



SIR EDWARD DEAS-THOMSON KCMG CB – FORMER CHANCELLOR (1865–78) AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (1863–65)

Sir Edward Deas-Thomson KCMG CB was one of the original 16 Fellows of Senate of the University of Sydney appointed in 1850 by proclamation of the Governor. He served until 1879. Senate elected him Vice-Chancellor (1863-1865) and Chancellor (1865-1878).

PROFILE

(1800 – 1879)

KCMG CB

Fellow of Senate 1850 - 1879, including election by Senate as

– Vice-Chancellor 1863 - 1865

– Chancellor 1865 - 1878

His career

Sir Edward Deas-Thomson arrived in Sydney in 1829 to take up the post of Clerk of the Executive and Legislative Councils of New South Wales. Deas-Thomson was appointed Colonial Secretary of New South Wales and Registrar of the Records in 1837, positions which carried with them membership to the Executive and Legislative Councils.

He was closely associated with the movement for responsible government in New South Wales, and with W C Wentworth was chosen to oversee the passage of the Constitution bill through the English parliament in 1856. He returned to Sydney the same year and resigned from the Executive Council. However, at Governor Denison's request, he remained as a caretaker Colonial Secretary until the ministry of the newly elected government was sworn in.

The biographical notes on the Chancellors contain information derived from a variety of sources including: Australia's First: A History of the University of Sydney, University News, University of Sydney Archives, and Lawlink NSW: Law and History.



The Hon Edward Deas-Thomson, KCMG CB, in 1854, *image from the 'Illustrated Sydney News', 4 February 1854, NLA Newspapers.*



The Hon Sir Edward Deas-Thomson, KCMG CB, in 1873, *image from the 'Australian Town and Country Journal', 9 August 1873, NLA Newspapers.*



The Hon Sir Edward Deas-Thomson, KCMG CB, in 1879, *image from the 'Illustrated Sydney News', 9 August 1879, NLA Newspapers.*



Sir Edward Deas-Thomson, *image G3_224_0691, University of Sydney Archives.*

His membership of Senate

Deas-Thomson was a strong advocate for the creation of a university and was a member of government select committee on the establishment of the University in 1849. At the inauguration of the University in 1850, he was appointed as a Fellow of the founding University Senate and remained a Fellow until his death.

Sir Edward was elected Vice-Chancellor in 1863 and Chancellor in 1865, holding office until ill-health forced his retirement in 1878. He presided over the period in the development of the University when the foundations for the transformation of the institution from a gentleman's university to a modern professional university were laid.



Sir Edward Deas-Thomson KCMG CB, 1865, *portrait by Artist Alessandro Capalti (1820-68); oil on canvas; Donated by Public Subscription circa 1865; University Art Collection, reproduced with the permission of the University.*



Chancellor The Hon Edward Deas-Thomson KCMG CB c1874, *photo from the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, call number ON 6, digital order number a593061.*