

Professor Edward Byrne AC

An honorary award of a Doctor of Medical Science (honoris causa) was conferred upon Edward Byrne by the Chancellor, Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM, at a Faculty of Medicine and Health graduation at 11.30am on 15 April 2019.

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Professor Edward Byrne AC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medical Science (honoris causa) in recognition of his contributions to medicine, medical research, higher education and international relations.

He has been one of the most influential figures in Australian medicine, medical research and university leadership of his generation.

In the clinical area, he was the first Professor of Neurology at the University of Melbourne and led clinical services at a number of major hospitals. His early research delineated clinical signs and symptoms of people with disorders of mitochondria, the energy factories within cells. This work served as the foundation for the study of mitochondrial disease and helped build Australia's reputation as a major contributor to neurological research internationally. He was Secretary General of the 9th international Congress on Neuromuscular disease. He greatly strengthened the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Medicine as editor in chief, transforming it into the Internal Medicine Journal which continues to thrive.

He went on to become Dean of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science at Monash University where he led that university to a leading position in Australian medical research and founded a medical school in Malaysia and a regional school in Gippsland.

He then moved to London as Vice-Provost Health and Dean of Medicine at UCL, the leading medical research university in Europe. There he led the establishment of UCL partners, a pioneering academic health centre and did much to promote the integration of academic and clinical activities for improving health outcomes, a model he later helped pioneer in Australia. He also played a major role in the concept and establishment of the Crick institute, the major medical research institute to be established in Europe in the last fifty years.

He returned to Australia as Vice-Chancellor of Monash University and while there improved the university from around 200 into the top 100 on all major ranks and established a new campus in Suzhou in China. At a national level he played a key role in the establishment of the Australian Academy of Health and Medical Science.

After 6 years he returned to the UK to become President and Principal of King's College London, a world top 25 university and Chairman of King's Health Partners, a partnership between the university and the key hospitals in South London. At Kings, he has launched a business school and a school for government, strengthened natural sciences and engineering and led the launch of a series of new medical research institutes. Kings is now one of the strongest health universities in the world.

He has pioneered closer links between leading Australian and UK universities, bringing universities in the UK and Australia together to form a post Brexit planning group. Former Australian PM Julia Gillard has launched an international institute for women and leadership at King's and the Menzies institute for Australian studies has been strengthened and relaunched with revitalised partnerships with Group of 8 universities.

At the request of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr Michael Spence AC, he led a comprehensive review of health and medicine at the University of Sydney which suggested wide ranging reforms and reorganisation, which are now being implemented.

Professor Byrne has received many awards including the Queen's Square prize for neurological research in London), the Bethlem Griffith prize for research contribution in Australian neuroscience, the national award for major contributions to MS care from MS Australia, the John Sand medal of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the Graeme Robertson award of the Australia and New Zealand Society of Neurologists and was the Mills orator for the RACP in 2016 contrasting the NHS and Australian health care. In addition to being the recipient of numerous honorary doctorates, he was awarded an Officer of the Order of Australia for contributions to medical research and a Companionship of the Order of Australia for leadership in the university sector internationally and leadership in global health.

He is devoted to improving university contributions to society generally in Australia, the UK and internationally, and to promoting the role of universities in championing both social equity and free speech.

Chancellor, I present Professor Edward Byrne AC for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medical Science (honoris causa) and invite you to confer the degree upon him.