

## Mr Frank Thomas Moorhouse AM

For his exceptional achievement in the creative arts.

*Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) [Hon DLitt]*  
*Conferring ceremony: 13 May 2015*

### Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Frank Thomas Moorhouse AM to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) for his exceptional contributions to literature.

Frank was born on 21 December 1938 in Nowra. He attended Nowra Central school and his secondary schooling was undertaken at Wollongong Secondary Junior Technical High School to the Intermediate Certificate, and Nowra High, to Leaving Certificate. He completed his compulsory national military service of three months basic training and three years part-time in the Reserve Army (infantry) in the University of Sydney Regiment and in the Riverina Regiment. He studied units of undergraduate political science, Australian history, English, and journalism – law, history and practice, at the University of Queensland as an external student while working as a cadet newspaper journalist in Sydney and as journalist in Wagga Wagga, without taking a degree.

Frank is an acclaimed Australian writer with an international reputation. He has won major Australian national prizes for the short story, the novel, the essay, and for script writing. His work has been published in the United Kingdom, France and the United States and also translated into German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Serbian, and Swedish. His novels have been likened to those of Henry James and praised for their humour and intellectual insight.

He is perhaps best known for winning the 2001 Miles Franklin Literary Award for his novel, *Dark Palace*, which together with *Grand Days* and *Cold Light*, the "Edith Trilogy" is a fictional account of the League of Nations, which trace the strange, convoluted life of a young woman who enters the world of diplomacy in the 1920s through to her involvement in the newly formed International Atomic Energy Agency after World War II.

After leaving school, he began his career as a copy boy and then trained as a cadet journalist on the *Daily Telegraph* (1955–1957). He then worked as a reporter and editor on country newspapers during the years 1958–1962; the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* as a reporter, the *Riverina Express* as reporter, and the *Lockhart Review* as editor. He returned to Sydney to become an administrator and tutor in media studies for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and later became editor of the WEA magazine *The Highway* (1963–1965). He worked as a trade union organiser for the Australian Journalists' Association and as part-time editor of *The Australian Worker* newspaper of the AWU – a union covering shearers, drovers, and other rural workers – the oldest trade union newspaper in Australia (1964). In 1966 he was briefly editor of the country newspaper *The Boorowa News*.

At eighteen, he published his first short story, *The Young Girl and the American Sailor*, in *Southerly* magazine and this was followed by publication of early stories in *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Quadrant*, *Westerly* and other Australian literary magazines.

He became a full-time fiction writer during the seventies also writing essays, short stories, journalism, and film, radio, and TV scripts. In his early career he developed a narrative structure which he has described as the 'discontinuous narrative'.

He has also written and lectured on the way communication and the control of communication has been developing and the relationship of creative professionals to the economy and to the political system. He has been active in the defence of freedom of expression and in analysis of the issues affecting it and in the 1970s was arrested and prosecuted on a couple of occasions while campaigning against censorship. He has been a chairman and a director and one of the founding group of the Australia Copyright Agency (CAL), which was set up by the publishers and authors to coordinate the use of copyright and which now distributes millions of dollars annually to Australian writers. He has been a president of the Australian Society of Authors and member of the Australian Press Council.

He was appointed a member of the SYDNEY PEN eminent writers' panel in 2005. He has participated in Australian and overseas conferences in arts, communication and related areas and has taught, been a guest lecturer and writer-in-residence at Australian and overseas universities.

In 1985, he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for service to Australian literature; and in 2001 he received the Centenary Medal for service to Australian society through writing. In 1987, Frank was Writer-in-Residence in the English Department of the University of Sydney and 1995 he was Colonel Johnson Fellow in the Department of History also at the University of Sydney.

*Forty-seventeen* won *The Age* Book of the Year Award and the Australian Literature Society's Gold Medal in 1988. *The writer in a time of terror* appeared in *Griffith Review* and won the 2007 Alfred Deakin Prize for an Essay Advancing Public Debate in the Victorian Premier's Literary Award and the award for Social Equity Journalism in The Walkley Awards for Excellence in Journalism. In 1994, *Grand Days* won the Adelaide Festival National Prize for Fiction; in 1975 *The Electrical Experience* won the National Award for Fiction; and in 2012 *Cold Light* won the Queensland Literary Award for Fiction and made the short list for the 2012 Miles Franklin Literary Award.

Chancellor, I present Frank Thomas Moorhouse AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.