

Ms Rikki O'Neill

The title of Honorary Fellow was conferred upon Rikki O'Neill at the ceremony held at 2.00pm on 11 May 1997.

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Gavin Brown

Chancellor,

I have the honour to present Mrs Rikki O'Neill, for the conferring of the title of Honorary Fellow.

When Mrs O'Neill migrated to Australia with her father in 1959, she was already imbued, through her family upbringing with a commitment to support, through charitable endeavours, those less fortunate than herself.

Soon after her arrival in Melbourne she began raising funds on behalf of the Yooralla Society for Disabled Children. Beyond this charitable activity, she studied architecture and interior design at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and became a very successful fashion model. She met and married her late husband Terry O'Neill, a well known English entertainer who hosted a popular television programme in Melbourne before moving to Sydney in 1973.

Within a year of enterprising fund raising in Sydney, Rikki O'Neill had raised sufficient money to allow the purchase of the first total body CAT scanner which was used in the Department of Nuclear Medicine at the Prince of Wales Hospital. She also established her own clothes manufacturing company, in Alexandria for larger sized women.

When her brother and sister were diagnosed with multiple sclerosis more than a decade ago, Rikki O'Neill's response was to establish the Ms Large and Lovely Quest, an enterprise designed to raise money for research into multiple sclerosis undertaken within the University of Sydney. Entrants in the quest came from all over Australia and were judged on their personality, communication skills, fashion sense, grooming and, not least importantly, the amount of money for research into multiple sclerosis they were able to raise from corporate sponsorship.

Through her boundless enthusiasm, organisational skills and selfless dedication, Rikki O'Neill has raised more than \$300,000 for the Nerve Research Foundation at the University of Sydney. Mrs O'Neill is now a Governor of the Foundation.

Rikki O'Neill is an outstanding example of an industrious professional who nevertheless finds time and energy to support those she feels are less privileged than herself. Once a fashion model she is now a role model for dedicated friends and supporters of the University who use their energies and talents to encourage other benefactors to support research. In this case, medical research which can achieve much to improve the lives of those who suffer the distressing symptoms of that pattern of nerve-related disabilities known as multiple sclerosis.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting Rikki O'Neill for the conferring of the title of Honorary Fellow.