

Ms Sally Crossing AM

The honorary degree of Doctor of Health Sciences was conferred upon Sally Crossing by the Chancellor, Ms Belinda Hutchinson AM, at a Faculty of Health Sciences graduation at 9.30am on 28 November 2014.

Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Sally Crossing AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Health Sciences (honoris causa).

Sally Crossing graduated with a Bachelor of Economics from the University and lived at Women's College in the 1960s, a time when there were very few women economists. She served on the Women's College Council for several years.

After graduation, Sally Crossing's first position was at the Bank of New South Wales. At this time she also assisted the economist Reginald Holder write the history of the Bank of New South Wales. Sally Crossing worked in banking and government both locally and internationally for a number of years in a number of sectors including the UK Desk in the Reserve Bank, the NSW Parliament, the NSW Department of Minerals and Energy, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development in Italy. In her time in government, she implemented policies that she conceived whilst working for the Liberal Party when in Opposition.

Sally Crossing was first diagnosed and treated for breast cancer in 1995. Within two years she founded the Breast Cancer Action Group NSW and chaired the committee for 11 years. The Breast Cancer Action Group NSW has 750 members and provides a highly influential voice for people affected by breast cancer. Sally Crossing is also Chair of Cancer Voices NSW (CVN), a coalition of 88 cancer consumer groups that acts in the interests of the 40,000 people diagnosed with cancer in New South Wales each year. Cancer Voices, since its inception in 2000, has had a major impact on diagnosis, treatment, care, support, survivorship and direction of breast cancer research. In 2010, to mark the 10 year anniversary, Sally Crossing published the major text *A Decade of Success: Cancer Voices NSW 2000-2010*.

In the late 1990s, Sally Crossing became aware that consumers wished to increase participation rates in clinical trials, improve consumer appreciation of the importance of clinical trials and identify trials relevant to individuals' own circumstances. She therefore joined an expert group appointed to achieve these goals. By the late 1990s the Australian New Zealand Clinical Trials Registry was established, supported by the interactive Australian Government website, sponsored by Cancer Australia: Australian Cancer Trials. Sally Crossing became the first Principal Researcher with responsibility to bring the consumer's perspective to the University of Sydney's Australian Clinical Trials Project, and took charge of co-ordinating consumer opinions. In her words "Australian Cancer Trials will make it much easier for people affected by cancer to make informed decisions about entering clinical trials." This has certainly been achieved and has led to a major increase in consumer participation in research activities.

In 2008, Sally Crossing became the Vice-Chair of arguably the most important consumer group nationally – the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia. This position involved much broader consumer activity, beyond the area of breast cancer and indeed all cancers. This achievement inspired her to develop the same type of peak consumer body at state level, Health Consumers NSW (HCNSW) and she became its first Chair in 2011. HCNSW provides an independent voice for the consumers of public and private health services in NSW. Her wider involvement in consumer affairs led her to serve on the board of the Cancer Council NSW as well as being the consumer representative on a variety of state and national committees focussing on research, clinical treatment and health policy.

Another of Sally Crossing's significant achievements was the establishment of a Directory of Services describing the quality of information and support services that were available to women with breast cancer. This directory made available to women, detailed information on variables critical to service quality, such as the treatment rates of individual doctors. Despite significant opposition by the AMA and threatened legal action, Sally Crossing pursued this goal relentlessly and successfully and continues to be an influential advocate for access to the directory despite privacy legislation hindering the release of de-identified information from the Health Insurance Commission. Sally Crossing's personal experiences did not deter her commitment to ensure that breast cancer survivors remained a major force in Australia. Her leadership of a constituency of 40,000 women remains as powerful as it has always been.

Sally Crossing was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in June 2005 for services to the community through health care consumer advocacy and the establishment of the Breast Cancer Action Group NSW and Cancer Voices NSW. She received the inaugural NSW Consumer Advocate Award in December 2001 for her work for women with breast cancer, and specifically for the courageous establishment of the ground-breaking Directory of Breast Cancer Treatment and Services, NSW. In 2011 she was identified as one of the five Most Influential People in the medical section of the Sydney Morning Herald's Sydney's Top 100.

Sally Crossing is a national leader in consumer activities and is aware of the impact of key publications that will transform the experience of breast cancer survivors and is an author or co-author of 18 peer reviewed publications in prestigious journals with high impact factors. Colleagues refer specifically to her excellent memory, extraordinary intelligence, openness to new and creative solutions and her immense ability to get things done. Since 2012, Sally Crossing has been an active advocate for the University of Sydney's Breast Cancer Special Interest Group (SIG) and her contribution has been critical to its rapid rise to become the largest Cancer Research Network SIG in the University. She hosted the group's highly successful Consumer evening, attended by a large group of breast cancer survivors, in March 2014. She has helped bring the consumer to the heart of breast cancer research in our University and her advice to scientists has had a major positive impact on national research grant submissions.

Sally Crossing has now been working in voluntary leadership positions for 17 years. She has used her own experience of illness and has learned from many others to inform her work. She says that she has abundant energy and is motivated by 'the challenge of seeing that something could be done and then seeing it done – it is extremely rewarding'. Sally Crossing values working collaboratively and describes herself as a collaborative leader – one who works with and learns from others. 'Leaders', she says, 'should never have total confidence that they are right. Others may know a lot more than the leader.' She also emphasises the importance of respecting the interests and skills of others, and ensuring that their talents are fully utilised. 'The way we work is to spark off and learn from each other. It's very rewarding and exciting to do it that way, and you can have confidence that you are doing the right thing – it's not something you've plucked out of the air because you have a particular bee in your bonnet. That's a big danger.'

Sally Crossing has been a tireless advocate for Breast Cancer survivors and indeed all health consumers. Her story is one of immense activism, and of effectively and measurably contributing to the goal of defeating breast cancer within the next two decades. This remarkable woman has transformed consumer representation, visibility and impact in Australia and her achievements have been recognised by her peers, consumer groups and the Australian Honours system. Her significant and multifaceted contributions have impacted the University and the general wellbeing of the wider community.

Chancellor, I present Sally Crossing AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Health Sciences (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.