

Mr Tom Uren AO

The degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (honoris causa) was conferred upon Thomas Uren AO at the ceremony held at 11.30am on 8 November 2002.



Tom Uren after the conferring ceremony, *photos from "archtype", University of Sydney Alumni Association, Faculty of Architecture, Newsletter 10-8-2003*

Citation

Deputy Chancellor, I have the honour to present Tom Uren, AO, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (honoris causa).

In all aspects of his life, Tom Uren has displayed a remarkable understanding of the key factors basic to the quality of life of ordinary people. His particular blend of pragmatic idealism has enabled him to make a major contribution in the fields of urban and regional planning, architecture and allied arts, heritage and conservation, housing practice, and the environment. Throughout, Tom Uren has used his personal skills to guide, motivate and inspire a network of talented people from all walks of life to work together towards egalitarian social outcomes.

Tom Uren was born in May, 1921, in the then working-class suburb of Balmain. He left school during the depression to help support his family, joined the Army in 1939, and was a prisoner-of-war on the infamous Burma-Thailand railway and in Japan from 1942 to 1945. After the war, he was variously a builder's labourer,

professional boxer, rubber millman and Woolworth's manager before entering politics as Member for Reid in Sydney's western suburbs in 1958.

It was as Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam Government that Tom Uren initiated many projects that have had a deep impact on Australian cultural life. These include the development of the Australian Heritage Commission and consequent compilation of the Register of the National Estate, the restoration and effective re-use of derelict inner city areas such as the Glebe Estate and Woolloomooloo, the reclamation of Duck Creek and the creation of the Chipping Norton Lakes Scheme. Through projects such as these, Tom Uren has played a pivotal role in the development of the heritage and conservation movement in Australia, a movement in which the University also participates through the education of professionals for these fields.

He was also largely responsible for stopping the building of a freeway through Glebe, which would have destroyed a substantial portion of this historic suburb. This has been a major benefit to the amenity of the University, its staff, students and visitors.

Tom Uren has played a key role in the development of innovative social housing policy through the re-housing of the original inhabitants within the area, which ensured a social mix, and by advocating that new infill housing should be of high architectural quality. He also laid the foundations for current community housing programs, and his actions and advocacy for tree planting were precursors to the development of Greening Australia.

After leaving Parliament in 1990, Tom Uren continued his involvement in conservation issues, particularly his longstanding concern for the wellbeing of Sydney Harbour and its foreshores. Most recently this led to his being invited to present the inaugural Tuhbow Lecture at the Sydney Opera House in April, 2001.

Tom Uren has been instrumental in changing the way Australians value and treat their natural and built environmental heritage. His work transcends politics.

Now in his 82nd year, he has dealt with the past, the present and the future as one integrated vision. His contribution to Australian society is of such magnitude that the University is itself honoured to be able to honour him.

Deputy Chancellor, I present to you Tom Uren, for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science in Architecture (*honoris causa*) and I invite you to confer it upon him.