

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR IAN CHUBB, DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF THE HONOURABLE EDWARD GOUGH WHITLAM TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF LETTERS, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 8 DECEMBER, 1989.

Chancellor, I present to you, The Honourable Edward Gough Whitlam.

Gough Whitlam was born in Melbourne in 1916. He attended Preparatory School and Knox Grammar School in Sydney. In 1928 his family moved to Canberra where he was enrolled first at Telopea Park High School and then Canberra Grammar School. In 1935 he enrolled in an Arts/Law degree at Sydney University but interrupted his studies to serve as an RAAF navigator during the war. He returned to complete his degree in 1946 and was called to the Sydney Bar in 1947. He was later to become a Queen's Counsel in 1962.

These biographical notes mask the development of a man of great intellect; a *"true believer"* in personal liberty and social justice. Gough Whitlam's formative education, as distinct from his schooling, took place in a family home where reading and debate were actively encouraged. In his reading of the classics and history, he recognized the power of government both to stimulate and to oppress creative thought and individual expression. In 1985, he wrote, *"The glories of Periclean Athens, the Renaissance and Elizabethan England were largely the achievements of supremely gifted individuals, and the societies in which they worked were in most aspects cruel and unjust. No government supposes that its policies can produce great works of art, but it would be equally rash to suppose that the arts will not flourish more securely --- in a society that is tolerant and humane."*

In his own public life, Mr Whitlam's highest goal was the achievement of that *"tolerant and humane"* society in which the arts could flourish and his fellow Australians could work towards developing what Humphrey McQueen has called *"that body of ideas and actions which helps us to make and then keep our country independent"*.

Mr Whitlam joined the Australian Labor Party in 1945 and won the Federal seat of Werriwa in 1952. He served as a member of the House of Representatives until 1978, maintaining throughout his long parliamentary term a deep respect for the Constitution and the Parliament.

In 1960, Mr Whitlam was elected to the Deputy Leadership of the Parliamentary Labor Party and became the Leader in 1967 following the retirement of Mr Calwell. After a close contest in the 1969 election, a Labor Government was voted into office in December 1972 under the leadership of Prime Minister Whitlam.

In the years between 1969 and 1972, Gough Whitlam played a key role in the affairs of Papua New Guinea. His vision of Australia as an independent and tolerant nation was not compatible with its role as a colonial overseer. His visit to Papua New Guinea in December 1969 and early 1970 was to be seen as a watershed in the history of the movement towards independence. He pronounced a specific program for self-government and independence and was the first senior Australian politician to recognize the emerging indigenous leaders. He left the country with the words: "*The fact of independence is just not negotiable*". Papua New Guinea achieved self-government in 1973 and independence in 1975. Mr Whitlam commented in retrospect: "*If history were to obliterate the whole of my public career, save my contribution to the independence of a democratic Papua New Guinea, I should rest content*".

By what Mr Whitlam has called "*an extraordinary twist of history*", the emergence of an independent Papua New Guinea in the early 1970s paralleled the restatement of Australia's own independence. Under the Whitlam Government, the tangible vestiges of Australia's past as a British colony were cut away. The colonial attitudes of mind were harder to dispel.

The poet A.D. Hope had described his countrymen as "*second-hand Europeans*" clustered "*timidly on the shores of an alien land*". Gough Whitlam set out in 1972 to change this image.

The record of the Whitlam Government is an extensive one. In three years it acted as, what one commentator has called, "*the engine of national renovation*". Australia's international policy was unhooked from its British and American connections. Australian troupes were withdrawn from Vietnam; Australia recognized the People's Republic of China and Papua New Guinea achieved independence. Australian control of natural resources was strongly promoted.

The success of the Whitlam Government's program for the development of the arts in Australia relied upon the impact of its great social reforms in areas such as immigration, Aboriginal land rights, health, the rights of women and education. Their liberating effect attracted expatriate artists back to these shores. Australians were given pride in their own abilities and support to

develop them. \$14 million were allocated to the arts in the Whitlam Government's first budget. Mr Whitlam encouraged the greater participation of Australian creative and performing talent in radio, television and cinema production. The Australian Film and Television School was opened in 1975. The Australian National Gallery was established and Mr Whitlam shocked Australia and the international art world by having the courage and confidence to support the purchase of Pollock's *Blue Poles*.

The policies of Gough Whitlam and his Government sought to strengthen "*the feminine principle*", long alien to Australian society. Not exclusive to any particular gender, this principle of nurturing creativity, caring and tolerance is what Lord Kenneth Clark has called the "*civilizing principle*". Gough Whitlam, in many ways the epitomé of the civilised man, sought to create a civilised, enthusiastic Australian nation.

After the events of 1975 removed the Labor Government from office, Mr Whitlam may have questioned the overall success of his vision for Australia, but his record as a great reformer and liberator of the national spirit stands clear.

Gough Whitlam left Parliament in 1978 but continued to play a significant role in academic and public life. He has been a Visiting Fellow at The Australian National University and Visiting Professor at Harvard University. He is Chairman of the China Council and Chairman of the Australian National Gallery. In 1978 he received the award of Companion of the Order of Australia.

In 1983 Gough Whitlam was appointed as Australia's Ambassador to UNESCO. He served in that role until 1986 and remained thereafter as a member of UNESCO's Executive Board. He has published many works, on topics ranging from government and the constitution to Italian literature.

The University applauds Mr Whitlam as a man of letters who sought to create for the "*men and women of Australia*" a free and tolerant society in which ideas and initiatives could flourish. As a university community we must aspire to Gough Whitlam's civilized vision.

Chancellor, it is a great privilege to present to you Edward Gough Whitlam for the award of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa.