

## **Harold Thomas**

Chancellor, I have the pleasure of presenting Harold Thomas, who has been awarded the Honorary Doctor of Arts.

Born in 1947 in Alice Springs, Harold's mother was a Luritja woman and his father a Wombai man. During his early years, he spent countless afternoons drawing and painting on scraps of butcher's paper. As a member of the Stolen Generations, Harold was taken from his family at the age of seven, and sent to St Frances House in South Australia. At eleven, he found a new home in Willunga, south of Adelaide.

Harold's trajectory as an artist commenced when he secured a scholarship to the South Australian School of Art at the age of seventeen. He became the first Aboriginal person to graduate from an Australian art school, and also received an honorary degree in social anthropology from Adelaide University.

In 1970, Harold embarked on a career as a survey artist at the South Australian Museum, as the first Aboriginal person to be employed in a state museum, where he had the privilege of delving into a treasure trove of artefacts and cultural treasures.

Amidst his studies, Harold also engaged passionately with the Aboriginal Land Rights Movement. In 1971, he designed a bold

graphic artwork that swiftly became the emblem of the Aboriginal flag, first hoisted during the NAIDOC march in Victoria Square, Adelaide. This flag remains an enduring symbol of unity and advocacy for Aboriginal rights and justice.

Over the years, he has presented many exhibitions in Darwin, showcasing the variety of his mediums from watercolour landscapes to oil paintings, prints, detailed charcoal sketches and abstract graphics.

In 2016, he embarked on a series of emotionally charged paintings that depicted confronting historical subjects. These evocative artworks depicted the struggle of Aboriginal people under the constraints of European law, the aftermath of European colonisation, and the Frontier Wars.

Drawing from a classical education, Harold's body of work expands across more than five decades of mastery in draftsmanship, light, colour, composition and subject.

Chancellor,

In recognition of his significant contribution to the fine arts, and activism for Aboriginal rights, Charles Darwin University Council awards Harold Thomas the title of Honorary Doctor of Arts.