

Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work was conferred upon Muriel Bamblett by the Pro-Chancellor, Mr Kevin McCann AM at a Faculty of Education and Social Work graduation at 2.00pm on 13 April 2017.

Citation

Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa).

Muriel Bamblett is a proudly confident Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman and one of Australia's leading experts on Aboriginal affairs generally and Aboriginal child welfare, in particular. Muriel's expertise and standing has been drawn from a dedicated, passionate, long standing and, at times, hard fought contribution at local, state and national levels.

Muriel has been the Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) for almost two decades. In this role she has resolutely advocated and advanced the interests of Aboriginal children and families, the importance of culture and the principle of care within the community.

Her efforts have led to the incorporation in child welfare legislation in Victoria of the Aboriginal child placement principle, the fundamental commitment that Aboriginal children in care have the right to their families, community and culture including a strong active and engaging identity as Aboriginal people. It also recognized for the first time, the right of self-determination of Aboriginal people. In addition to her influence over statutory arrangements, Muriel's vision for Aboriginal child and family welfare has guided reform to service practice, to education and training and to community development.

Muriel's influence has reached well beyond Victoria. For a decade Muriel was the Chairperson of the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) leading the peak national association of Aboriginal children's services and related community organisations working in this complex and demanding space. As the SNAICC National Chair, Muriel took on and championed new approaches to federal engagement in the Aboriginal children's agenda, and supported Aboriginal communities across the country to develop and deliver new, innovative and effective child and family support policies and programs. Under her visionary leadership more and more Aboriginal communities picked up the challenging task of trying to ensure that their children and grandchildren were able to grow up safe, proud, confident Aboriginal people.

For two years from 2009, Muriel took on the task of lifting the lid on the Northern Territory child protection services to Aboriginal children. She brought her considerable experience, intellect and energy to the question of how well the system protected Aboriginal children including examining the roles and responsibilities of Northern Territory Government departments. She considered how services could be delivered better, especially in rural and remote locations, she examined the quality, sustainability and direction of out of home care, staff retention and training and sought to find better ways Aboriginal and non Aboriginal stakeholders should work together.

With hindsight and recent Northern Territory events fresh in our minds, we can now understand just how much courage and commitment Muriel must have mustered as she worked through the complexity, upset and pain of that reality and the remarkable dedication that kept bringing her heart and mind back time and time again to the objective of doing better for the kids.

Muriel is also an active member of many boards and committees concerning Indigenous children and families, including the Victorian Children's Council, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum, the Aboriginal Justice Forum and the Aboriginal Community Elders Service.

Since 2016, Muriel has also been a member of the Interim Treaty Working Group which has been negotiating with the State government and consulting Aboriginal communities in Victoria about a Treaty.

Muriel has been the recipient of a number of awards, including the Centenary of Federation Medal, the 2003 Robin Clark Memorial Award for Inspirational Leadership in the Field of Child and Family Welfare and the Women's Electoral Lobby Inaugural Vida Goldstein Award. Muriel was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2004 Australian Day Honors for her service to the community and in 2009

Muriel was appointed an Adjunct Professor of La Trobe University's School of Social Work and Social Policy.

In 2011, Muriel was inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women, a year in which she was also a finalist for a Human Rights Medal with the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Pro-Chancellor, I present to you Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa) and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.