

PROFESSOR DEREK JOHN ANDERSON – FORMER VICE-CHANCELLOR (1996)

Professor Derek John Anderson was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney in 1996, and accordingly an *ex-officio* Fellow of Senate.

PROFILE

BSc *Nott* PhD *Wales*, FLS

Vice-Chancellor and ex-officio Fellow of Senate 1996

Born in London, Professor Anderson came to Australia and began work at the University of Sydney in 1965.

From 1968 to 1972, he was a foundation member of the Research School of Biological Sciences at the Australian National University.

Professor Anderson's research interests centred on ecology, with particular emphasis on semi-arid drylands and coastal areas.

He held the Chair of Botany at the University of NSW, becoming involved in academic administration in 1980 when he was elected Vice-Chairman of the Professorial Board at UNSW, and was the inaugural President of the UNSW Academic Board from 1988.

Professor Anderson took up the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney in February 1992, following the retirement of Professor Michael Taylor. He became Vice-Chancellor in 1996 following the resignation of Professor Don McNicol and before the appointment of Professor Gavin Brown.

He retired from the University of Sydney as Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the end of 1999.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in June 2010 for service to university administration, and to the botanical sciences, particularly through contributions to the development of the field of ecology in Australia.

From 'The University of Sydney News'

Senate tribute

On 3 June 1996, the Chancellor Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer spoke on the occasion of Professor Anderson's last meeting as Vice-Chancellor, commenting that Professor Anderson had carried out an extremely difficult and demanding task in 1995/1996. She said that considerable change in the University had been brought about by Professor Anderson's own example; he had built an important feeling of relaxation and determination and the sense that the University must and could take a unified approach to problems and opportunities. Professor Anderson had brought a spirit of collegiality to senior officers, Departments, Professors and Deans. She thanked Professor Anderson for his consistently

good humour, willingness to tackle difficult problems and ability to get on with people. She asked for these words to be recorded in the minutes.

The Chancellor's words were seconded by Mr Coles, and endorsed by Professor Rees in relation to his accessibility, collegiality and highly professional way of giving leadership; by Dr Macnab from the point of view of academic staff; by Ms Corby from the point of view of students; and by Professor Mack in relation to the very positive mood in the Academic Board in the way it was addressing its problems, much of which he believed was due to Professor Anderson.

Professor Anderson expressed his appreciation for these comments, and drew special attention to the support given to him by his senior colleagues, who had worked enormously hard and well together. He felt he had had great support from Senate and the Academic Board, placed on record his belief that the University had a senior team second to none, and expressed his hope that Professor Brown would receive their full support to realise the full potential of the University.

From the Senate minutes, 3 June 1996

Academic Board tribute

The Chair Professor Ros Pesman reported:

“As there was no meeting of the Academic Board in January, the Board did not have the opportunity to express, before his retirement as Deputy Vice-Chancellor, its appreciation of the contribution that Derek Anderson has made to the Board's ongoing life and work. Thus today, on my own behalf and on that of the previous Chair, John Mack, the Deputy Chairs past and present, and all members of the Board, I would wish to make public acknowledgment of Derek Anderson's contribution to the academic life and values of this University.

Derek Anderson has always held very strong beliefs on the central importance of academic boards in universities. He came to us after five years as the presiding member of the equivalent body at the University of New South Wales, the Professorial and then Academic Senate, and with a long and impressive record of commitment to collegiality and to the essential role of academic boards in the maintenance of academic and scholarly values, procedures and courtesies. As the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Staffing), Derek Anderson had the particular responsibility of liaising with the Board, and he took that responsibility very seriously. He was acutely aware of the problems as well as the advantages created by the reduction in the size of the Board and was very wise and generous in his counsel on how the sometimes conflicting goals of effectiveness, academic leadership and wide consultation might best be met.

‘Gentleman and scholar’ might be a clichéd phrase but I can think of no other that so well sums up Derek Anderson, and I use ‘gentleman’ in both senses of the word. His presence has done much to ensure that the University remains a place of civilisation and civility.”

From the Academic Board minutes, 10 February 1999