



CECIL PURSER – FORMER DEPUTY CHANCELLOR (1924–25) AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (1917–18, 1923)

An early graduate of the University of Sydney (BA 1885, MB ChM 1890), Cecil Purser was a Fellow of Senate from 1909 to 1939, including election as Vice-Chancellor 1917 - 1918 and 1923, and Deputy Chancellor 1924 - 1925.

PROFILE

(1862 - 1953)

BA MB ChM *Sydney*

Fellow of Senate: 1909 - 1939, including election by Senate as

– Vice-Chancellor 1917 - 1918, 1923

– Deputy Chancellor 1924 - 1925

His early years

Cecil Purser was born on 16 December 1862 at Castle Hill, New South Wales. He attended school locally in Castle Hill and later at Newington College.

His student days at the University of Sydney

Purser began his studies at the University of Sydney in 1882 and was a resident of St Andrew's College. While at the University, he captained the cricket team and was a successful athlete. He was a foundation member (president 1891-92) of the Sydney University Medical Society.

He graduated BA in 1885 and MB ChM in 1890.



2nd year Medical students in 1886, with Cecil Purser far right, middle row, *photo G3_224_0007, University of Sydney Archives.*

His career

Purser was a resident medical officer at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1890, medical superintendent from 1891 to 1892, in private practice at Petersham from 1893, honorary staff, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital from 1896, and consultant physician from 1912 to 1953. He practised in Macquarie Street from 1912, was director of the hospital board from 1909 to 1933, vice-chairman from 1920 to 1923 and chairman from 1924 to 1933.

His interest was in the prevention and treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis.

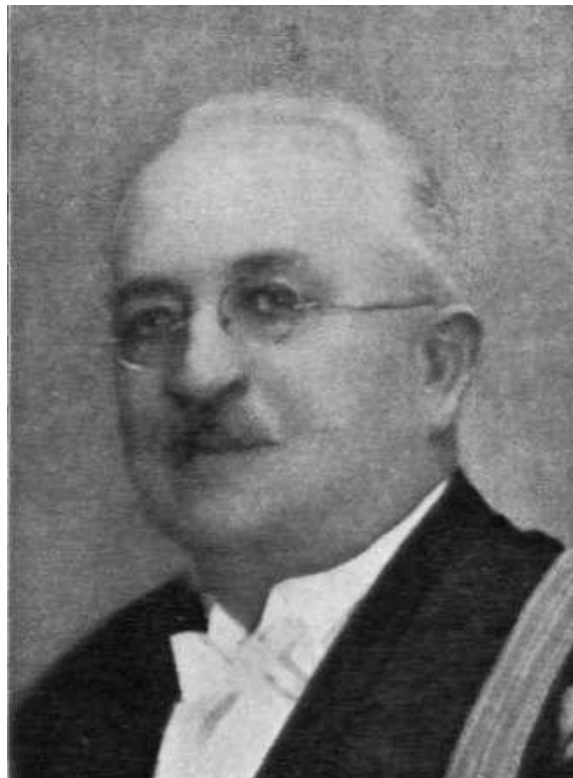
Other career highlights included:

- Director (chairman from 1915), Carrington Centennial Hospital for Convalescents, Camden
- Foundation member, Queen Victoria Homes for Consumptives
- Honorary consultant to the Home for Consumptives, Waterfall
- Medical examiner, R T Hall Sanatorium, Hazelbrook
- Tuberculosis Advisory Board from 1912
- Life governor, Women's Hospital, Crown Street
- Honorary major, Australian Army Medical Corps Reserve from 1916
- Foundation fellow, Royal Australasian College of Physicians 1938

Information from "Bright sparks", published by the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, and the Australian Dictionary of Biography



Cecil Purser, *image from 'The Centenary Book of the Faculty of Medicine.*



Cecil Purser in 1927, *photo from the Sydney Medical School Senior Yearbook 1927-28, Faculty of Medicine Online Museum.*

