

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR K. R. MCKINNON, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF PATRICIA JUNE O'SHANE TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LAWS, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 12 MAY 1994

Chancellor, I present Patricia June O'Shane.

Teacher, activist, public servant and woman of the law, Pat O'Shane is surely destined to feature in any history of our times. She has been involved in the key issues of the latter decades of this century: civil rights, environmental awareness, the status of women and the role of education in society.

Born in the hot lands of northern Queensland, Ms O'Shane attended school in Cairns and graduated from Queensland Teachers College. She enrolled for an Education degree at the University of Queensland before leaving to become a practising teacher for 10 years between 1961 and 1971.

Pat O'Shane began her Law studies at the University of New South Wales after moving to Sydney in 1973. Her progress through those studies was swift and sure, indicating a natural affinity for the Law and a great capacity for hard work. These natural talents were needed to succeed in a career at a time when attitudes were changing but only slowly. She graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1976 and, from 1976 to 1979, practised at the New South Wales Bar and in the Northern Territory where she worked with the Central Australian Legal Aid Service.

Ms O'Shane was awarded her Masters by the University of Sydney in 1981 and in that year began her ground-breaking term as a senior Public Servant. Moving to Canberra, she was initially appointed as a Senior Policy Adviser in the office of Women's Affairs before becoming the first Permanent Head of the newly established federal Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs: a post she held with often disquieting energy for 5 years. In 1986, she was appointed to her current position as a magistrate of the Local Courts of New South Wales.

This impressive summary of achievements cannot fully reveal Pat O'Shane's unique character and commitment. We may look to the words of her dear friend and counsellor, the poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal, to find the creed that she follows.

Oodgeroo wrote:

"In my own heart I know
That hate is wrong,
Injustice evil.
Pain there must be and tears,
Sorrow and death, but not
Intolerance, unkindness, cruelty."

(Oodgeroo, "God's One Mistake")

Pat O'Shane knows these enemies well. Her fight against them is documented in her rulings, as a Magistrate, against those wishing to exploit others and deny them their dignity.

Ms O'Shane has worked to raise expectations and to open up opportunities for all peoples and particularly Aboriginal people and women. She has been President of the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and a member of the Union of Australian Women and the NSW Council for Civil Liberties. Her recognition of the role of education in empowering all peoples is evidenced in her membership of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission and the TAFE Council. Ms O'Shane also served as member of the Council of this University from 1981 to 1983.

She has served the University of Technology Sydney as the Chair of the Industry Advisory Committee of their School of humanities and on the Advisory Committee for their Law course. UTS recognised her contribution last year by awarding her an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. She also received the United Association of Women Jessie Street Memorial Award as "Woman of the Year" in 1976 and the UNSW University Alumni Award for Achievement in 1982. She was admitted as a member of the Order of Australia in 1984.

Ms O'Shane has written and spoken persuasively and well on many issues and has addressed a number of national and international conferences. She was an Occasional speaker at one of this University's Graduation Ceremonies ten years ago and it will be a pleasure and, I am sure, an education to hear her speak again today.

Chancellor, the University is honoured to acclaim the contribution the Pat O'Shane has made to the law, and especially to achieving equity and justice for all members of Australian society.

Once again, Oodgeroo, in a poem of hope and encouragement, seems to prophesy an achievement like that of Pat O'Shane:

"For ban and bias will soon be gone,
The future beckons you bravely on
To art and letters and nation lore,
Fringe-dwellers no more."

(Oodgeroo, "The Dawn is at hand")

Pat O'Shane is a true role model for all who follow her.

Chancellor, it my great pleasure to present Patricia June O'Shane for the award of Doctor of Laws, Honoris Causa.