great merit which it has', he instructed me 'is that when the University turns on a particularly good performance to which the Chancellor has contributed nothing, he gets all the praise. If something goes wrong, the full-time staff [and I might add usually the Vice Chancellor] invariably take the blame'.

#### INNOVATIVE THINGS

This is not an occasion for policy speeches. Chancellors are too prudent a lot to offer that most discredited form of Australian public address. But I do want to say what a special pleasure it has been to assume this function and to exercise it today in the presence of so many distinguished guests, particularly Sir Herman Black and Sir Frederick Deer. Both were Fellows of Sydney University Senate when I joined that august body 20 years ago.

I was proud to be elected Chancellor of Macquarie:

- . I had long connections with Macquarie University. I was a foundation member of its Convocation. I took part in a number of its Schools.
- . Members of my family were closely connected with the life of the University from its earliest days. Notably, Dr Elisabeth Hervic, who died tragically in December 1982, was a Senior Lecturer in French here and a constant source of connection with the life of the University.
- . As a citizen, I always admired the experiments pursued by the University, most especially in the field of provision for mature students and special provision for the higher education of women.
- . Finally, as a child of the Western Suburbs of Sydney. I could see the special needs of education of disadvantaged fellow citizens to which Macquarie could make a particular contribution.

I do not pretend that the early dreams of Macquarie have all been realised. Although there has been some controversy of late concerning the position of women in Australian Universities, there is a long way to go before we achieve the goal of equal opportunity, including at Macquarie. We should never forget that:

- . women represent only 16% of academic staff in Australian Universities;
- . only 2% of Australia's professors are female (though at Macquarie it is 10%);
- . only 46% of women academics have tenure compared with 84% of men.

For all that, I am confident that great strides will be made in this University in equal opportunity. And I hope to contribute to them — whether equal opportunity on the ground of sex, equal opportunity on the grounds of social deprivation, equal opportunity on the grounds of racial and ethnic backgrounds, equal opportunity for the older members of society and so on. People must not be discriminated against on the grounds of a stereotype, least of all in a University where we should ensure that all can flourish equally on their merits.

I have now done what I promised not to do. Judges do not get many chances to make policy speeches. Henceforth, at least until the next ceremony, I will do as the Vice Chancellor instructs me.

It now falls to me to perform my first graduation function as Chancellor. This is to confer degrees and to award diplomas:

- . the degrees will be conferred upon those who have, to the satisfaction of the Academic Senate, complied with the requirements of the regulations for one of the several degrees shown in the program;
- . the graduate diplomas will be awarded to those who have satisfied the requirements of the graduate diploma regulations for the award of a diploma.

At this ceremony today:

- . 184 candidates will be admitted to their degrees; and
- . 4 graduate diplomas will be awarded.

At the close of the five conferring ceremonies to be held this week, the University, now in its 18th year of instruction and research, will have awarded 17 412 degrees and 428 graduate diplomas.

As Chancellor of the University, I have been authorised to confer degrees on those who have, to the satisfaction of the Academic Senate, complied with the requirements of the regulations for one of the several degrees.

Likewise, I have been authorised to award graduate diplomas to those who have satisfied the requirements of the graduate diploma regulations for the award of a diploma.

#### ADMISSION TO DEGREES

(After the certification by the Registrar and the instruction to the graduands to stand):

IN THE NAME OF THE COUNCIL AND BY MY AUTHORITY AS CHANCELLOR, I ADMIT EACH OF YOU PRESENT TO THE DEGREE (OR AWARD YOU THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA) FOR WHICH YOU HAVE QUALIFIED

AND I ADMIT THOSE ABSENT 'IN ABSENTIA' TO THE DEGREE (OR AWARD THE GRADUATE DIPLOMA) FOR WHICH THEY HAVE QUALIFIED.

#### INTRODUCTION OF SIR HERMAN BLACK

It is now my special privilege to invite the Chancellor, Sir Herman Black, to deliver the Occasional Address.

I always hope for distinction by proximity. I have often watched Sir Herman's dexterous performances in his golden robes. I trust that in time — say by my 90th year — some of the gleam will rub off on me:

- . We went to the same school. Indeed, my two distinguished predecessors as Chancellor to whom I pay tribute (Sir Garfield Barwick and Professor Percy Partridge) were also alumni of the Fort Street School — a jewel of State education.
- . In 1956 he lectured me in my first week at Sydney University.
- . We sat together on Sydney Senate.
- . We were named successively Speaker of the Year — which is a generous way of saying that we each talk a lot.
- . As with so many people here, I first knew Sir Herman as the voice over the ABC Schools Program 'The World We Live In'. I can still remember his weekly descriptions of the fall of the Kuo Min-Tang and the ascendancy of the People's Republic in China in 1949. That was in a year when Ronald Reagan was making his less memorable movies.

The Chinese last week apparently thought some of the President's 1984 footage was also below par and deleted it. But Sir Herman has always had that rare gift, unhappily uncommon in our country — of presenting ideas that are intellectually stimulating in a manner that is vigorous and arresting. He compliments the new graduates, this University and me by agreeing to address us today. He is an ornament of our Universities. I invite you, Mr. Chancellor, to address us.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

(After Sir Herman Black's address). On behalf of the University I express our thanks to you, Sir Herman, for your remarks today.

For many in this ceremony you were present, as it were, at the creation. You have been a voice of reason over the years. But you have been no cloistered scholar — like Sir Zelman Cowen you have treated the whole Australian population as your class. I hope that all of us will learn from your example.

The Registrar will now make a brief announcement, after which I declare these proceedings to be closed.