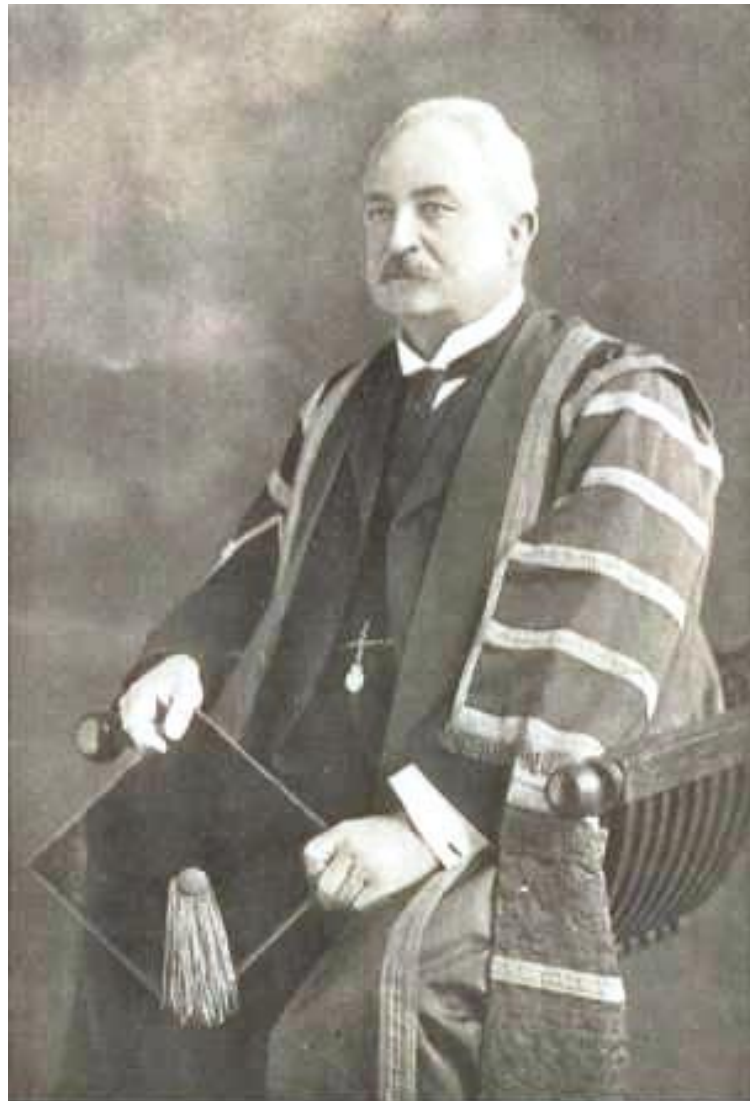
His membership of Senate

Purser was a Fellow of Senate from 1909 to 1939:

