

Chancellor, I present Alan William Roberts.

Alan Roberts was born in April 1930. He began his engineering education at Sydney Technical College and progressed from there to a Bachelor of Engineering with First Class Honours and finally a Doctor of Philosophy from the University of New South Wales in 1962. Professor Roberts reaches his 70th year in 2000 and his enthusiasm for his field and his zest for passing on his knowledge to others remains undimmed.

Alan Roberts spent the years of his doctoral study as a Lecturer in the fledging Department of Mechanical Engineering within the then Wollongong University College, established first at Gladstone Avenue and then on this campus in 1962. He was one of the pioneers of this University in a discipline that was at its academic core in those early days. He progressed to Senior Lecturer in 1963 and eventually to Associate Professor from 1969 to 1973. Just before the College gained its independence to become the University of Wollongong, Alan Roberts was appointed Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Newcastle. For the past 25 years he has established his reputation as an internationally acclaimed practitioner in the field of bulk solids handling. To quote his Wollongong colleague, Emeritus Professor Peter Arnold, Alan Roberts has a precious ability to show that “fundamental engineering research can be applied with considerable elegance to the solution of engineering problems”.

Alan Roberts became Professor of Industrial Engineering and Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at Newcastle in 1974. He held a number of concurrent senior positions ending with that of Professor in the discipline he had helped to establish – Bulk Materials Handling and Conveying. Bulk solids handling is concerned with the science and technology of handling granular or powdered materials. These types of materials are found in a wide range of industries including food, chemical, agricultural, mining and pharmaceutical. Bulk solids share a common characteristic of often being very hard to handle efficiently.

Alan Roberts officially “retired” from the University of Newcastle in 1993 to join, what his like-minded fellows wryly but affectionately call, the OASIS Club – “Old Academics Still In Service”!

During his long and still active academic career, Alan Roberts has earned the admiration of his peers. Their esteem is clearly manifested in an array of awards which includes the AGM Michell Award and Medal, the most prestigious award in Mechanical Engineering made by the Institution of Engineers, Australia. In 1992 he was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia for services to mechanical engineering, particularly in the field of bulk materials technology, research and education. He received the Trinity Solids Handling Award from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in the United Kingdom (the first time it had been awarded outside British shores) and an Honorary Doctorate of the University of Newcastle in 1995. In

1998, Professor Roberts was elected a Life Member of the Australian Society for Bulk Solids Handling. He is also a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and an Honorary Fellow of the Institution of Engineers, Australia.

Professor Roberts has written five design manuals and published over 300 research and conference papers in his field. He has worked in the United States and in Europe and is acclaimed as a plenary speaker at international conferences. In his "spare time", Alan writes poetry, often about his engineering topics. This combination of interest and subject area may seem unusual but it says much about the breadth of Alan's talents and outlook on life; it also reveals his sense of the underlying patterns and potential in combining different elements, be they words or materials.

Chancellor, Alan Roberts formally renewed his relationship with the University in 1994 when he and Professor Peter Arnold from our Department of Mechanical Engineering applied for Australian Research Council funding for a Key Centre in Bulk Solids and Particulate Technologies. The Centre was one of only 7 out of 96 applications across Australia to be successful that year. The first graduates from its Masters program, offered jointly by the Universities of Newcastle and Wollongong, graduated two weeks ago.

Alan Roberts' journey parallels in some ways the growth of this University. He came here first as a Lecturer in a young and

restricted engineering program; he returned here as an internationally acclaimed researcher and teacher in a contemporary field linked to the latest technology. Thus the University began as a teaching university with a very basic range of disciplines and grew to be recognised as one of Australia's finest research universities, renowned especially for its development and application of technology. Like Alan Roberts, however, we have retained an enthusiasm for making sure that the knowledge we have gained is properly communicated to following generations. We can aspire to the persistence and vision that have gained Professor Roberts the status of an elder statesman in his field throughout the world. We applaud his achievements and welcome him back today, as an academic leader and model, to special membership of a very different campus to the one he joined over 40 years ago as a young lecturer.

Chancellor, it is a privilege and a great pleasure to present Alan William Roberts for admission to the award of Doctor of Science honoris causa.