

Dr Sydney Ralph Reader

The degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa) was conferred upon Dr Sydney Ralph Reader at the Medicine ceremony held at 2.00pm on 16 June 2006.



The Deputy Chancellor Emeritus Professor Ann Sefton with Dr Reader at the conferring ceremony, *photo, copyright Memento Photography.*

Citation

Deputy Chancellor, I have the honour to present Dr Ralph Reader for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa).

Ralph Sydney Reader began his distinguished career in medicine after graduating from this university with a MBBS in 1940. His first position was as a resident medical officer at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Soon after he enlisted in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, was commissioned as Surgeon Lieutenant and served as a medical specialist until the end of World War II.

During the war, Dr Reader developed an interest in renal disease. He was employed by the University of Sydney to conduct research in this area at the end of the war. In 1948, Dr Reader received the prestigious Nuffield Dominions Fellowship, which took him to Oxford to continue his research. Whilst at Oxford, Dr Reader carried out investigations in the area of rheumatism and tissue conductivity and was awarded a Doctor of Philosophy from Oxford University in 1952.

Upon returning to Australia, Dr Reader continued his clinical, research and teaching work in immunological disease for over a decade. During this time, he established what was later to become the first Nephrology Unit at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

In 1961, Dr Reader was appointed as Medical Director of the National Heart Foundation of Australia. In 1970, he was appointed Director and continued in this position until his retirement in 1980. At the National Heart Foundation, Dr Reader devoted two decades to public education, professional practice and research into cardiovascular disease. His extraordinary contribution changed Australians thinking about cardiovascular disease and led to better health outcomes for the wider community.

Prior to mid 1960, heart disease and stroke were increasing at an alarming rate. In Australia they accounted for two-thirds of all deaths. In 1968, Dr Reader was the first to report a plateau then a decrease in the number deaths related to these causes. Australia was the first country in the world to reverse this trend and the role of the National Heart Foundation, under Dr Reader's leadership, was crucial to this success.

Whilst at the National Heart Foundation, Dr Reader also made other contributions that led to groundbreaking changes in the treatment of heart disease. He was actively involved in the development of policies that aimed to reduce people's cholesterol levels and oversaw the establishment of coronary care units in hospitals across Australia. Both of these achievements have had a significant influence, decreasing the number Australians who die because of heart disease.

One of Dr Reader's most significant achievements at the National Heart Foundation was discovering the effectiveness of antihypertensive drugs for patients with mild hypertension. This clinical trial helped establish Australia as an international leader in the area of heart disease. Its results, and other similar studies, soon led to the established practice worldwide of prescribing antihypertensive drugs to all hypertensive patients.

Dr Reader has also made an outstanding contribution to academia. He has published extensively in high impact journals, published several books and book chapters, developed the National Heart Foundation's successful research program, served on the Medical Research Advisory Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council, been the invited speaker at numerous international conferences and worked as a consultant to the World Health Organization.

Deputy Chancellor, for his impressive career of service and innovation and outstanding contribution to the health of our nation through his leadership of the National Heart Foundation, I have great pleasure in presenting to you, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa), Ralph Sydney Reader, and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.