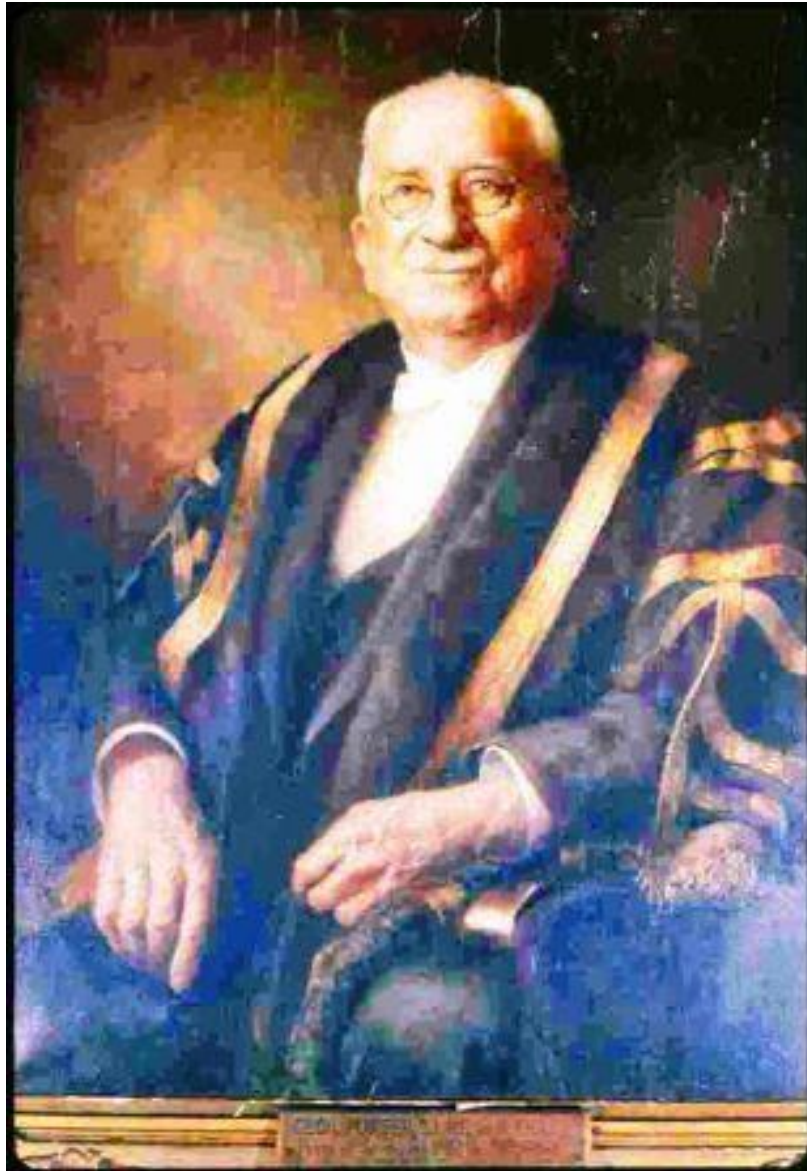
- 1909 – 1913: Fellow elected by a Convocation of electors to fill a vacancy
- 1913 – 1939: Fellow elected by the graduates

Senate elected him Vice-Chancellor from 1917 to 1918 and in 1923, and Deputy Chancellor from 1924 to 1925.

In addition, he was an examiner within the Faculty of Medicine for 19 years from 1911 and served on the councils of St Andrew's College, Wesley College and Women's College at the University of Sydney.



Vice-Chancellor Cecil Purser in 1917, *photo from 'Hermes', May 1917.*



The portrait of Cecil Purser by artist Jerrold Nathan, oil on canvas, was presented to the University in 1941 by chairman of the board of Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, *University Art Collection, reproduced with the kind permission of Ms Felicity Brierley and the University of Sydney*. The cost of the portrait was subscribed by friends and colleagues of Dr Purser.

Senate's tribute

Cecil Purser died in 1953 aged 90.

At its meeting in February 1953, the Senate adopted the following resolution, the Fellows standing:

"The Senate expresses its profound regret at the death on 13th January, 1953, at the age of 90 years, of Dr Cecil Purser, a former Deputy Chancellor. For over 70 years Dr Purser was associated with the University of Sydney and for 30 years was a member of the Senate. He came to the University from Newington College in 1882 and entered the Faculty of Arts.

After graduating in Arts in 1885 he entered the Faculty of Medicine and graduated in that Faculty in 1890. From then until his death he had an unbroken association with the University of Sydney. The ability and thoroughness with which he carried out his responsibilities as a member of the Senate and of its Committees earned him the greatest admiration of his colleagues who four times elected him to the Vice-Chancellorship and twice to the Deputy Chancellorship when that office was first established. He was a man who sought no distinction for himself but took pride in using his talents to serve the University.

As a member of the Buildings and Grounds Committee from 1914 until his retirement in 1939, he was one of the small group of men who were responsible for guiding the development of the University. The time and energy which he devoted to furthering the interests of the University are all the more to be admired because of his many other interests in the professional and business life of the community. He was a leader in his profession and a director of many important companies. The knowledge and experience which he gained in these capacities he willingly turned to the advancement of the University, where his advice was frequently sought and readily accepted. His broad outlook, engendered by his association, first as a student and later as a colleague, with the University's greatest scholars from the days of Badham, was always refreshing to those who knew him, particularly in the atmosphere of specialisation which grew as the University flourished and expanded.

He was one of the original Trustees of Wesley College and his name will ever be remembered for the driving part which he played in its development; it is fitting that the newest wing at the College bears his name. The Senate records its great sense of loss at his passing and offers its condolences to the surviving members of his family."