

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Education Raymattja Marika, a woman of high esteem in both the Yolngu Aboriginal community of north-east Arnhem Land and in the wider Australian community.

This award recognises her notable contribution to education, especially to the education of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The award will also honour her contributions to the University and to Australia as a whole, including her services to the causes of reconciliation and inter-cultural understanding.

Raymattja Marika was born at Yirrkala in 1958. She is the oldest child of Dadaynga (Roy) and Djerrkngu (Eunice) Marika. Her father was a pioneer of the land rights movement and the person who perhaps did more than any other to achieve national recognition of the fundamentally important relationship between Aboriginal people and their land and sea.

Roy Marika had a strong belief in the special value of education for Aborigines, both in their own cultures and in the culture of the non-Aboriginal world. Inspired by that belief, Raymattja Marika has dedicated her life to the achievement of a society in which every Aboriginal child would have the best possible opportunity to obtain a proper education 'both ways' – in the traditional language and other culture of their country, and in the way of the wider world.

Raymattja's own education began when her grandmothers and mothers taught her about her relationship with the land and with her community. She also learned how to gather and use the products of the land and how to discharge her obligations to contribute to the physical and cultural well-being of her community.

She also attended the Yirrkala kindergarten and then the mission school. She learned to read and write in English but she also became literate in her own Rirratjingu language. While still a school student she became involved in recording and writing local stories so that they could be used in bilingual education programs which began in 1974. In 1976 she was employed at the school to continue this work, thus beginning her formal career as an educator.

Some of the books, stories and songlines she worked on during these early years gave her a new understanding of the world from the perspective of the Yolngu people of north-eastern Arnhem Land. Her thinking was enriched about the complexities of the content and context of the Yolngu world view. She realised that life involved continuing learning and that, for the Yolngu, life meant constant demonstration and affirmation of traditional knowledge and values.

She was strongly encouraged by her father, who had been centrally involved in the land rights struggle that was provoked by proposals for mining near Yirrkala and in the litigation which became known as the Gove Land Rights case. Roy Marika realised that it would be essential for younger Yolngu to be able to express and translate Yolngu language, lore and views to the wider community. In particular, Roy Marika stressed, it would be essential for people to be able to clearly explain the principles underlying all aspects of Yolngu society so that the attitudes of outsiders toward the existence and legitimacy of the Yolngu way of life could be changed for the better. Raymattja pursues those same goals, strongly believing that there is still much to be done to improve inter-cultural attitudes.

Raymattja has pursued personal development in directions that have enabled her to significantly contribute to the achievement of her father's objectives. She has extended these directions by articulating a need for fundamental change in the school education system. For three decades she has argued that it is necessary to bring about a situation where Aboriginal people are included in the mainstream education system, where the curriculum includes aspects of Aboriginal life and culture and where Aboriginal first languages are accepted as part of the curriculum.

While continuing her learning about the Yolngu way, she successfully studied for a Certificate of Literary Attainment from the School of Aboriginal Languages at Batchelor. She then studied through Melbourne University for a Graduate Diploma in Adult Education and Training. She subsequently gained an Advanced Diploma in Teaching from the Batchelor Institute of Primary Education.

In 1976 Raymattja married Nanikiya Munungiritj. Together the couple achieved much for the promotion of Yolngu culture and for the protection of Yolngu land. The couple had four children, but Raymattja was widowed in 2004. Raymattja now has five grand daughters and one grand son.

In 1984 Raymattja led a decisive move to establish the Yirrkala School Action Group which had as its main objective the achievement of negotiation between education providers and the community about the teaching and learning environment and the curriculum content. The activities of the Action Group resulted in the Yirrkala School Council gaining control over decision making in the school and in achieving a program and mode of delivery of educational services that is valued by Aboriginal groups and communities.

In 2002 her eminence in the field of Aboriginal education was recognised when she was appointed a Director of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. She has since been appointed a Director of Reconciliation Australia; Treasurer of the Yothu Yindi Foundation; and she plays a central role in the annual Garma Festival activities. In 2006 she was centrally involved in Charles Darwin University's Garma Key Forum Steering Committee that delivered a report on indigenous education and training which plotted ways ahead for raising levels of literacy and numeracy and increasing training opportunities for Aboriginal students.

Raymattja's association with the Yirrkala school continues, as does her advocacy for 'both ways' education. In August 2007 she was appointed Director of the Buku Larrngay Mulka Arts Centre in Yirrkala.

In 2006 she was named the winner of the Territory Day Award, in recognition of her excellence as a role model for educational advancement and for her tireless work to improve education and training opportunities for Aboriginal people. She was subsequently a finalist in nominations for Australian of the Year.

She has written numerous scholarly and general articles and in 1998 she was chosen to deliver the prestigious Wentworth Lecture at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. She concluded that lecture by saying "our job as educators is to convince the people who control mainstream education that we wish to be included. Until that happens, reconciliation is an empty word and an intellectual *terra nullius*."

Raymattja was also responsible for writing the original version of the Yolngu language and culture notes which have been taught in the Charles Darwin University Yolngu studies program and has been a key advisor to that program which won the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Tertiary Teaching in 2005.

Her quest for inclusion and for reconciliation has been rewarded by gratifying results. Over a period of more than thirty years, Raymattja Marika has made a positive difference to Australia. In particular, she has successfully worked toward educational outcomes which will empower Aboriginal people to express themselves as Aborigines in an environment which understands and respects the bases of Aboriginal culture. In that process, she has enhanced the educational opportunities for non-Aboriginal people to learn about Aboriginal culture and traditions. In so doing, she has enriched the cultural inheritance of all Australians.

CHANCELLOR

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the education of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory and in acknowledgment of her many notable contributions to the whole Australian community, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Education, Honoris Causa – Raymattja Marika