

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you for the award of the degree of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann.

The award recognises outstanding service to the Northern Territory, particularly in the fields of education, visual arts, and Aboriginal affairs.

Miriam-Rose was born in the bush near Daly River in 1950. Whilst Miriam Rose is a member of the Ngangiwumirr language group she also speaks four other local languages.

When Miriam Rose was about five years old she was placed in the care of her aunt Nellie and uncle Attawomba Joe, a legendary police tracker. Miriam Rose subsequently moved with her aunt and uncle to live at police stations at Adelaide River, Pine Creek and Mataranka, where she attended government schools. Whilst maintaining her traditional cultural education, Miriam Rose learned to “read the country” as well as the pages of her text books.

When she was aged about fourteen, Miriam Rose returned to Daly River and continued her education at the mission school. In 1965, Miriam Rose was baptised a Catholic.

In 1968, Miriam Rose undertook a Teaching Assistants' course at Kormilda College in Darwin, and subsequently became a teacher's aide at the St. Francis Xavier mission school at Daly River. She returned to Kormilda for further study in 1971. It was during this time that she became keenly interested in painting.

Miriam Rose developed a unique imagery characterised in her acclaimed series of paintings, Australian Stations of the Cross. Early recognition of her work was also given when she was asked to illustrate Alan Marshall's book “People of the Dreaming”.

As Miriam Rose's interest in painting grew, she used art increasingly as a means of encouraging children to express themselves. In 1974, the Commonwealth government sponsored a secondment to Victoria, enabling her to work with art teachers in schools.

In 1975, Miriam Rose again returned to Daly River as the Territory's first fully qualified Aboriginal teacher and for many years held the position of Art Consultant with the Professional Services Branch of the Northern Territory Department of Education. During this time she visited schools throughout the Territory thus gaining the opportunity to advance her commitment to the inclusion of visual art as a part of every child's education.

Miriam Rose was convinced on her return to the Daly River School in 1982 that there was a need for more Aboriginal teachers to work among non-Aboriginal school children and deeply committed to ensuring that Aboriginal people had the opportunity to become qualified teachers and to manage their own schools. Miriam Rose continues to advocate that education is a matter for the whole community, and must be adapted to suit contemporary Aboriginal needs. She has shown great leadership and perseverance in meeting these objectives. For example, she encouraged other women from Daly River to study to become teachers and she initiated a very successful remote area teaching education program. St. Francis Xavier School is now completely staffed and managed by Aboriginal people. Her commitment to the community is demonstrated by her role in creating the Merrepin Arts Centre, which fosters adult education with a focus on the visual arts.

In 1988 Miriam Rose was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts by Deakin University, through Batchelor College. Two years later, she began training as a school principal, and in 1993 was appointed to the position of Principal at the St. Francis Xavier School at Daly River.

Miriam Rose was awarded a Bachelor of Education degree in 1993 by Deakin University, and in 1999 gained her Master of Education Degree, with High Distinction. The focus of her work for this degree was the integration of traditional and western education for Aboriginal children and adults.

In 1998, Miriam Rose was appointed Member of the Order of Australia, for her services to Aboriginal education and art, and for services to the Nauiyu community having been for many years a member of the local community council, often in the role of President.

CHANCELLOR,

In recognition of her outstanding service and contribution to the Northern Territory, in acknowledgment of her leadership and example in the fields of Aboriginal education and the visual arts, and for her contribution to the general community, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters, Honoris Causa, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann