

Robyne Burridge

Chancellor, I have the pleasure of presenting to you Robyne Burridge, who council has determined should be awarded the honorary Doctor of Arts.

Robyne is to be commended for her tireless efforts in creating a more inclusive and understanding community through her advocacy work, particularly in disability services.

Robyne, who was born with cerebral palsy, has led by example in her work to not only improve the lives of people living with disability, but to improve our whole community through greater inclusion.

Robyne began her advocacy work in the Northern Territory in 1980 as the coordinator of the International Year of Disabled People 1981 for the Northern Territory Government (NTG).

According to an ABC story published more than three decades after her arrival in the NT, Robyne recalled that when she arrived there was an assumption shared by many people that there were not many people with a disability in the territory, because you didn't see them around.

Her response was simply; "Maybe they just can't get out of their homes."

That doggedness and the way she embraced the region as a champion for change earned her the Citizen of the Year by the

Darwin City Council in 1981. Robyne received the award after only five months in the NT.

Over the past 40 years, her commitment to creating a more just and equitable society has helped many to change their lives for the better, and for many of the decision makers to be compassionate and inclusive with their social policies.

Representing the community for 20 years as an Alderman on Darwin City Council, including one year as Deputy Lord Mayor, Robyne believes she has developed a broad understanding of community needs and expectations, not just in the disability field.

Despite the recognition she has received, Robyne believes “the most honourable achievement you can have is when someone asks you for help and you are able to get a positive outcome for them.” She has never wavered from her role as an advocate, and activist and a champion for people’s inclusion, equality and access.

In January 2010 until the change of government in 2012, Robyne worked for the Henderson Government and was appointed a Ministerial Adviser in disability, to the then Minister for Health and Families Kon Vatskalis

In December 2017 Robyne’s strong belief that people with a disability have the same rights as anyone else in the community, was further recognised when she was announced

as a joint winner of the Fitzgerald Social Change Award, as part of the NT Human Rights Awards.

On Australia Day 2020 Robyne was awarded an OAM in the General Division, for service to people with a disability

In November last year Robyne was announced as the 2022 Northern Territory Senior Australian of the Year.

She represented the Territory at the Australian of the Year Awards in Canberra, in January 2022.

While at the Australia Day Awards in Canberra Robyne continued to advocate for people with a disability. She said then her biggest challenge has been and probably still is, the need for a better understanding about disability and the various types of disabilities there are. She said there is truth to the saying; “Your attitude is my greatest handicap.”

Chancellor

In recognition of her outstanding service to people with a disability, Charles Darwin University Council awards Robyne Burridge the Honorary Degree Doctor of Arts.