

Emeritus Professor Donald Richmond Horne AO

The degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) was conferred upon Emeritus Professor Donald Richmond Horne at the Arts ceremony held at 11.30am on 29 April 2005.

Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Emeritus Professor Donald Richmond Horne AO for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

Donald Horne was educated at Maitland, Parramatta and Canterbury High Schools and enrolled in a BA at Sydney University in 1939. His days at the University are vividly recounted in the first volume of his memoirs *The Education of Young Donald* (1967). Professor Horne threw himself headlong into student life, joining the Freethought Society, becoming sub-editor of *Hermes* and editor of *Honi Soit*. War meant he never completed his degree, although his participation in active service was curtailed by a training accident.

In 1944, while training as a diplomatic cadet in Canberra, he began to write for Sydney newspapers. In 1945 he finally abandoned diplomacy for journalism, working full time for the Frank Packer media empire, largely writing for the *Telegraph*. In 1949, however, he travelled to Britain in the hope of becoming a novelist; living the life of a country gentleman, dabbling in local Tory politics, writing occasional journalism (at one point becoming a golf feature writer, a game about which he knew very little) and working on his novels.

In 1954 Sir Frank Packer enticed Professor Horne back to Australia with an offer to edit the magazine *Weekend*, published from 1954 to 1961. Horne used the success of *Weekend* to persuade Packer to establish a serious literary, social and political periodical *The Observer* (1958-61), a breeding ground for a generation of prominent Sydney writers, political analysts and cultural commentators. In 1961 he became editor of Packer's flagship magazine *The Bulletin* whereupon he removed the long-standing magazine motto 'Australia for the White Man' from the masthead.

In 1965 friction between editor and proprietor led to Professor Horne's resignation. He became a creative director for an advertising company, devising the media strategy for the successful State election campaign of the Liberal Party lead by Robert Askin. He was also editor of *Quadrant Magazine* and member of the executive of the Australian Association of Cultural Freedom. But journalism beckoned again; he returned to the Packer stable as editor of *The Bulletin* from 1967 to 1972.

During this period Professor Horne emerged as an acute analyst and commentator, publishing in 1964 his pathbreaking social analysis of contemporary Australia *The Lucky Country*, which has now gone to many editions. The title has entered the Australian lexicon and even become the name of a hotel in Newcastle. Since then Professor Horne has published three novels and more than twenty volumes of history, memoir, political and cultural analysis, including *Money Made Us* (1976), *In Search of Billy Hughes* (1979), *The Great Museum* (1984), *Story of the Australian People* (1985), *The Intelligent Tourist* (1993), *Avenue of the Fair Go* (1998), *Into the Open* (2000), *Looking for Leadership* (2001) and most recently *Ten Steps Towards a more Tolerant Australia* (2003).

In 1972, relations with Packer again became strained and he resigned. The following year he took a gamble and accepted an offer of a temporary research fellowship in political science at the University of NSW. While Horne was a well-known writer and critic, the appointment of someone with no formal academic qualifications to such a post was a bold move. It paid off. Freed from the grind of daily journalism, Horne's career as a cultural critic and social analyst flourished with the quantity of books published after 1973 more than enough to satisfy even the most greedy research bean counter. The University of NSW in turn basked in the glow of a high profile and increasingly influential public intellectual. In 1974 he was appointed to a continuing academic position becoming Associate Professor in 1981 and promoted to a Personal Chair in 1984. He was Chairman of the Faculty of Arts 1982-86 and member of the University's Council 1983-86. In 1992 he was appointed Chancellor of the University of Canberra, serving until 1995.

Despite his extensive academic commitments, Professor Horne has remained very active in public life and letters. Apart from his numerous books, essays and public talks his multifarious contributions to public life and Australian letters include contributing editor to *Newsweek*, member of the Australian Constitutional Commission, member of the NSW Centenary of Federation Committee, Chairman of the Ideas for Australia Program (1991-94), Chairman of the Copyright Agency Limited, Chairman of the Australia Council (1985-90) and President of the Australian Society of Authors (1984-85).

Central to all his many endeavours has been the assistance and loving support of his wife Myfanwy. In 1997 the National Trust designated Professor Horne one of Australia's one hundred Living National Treasures.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting to you, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), scholar, critic, writer, ironist and public intellectual Emeritus Professor Donald Richmond Horne AO.