

The Honourable Bob Hawke AC CGL

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon Bob Hawke by the Chancellor, Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM at a Faculty of Law graduation at 11.30am on 9 December 2016.

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present The Honourable Bob Hawke AC to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

Mr Hawke was educated in Perth and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws from the University of Western Australia. He received a Rhodes Scholarship to study at University College, Oxford, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Letters. He subsequently undertook doctoral studies at the Australian National University.

On completion of his studies at Oxford, Mr Hawke returned to Australia where he joined the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) as a research officer and advocate. He made his name in the political arena while President of the ACTU, earning respect for considerable expertise across many areas including wage-fixing; his ability to resolve industrial issues rather than instigate them; his powers of persuasion and negotiation; and his ability to build consensus.

After a decade as ACTU President, in 1980 Mr Hawke announced his intention to enter Parliament and was immediately elected to the House of Representatives as the Labor MP for Wills. Two and a half years later, he led Labor to a landslide victory and was sworn in as Australia's 23rd Prime Minister. He led his party to victory again in 1984, 1987 and 1990, thus making him the most electorally successful Labor leader in history. He remains Labor's longest-serving Prime Minister and Australia's third longest.

Under his leadership, the government undertook systematic economic reforms, achieved by bringing together unions and employer organisations. These included the float of the Australian dollar, deregulation of the financial sector and dismantling of the tariff system.

The Hawke Government had a strong emphasis on protecting the environment and in 1983 used its powers in the High Court to prevent the Tasmanian government from building the Gordon-below-Franklin dam in Tasmania. His Government was successful in having world heritage listing for Tasmania's forests, the North Queensland rainforests and Kakadu National Park. Antarctica has been given protection from mining exploration and exploitation under the Madrid Protocol due to Mr Hawke's personal intervention and commitment to ensuring that Continent remains, until at least 2048, a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science.

Other legacies of the Hawke government included: improved financial assistance to low-income families; the introduction of Medicare; the introduction of the Family Assistance Scheme; the integration of employment, education and training; and the establishment of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation known as APEC which recently met in Lima, Peru.

Mr Hawke appointed the University's alumnus Charles Perkins as Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, making him the first Indigenous Australian to head a Commonwealth department, and in 1985, the Hawke government officially returned ownership of Uluru to the Pitjantjatjara Aboriginal people.

Mr Hawke's post-parliamentary career has included terms as Adjunct Professor in the Research Schools of Pacific Studies and Social Sciences at the Australian National University; Honorary Visiting Professor in Industrial Relations at the University of Sydney; Member of the Advisory Council of the Institute for International Studies at Stanford University; and Chairman of the Committee of Experts on Membership of Education International. He initiated, along with the former President of the Philippines, Fidel Ramos, and former Prime Ministers Nakasone and Hosokawa from Japan, the Boao Forum for Asia – an organisation devoted to promoting and co-ordinating high-end dialogue between governments, business and scholars, to deepen economic and co-operative relationships within and between Asian countries and other parts of the world.

Mr Hawke is Patron of the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer Schools at Engineering Aid Australia which has been hosted by Sydney University on a number of occasions over the last twenty years.

An Honorary Fellow at University College, Oxford, Mr Hawke holds honorary degrees from Nanjing University; the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; the University of New South Wales; Macquarie University, the University of Western Australia; the University of South Australia; Oxford University; and Rikkyo University, Tokyo.

Mr Hawke was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1979. In 2009 he was awarded by the Papua New Guinean government's highest award for non-citizens, the Grand Companion of the Order of Logohu, and in 2012 received the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from the Government of Japan.

Chancellor, I present The Honourable Bob Hawke AC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.