

Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE



The degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE at the Faculty of Arts graduation ceremony held at 2.00pm on 8 March 2009.



The Chancellor Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO (left) conferring the honorary degree upon Emeritus Professor Dame Leonie Kramer AC DBE (right),
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Citation

Chancellor, I present Dame Leonie Kramer, Companion of the Order of Australia, Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

Dame Leonie Kramer was the Chancellor of this University between 1991 and 2001. Before that, for some years, she served as Deputy Chancellor. It was a time of great change. She devoted herself with supreme dedication to the University and to its place of excellence amongst the universities of the world. She brought her established reputation as a teacher, thinker and writer about Australian literature as well as her role as a public intellectual and greatly accomplished woman to the manifold duties of Chancellor. She was the first woman in nearly a hundred and fifty years to be elected Chancellor of the University. This was but one of many glass ceilings that she challenged and overcame during her glittering career.

It is in part because of Dame Leonie's place as an outstanding role model and fearless champion for her views that the University honours her today. We acknowledge her enormous devotion to the University and the dedication evident in the countless graduations, Senate meetings, committees and functions that she attended as the principal public face of the University. But above all, we pay tribute to her scholarship and leadership in the study of Australian literature. It was she who, in a very real way, helped to establish this subject as a legitimate and important realm for study, separate from, but part of, general English literature, one of the many great gifts of the English-speaking peoples to the world.

Dame Leonie is a respected publisher in the fields of language and literature, specifically Australian literature. She has written definitive works on the poetry of James McAuley. Her distinction as a scholar has been recognised by numerous intellectual and public awards. She is greatly respected by academic experts in her field as a scholar, mentor and example. She is honoured by Australian and overseas writers. She is acknowledged, including by those who sometimes differ from her, for her fierce love of intellectual integrity and individual freedom. Above all, she has proved by her remarkable service, her love for this University, its officers, staff and students.

Dame Leonie has served on many public bodies besides the University. She was a member of the Boards of the St Vincent's Hospital, the Queen Elizabeth II Trust and the International Advisory Committee of Encyclopaedia Britannica. She also served as Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and Commissioner of the Electricity Commission of New South Wales. She has given years of service as

National President of the Australia-Britain Society and in the Council of the Order of Australia Association. For these and many other activities she has received civil and academic honours. This University previously conferred on her the Honorary Degree of Master of Arts. The time has now come for the University to acknowledge her life of scholarship and service, and her devotion to its interests, by conferring on her the highest award in its gift - the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters.

To be Chancellor of a modern Australian university in a time of great change and to be engaged in the intellectual and professional energy of Sydney University necessarily produces occasional differences. This University is a vibrant, energetic, creative place, led by scholars and citizens of great talent and strong opinions. It is in such an institution that great creativity becomes possible. It is a high honour for me to have the privilege of presenting Dame Leonie Kramer for the Honorary Doctorate of this University. I do so with confidence because her service as Chancellor exposed her, over a decade, to all of us in this place. Here and far beyond she has demonstrated her gifts as a scholar, teacher, writer, publicist and prominent intellectual.

In the words of one who has gone before in receiving this same honour and with whom she has always enjoyed a lively and sometimes differing conversation (the Hon E G Whitlam AC, 1981), it's time that she, who presented so many degrees to so many deserving graduates in this very place, should now herself receive from you, Chancellor, the highest tribute that this University can bestow.

Chancellor, I present Dame Leonie Judith Kramer for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa and I invite you to confer the degree upon her.