

## Robert “Bob” Brown AO



The honorary degree of Doctor of Science was conferred upon Bob Brown by the Pro-Chancellor, Mr Barry Catchlove AM at a Faculty of Science graduation at 11.30am on 22 September 2017.

### Citation

Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Robert James Brown to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa) in recognition of his exceptional achievements and eminence in politics and as an advocate for environmental conservation.

Robert, or Bob as he is known, is an alumnus of Sydney University graduating with a Bachelor of Medicine in 1968. Between 1968 until 1980, Bob practised medicine in Canberra, London, Sydney, Perth and Launceston. During this time Bob helped establish the Wilderness Society and acted as its Director for five years.

Bob is regarded as one of the founders of the environmental movement in Australia, his initial interest arising from the concern at the flooding of Lake Pedder in Tasmania. He successfully led the opposition to the damming of Tasmania's Franklin River. The Wilderness Society organised the blockade of the dam works on the River which saw 1500 people arrested and 600 jailed, including Bob who spent 19 days in Risdon Prison. This led to the newly elected Hawke Government introducing legislation to protect the Franklin. The day after his release in 1983, Bob entered politics as an independent green Member of the Tasmanian House of Assembly serving until 1993.

As a state MP, Bob introduced initiatives such as Freedom of Information, Death with Dignity, lower parliamentary salaries, gay law reform, banning the battery-hen industry, nuclear free Tasmania and protection of native forests. The Labor and Liberal Governments voted against his 1987 bill to ban semi-automatic guns, nearly a decade before the Port Arthur massacre.

In 1989, he led the five-member Greens parliamentary team, which held the balance of power with the Field Labor Government. The Greens saved 25 schools from closure, created more than 1000 jobs through its local initiatives job scheme, doubled the size of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area to 1.4 million hectares, created the Douglas-Apsley National Park and supported tough fiscal measures to rid the state of debt. Bob resigned from the State Parliament in 1993.

Bob was then elected to the Australian Senate in 1996 where he was a leader in the national debate on climate change, Australia's involvement in war, the green economy, preventative healthcare, conservation, and human rights. He introduced many private senator's bills including electoral and parliamentary reform, for the rights of the territories, junk food advertising, against mandatory sentencing of Aboriginal children, and forestry. He was elected leader of the Greens in 2005 and saw the federal Greens parliamentary team expand to five in 2007 and ten in 2010. Internationally he advocated in relation to Tibet, East Timor and West Papua. Bob retired from Parliament in 2012.

Bob also opposed the Howard Government's amendments to the marriage Act in 2004. He was the first openly gay Member of the Australian parliament and the first gay leader of a major political party.

In 1990, using his Goldman Environmental Prize for environmental activism, Bob established the Australian Bush Heritage Fund, subsequently renamed Bush Heritage Australia. Bush Heritage owns and manages land of high biodiversity to protect it in perpetuity. Bob was the Founding President and occupied the Chair until 1996.

Bush Heritage Australia is now 25 years old and owns and protects 1.2 million hectares with a further 5 million hectares managed in partnership with pastoralists and aboriginal people. In total BHA has stewardship of 1% of Australia.

Bob has published several books including; Wild Rivers, Lake Pedder, Tarkine Trails, The Greens, Valley of the Giants, Memo for a Saner World, Earth, Optimism and Green Nomads.

Since retiring from Parliament, Bob remains a vocal advocate for the environment through the Bob Brown Foundation, a not for profit organisation dedicated to supporting environmental campaigns and green causes in Australia and our region. He is widely respected for his passion and commitment and for his pragmatic approach to achieving progress.

Pro-Chancellor, I present Robert James Brown for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.