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TRIBUTE TO THE CHANCELLOR,
THE HON JUSTICE MICHAEL KIRBY, AC, CMG,
AT THE COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 1993

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At the reception on Tuesday, Michael, you said you felt a bit like Dame Nellie Melba with all the farewell functions. Tonight is the last - but it is inescapable. It is only right and proper that we pay you this final tribute in your Chancellorial role as the Chairman of the University Council, and express to you our deep appreciation.

This of course is a special role laid down, if not in tablets of stone, at least in Section 10 of the University Act and Clause 7 of Schedule 1 of the Act and in Chapters III and VI of the By-Laws, where the Chancellor is mentioned almost as frequently as the Registrar and Vice-Principal. I promise I'm not going to read them all, but let me just highlight Clause 7(1) of Schedule 1, which provides that the Chancellor is to preside at all meetings of the Council at which the Chancellor is present.

Since you became Chancellor in 1984, Michael, you have presided over almost 90 meetings of the University Council.

As for Standing Committees of Council, you've chaired primarily the Standing Committee on Appeals and the Ceremonials Committee, and the one which I suspect has given you the greatest personal satisfaction, namely, the Honorary Awards Committee, for I know that your generous soul delights in giving deserving persons - especially people of the spirit as you have memorably termed them - their proper recognition. You've often said that you feel Australians are sometimes too parsimonious when it comes to handing out tributes and recognition. And indeed it was in your decade as Chancellor that University Medals were introduced, and Honorary Awards were conferred for the first time.

You have presided over many special committees too. At least one of these gave **me** much personal satisfaction, the Committee in 1985-86 which recommended my appointment to Macquarie University.

There were others which you probably were glad to see come to a close, such as the enquiry into the Third Chair of Law in 1985, and then in 1988 and 1989 the Committee of Investigation into the Head of the School of Law; and of course last year's Working Party on the Causes of Unrest.

But I hope that there have been enough gratifying moments to give your memories of Council meetings a positive flavour overall. Though not even the most cheerful soul would claim, I guess, that Council meetings have always been "a laugh a minute", there was one occasion I won't forget in a hurry. That was the Council Meeting when the Business Manager, John Manning, not only fell fast asleep but snored resoundingly. Far from being abashed when we woke him up, he's claimed proudly ever since that he's the only man in the University who's stopped the Vice-Chancellor dead in her tracks.

And there's been one indirect gain of presiding over Council, Michael: through a campaign of repeatedly exposing you to some of the finest examples of modern Australian art, I consider it a major triumph to have gradually widened your horizons of art appreciation.

Your chairing of Council has been marked by an unparalleled degree of openness and democratic participation with the very minimum of items marked as confidential.

We know that it remained a source of constant disappointment to you that when the Council doors were thrown open at each meeting only a modest audience of passers-by were usually waiting to witness the stirring debates which regularly unfolded in the Council Chamber.

You have given strong personal support to staff and student voices on Council, and have ensured opportunities for all shades of opinion to be aired. You have been accessible to all members of Council.

You have always been alert to issues of access and equity. You have shown compassion to those in difficulties, even on occasions when these might be of their own making, such as some of the student discipline cases.

At tense moments you have encouraged reconciliation and have stressed common values over differences.

While you have, of course, taken the lead and held to a firm and articulated stance on certain issues of principle - showing unswerving support for the principle of freedom of speech on campus, for example, even for such

unpalatable organisations as the National Front - you have probably also been unique among Chancellors in the extent to which you have elected merely to identify the wishes of the majority and have held back from attempts to impose (or on occasion even to express) your own personal views.

Your personal charisma has been such that it hasn't depended on dominating the discussion - your mere presence has been enough.

Professor Edwin Judge has captured our feelings for you in a salutation in Latin, which he will read out, while Professor Deryck Schreuder reads it in English.

(After Edwin, DY makes a brief presentation of the framed salutation.)

DI YERBURY

Vice-Chancellor