

## CITATION

**The Honourable Sir Gerard Brennan, AC, KBE**

**Doctor of the University (*honoris causa*)**

Conferred at the graduation ceremony for graduates from  
The Faculty of Law

Great Hall, City Campus, Monday 9 May 2005, 10.30am

This award is made to Sir Gerard Brennan, Companion of the Order of Australia, Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, in recognition of an outstanding contribution to the University.

Sir Gerard was born in Rockhampton, Queensland. He was educated at the Christian Brothers College in Rockhampton, Downlands College in Toowoomba and the University of Queensland where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws. He was President of the National Union of Australian University Students in 1949.

Sir Gerard is well known for his long and distinguished legal career. It began in 1950 with his appointment as Associate to the Hon. Mr Justice Townley, who presided over War Crimes trials on Manus Island, Papua New Guinea. He was admitted to the Queensland bar in 1951, appointed a Queen's Counsel in Queensland in 1965, appointed as the first President of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal in 1976, was one of the foundation judges of the Federal Court of Australia in 1977, and was appointed to the High Court of Australia in 1981. He was appointed Chief Justice of the High Court in 1995 and held this position until his retirement in 1998. His place in Australian legal history was fixed in 1992 when he wrote the leading judgment in *Mabo v Queensland (No 2)* that rejected the doctrine of terra nullius and recognized native title in Australia.

Sir Gerard has played a leading role in the legal professional associations. During the 1970s he was a member of the Law Council of Australia, President of the Australian Bar Association and a member of the Australian Law Reform Commission. His many achievements have been formally recognised by the receipt of honorary doctorates from seven universities, including a Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*) from UTS. He was made a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1981 and a Companion of the Order of Australia in 1988.

Yet it is because of Sir Gerard's work as Chancellor of UTS between 1998 and 2004 that he stands before us today. For six years he gave great service to this University. Throughout that period he was guided by several key convictions about universities. Foremost among those is the importance of universities in the life of the community. He saw education, and particularly tertiary education, as developing the capacities of individuals, thus enabling them to attain full potential. Chief among these is the development of the capacity for independent and critical thought. With the acquisition of professional knowledge and skills, he maintained, comes the duty to use these benefits responsibly in the service of the community. It was clearly his view, frequently stated, that education benefits society as a whole, as well as the individual.

He placed a strong emphasis on the importance of research, and he supported and was keenly interested in the work of UTS researchers throughout his term of office. He was also a great supporter of and advocate for a full university life, believing a mix of academic, social and sporting activities to be necessary for students' development.

He saw a healthy university sector as critical to the future well-being of the nation and the world. He spoke consistently about the broader social responsibilities of universities. Among these are the need to exercise academic independence, intellectual freedom, and to provide leadership to the professions. They also include examining and debating the social and political issues of the day. These are ideals in which he believes and which he promoted and strongly supported at UTS. Nor was he reticent in expressing his disappointment with the trend of governments to reduce support for universities, thereby making the pursuit of these aspirations more difficult.

Sir Gerard ensured that the role of the Chancellor assisted and supported the full range of University work and life. One of his more enduring contributions was the emphasis he placed on the notion of good governance for the University and the role of Council as the guardian of independence and academic integrity. His tenure of office contributed to the maturing of the University's governance and management, resulting in lasting improvements. He took an active interest in the affairs of the University, both internally and beyond the campus, speaking on its behalf and working to advance its causes. His support and enthusiasm for research and scholarship in all disciplines was evident and most supportive of the University's recent progress. He was strongly interested in its students and he never failed to be impressed by their quality and enthusiasm. He was an enthusiastic promoter of indigenous and multicultural issues. He was unfailingly courteous to all members of the University and always carried out his work with both dignity and good humor. A measure of his success as Chancellor can be seen in the high regard in which he is held by Council and the UTS community.

In 1999, at the end of his installation address, Sir Gerard alluded to the upcoming performance of his duties as Chancellor, saying that he hoped to be of some service to this University. At the close of his term as Chancellor, the University affirms that those duties have been successfully discharged with great distinction and humanity. He was always guided by the highest principles and dedicated to the service of the University, its students, its staff and, through them, the Australian people. In so doing he has been a model for the contemporary university chancellor.

It is a great honour for the University of Technology, Sydney to award Sir Gerard Brennan, Companion of the Order of Australia, Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire, the degree of Doctor of the University (*honoris causa*).