

**CITATION DELIVERED BY DR B. GILLET, DEPUTY CHANCELLOR OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG, ON THE OCCASION OF THE
ADMISSION OF JOHN HALDEN WOOTTEN TO THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF LAWS, HONORIS CAUSA, ON 5 OCTOBER 1995.**

Chancellor I present John Halden Wootten.

Hal Wootten was born in Tweed Heads in 1922. He graduated from the University of Sydney with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1943 and, after war service in New Guinea, completed a Bachelor of Laws degree in 1946.

In the 50 years since he completed that first class honours degree in Law, Hal Wootten has been an outstanding practitioner and reformer. He has rejuvenated the teaching of law in Australia and taken a highly public role in major issues for Australian society, notably Aboriginal rights and the protection of the environment.

Shortly after graduation in 1946, Hal Wootten took his first academic post as a senior lecturer in Law in the Australian School of Pacific Administration. His appointment, including as it did six months field work in New Guinea, gave him insight into the traditions of a tribal people. In the early 1960s, as the Chair of the Law Council Committee on Papua New Guinea, he helped to promote the development of an indigenous legal profession. The knowledge he gained in Papua New Guinea was to prove valuable at a later time in his career in Australia.

Hal Wootten was called to the bar in 1951 and practised as a barrister for over 20 years, becoming a Queens Counsel in 1973. In 1969, he was appointed Founding Dean and Professor of Law at the University of New South Wales. It was an unusual selection for the time. Hal Wootten came for the practising bar and not from academia. However, the decision proved to be an inspired one. As Dean, he was to bring about the most significant changes and developments that Australian legal education has seen this century.

Aware of the shortcomings of his own legal education, Professor Wootten set out to design a curriculum which took account of what practising lawyers needed, which was far more than how to memorise rules or to pass examinations. He sought to give a new generation of lawyers the ability to understand and apply changing rules and practices; to develop rational and telling criticisms of outmoded laws; to conduct research independently; to analyse facts and present arguments and to communicate effectively with all manner of people. He wanted his students to be able to think not only laterally but creatively. His achievement provided a model for the new generation of Law Schools in universities across Australia, including that established 6 years ago at the University of Wollongong.

For his contribution to legal education alone, Professor Wootten would be worthy of the highest honour yet he was to go beyond this plateau to areas of the law and social justice requiring all the skill, sensitivity and creative thinking that he tried to instil in his students. In 1970, as a precursor to the achievements in the next phase of his career, Professor Wootten

became Founding President of the Aboriginal Legal Service, the first and a model of later similar organisations.

In 1973, he became a Justice of the Supreme Court of New South Wales, dealing mostly with the Equity Division. During his time on the Bench, he was also Chair of the NSW Law Reform Commission and Chair of the Australian Press Council. His personal integrity, his belief in social justice and his deep knowledge of the law made him an outstanding choice to head the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody: a controversial and difficult inquiry that was to have a long-reaching impact on attitudes towards Aboriginal status in this country and to prepare in many ways for the reformation that was to come with the Mabo decision.

Since the Commission, Professor Wootten, has continued to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and has published a series of papers on the human and legal rights of indigenous people. His impressive record in dispute resolution, for example, lists a number of land rights cases, often those drawing together that interest and his other abiding passion - the protection of the environment. He is a past President and now an Honorary Life Member of the Australian Conservation Foundation.

In 1980 Hal Wootten was appointed Chancellor of the then NSW Institute of Technology, now the University of Technology Sydney, which awarded him his first Honorary degree in 1993. Sydney University honoured him in 1994 and this year he wins the "hat trick" as this University, another beneficiary of his reforms in legal education, admits him to its ranks of honorary graduates.

Chancellor, in 1990 the Honourable John Halden Wootten was admitted as a Companion in the General Division of the Order of Australia for services to human rights, conservation, legal education and the law. Today this University honours him as a man who has had the courage and great ability to make real changes in all of those vital areas of human concern.

John Stuart Mill once wrote that "--Human nature is not a machine--but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing" (John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty"). Hal Wootten has sought through his educational and his legal and judicial reforms to recognise and make others aware of the dignity and diversity of human nature and the value of the living world of which it is a part.

Chancellor, it is my great pleasure to present John Halden Wootten for the award of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.