

Emeritus Professor Thomas Stapleton

The degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa) was conferred upon Emeritus Professor Thomas Stapleton at the Medicine ceremony held at 4.00pm on 5 May 1995.

Citation

Presented by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal Professor D McNicol

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Emeritus Professor Thomas Stapleton for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa).

Less than two months before that great Australian and Sydney graduate, Peter Wilenski, died he wrote to our University to nominate Professor Stapleton for an honorary degree. In what was probably one of the last letters written by Peter in his extraordinarily rich, but all-too-short, life he highlighted the achievements of Professor Stapleton. And he concluded his letter with these words: 'He was an inspiration to many'.

Professor Stapleton has a special place in the history and affections of this University. For, aside from his academic and professional innovations, he nurtured the minds and careers of students and staff, helping them find their rightful places in institutions both here and abroad.

When Tom Stapleton first came to Sydney as Professor of Child Health in 1960 - a position he held until his retirement in 1983 - he worked under difficult bureaucratic conditions. Nonetheless, he achieved the construction of the Institute of Child Health, which provided excellent teaching and research facilities. His views, which today have been incorporated into orthodox paediatric practice, were unpopular then with many of his colleagues.

He was a strong advocate of child psychiatry and the need to recognise the impact of a rapidly changing urban society on child and family development. In his own Unit the practice of physical child restraints was abolished and open visiting by parents was introduced. He was particularly sensitive to the impact of imprisonment of a parent on children and devoted time to counselling and assisting these families. Although Professor Stapleton was, by background, training and vocation, a university man he placed his gifts at the disposal of the international paediatric community.

As Secretary General of the International Paediatric Association (IP A) he endeavoured to include third world countries and totalitarian regimes in the affairs of the IP A. Long before it became fashionable he personally spread the issues of child health to many world leaders. Our community was fortunate that Tom Stapleton's intellect and energies were channelled for so long into University activities. He displayed kindness and generosity of spirit to members of his profession who were disabled or who had committed criminal offences. Tom Stapleton blended the care of children with the pursuit of academic excellence.

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Emeritus Professor Thomas Stapleton for admission to the degree of Doctor of Medicine (honoris causa).