

## Dr William James Peacock AC

The honorary degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture was conferred upon Dr William James Peacock, AC, BSc PhD *Sydney* HonDSc *CSturt*, FAIAS FTSE FAA FRS, Chief of CSIRO Plant Industry, at a conferring of degrees ceremony held in the Great Hall on 26 April 2002.

### Citation

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Dr William James Peacock AC for the conferring of the degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture (*honoris causa*).

Dr Peacock grew up in Leura, west of Sydney, and gained an early appreciation of Australian flora and fauna in the bushland of the Blue Mountains. This appreciation, and a prescient enrollment advisor telling him that many students had already chosen economics on enrolment day, set him on a path in science. He took majors in Botany and Zoology and graduated from this University with a BSc with 1st Class Honours in 1958, and a PhD in 1963. His doctoral thesis described a study of the genetics of a family of Australian plants.

After postdoctoral appointments in the University of Oregon and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, Dr Peacock joined CSIRO Plant Industry in Canberra in 1965, and has been Chief of the Division since 1978. Under his leadership, CSIRO Plant Industry has gained recognition as one of the world's leading plant research institutes, with a large group of scientists in ten locations around Australia conducting research in many disciplines of plant science with applications in the cropping industries, pasture based agriculture and in horticulture. CSIRO Plant Industry is known for its ethos of excellence and creativity, for ensuring relevance of its research to the Australian agricultural industries, and for creating opportunities for gifted young scientists.

Dr Peacock and his coworkers pioneered research in several major areas of plant biology that are of critical importance to crop production - the molecular genetics of the induction of flowering and seed development in plants, and the molecular biology of stress responses in plants. The results of this research have been published in some 290 scientific publications. Dr Peacock is also at the forefront of interfacing plant science with modern agribusiness and has a strong commitment to extending research results and educating key-decision makers and the general public on the outcomes and value of modern science, particularly gene technology. He has brought the excitement of biological research to a broad cross-section of the community and to a large population of Australian school students.

Dr Peacock's many Honours and Awards include being made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1994 for his scientific contributions to the Nation. He was a co-recipient with Dr Elizabeth Dennis, also of CSIRO Plant Industry, of the Prime Minister's Prize for Science in 2000, the Farrer Memorial Medal for contributions to agricultural science (1999), the Burnet Medal of the Australian Academy of Science for distinguished contributions in the Biological Sciences (1989), the BHP Bicentennial Prize for the Pursuit of Excellence in Science and Technology (1988) and a CSIRO Medal for his leadership of CSIRO Plant Industry. His outstanding contributions to plant science have been recognized by his election to learned societies around the world. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science (1976), the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (1988), the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science (1989), the Royal Society of London (1982), a Foreign Associate of U.S. National Academy of Sciences (1990), and a Foreign Fellow of the Indian National Science Academy (1990).

Dr Peacock has served on numerous national and international scientific committees, on editorial boards of the most prestigious journals in his field, and on the board of various companies. He is currently a Director of the biotechnology company Gene Shears Pty Ltd and of BARLEYPLUS Pty Ltd. He has been a Visiting Professor in the University of California, Los Angeles, University of California San Diego and Stanford University, and has taught courses in these universities as well as in the University of Sydney and the Australian National University. Dr Peacock achievements are not only in the generation of new knowledge, but in the extension of that knowledge to all sections of the community, and in deriving commercial benefits from that knowledge.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting to you, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Agriculture (*honoris causa*), one of the world's most distinguished scientists, Dr William James Peacock AC.