The creation of Charles Darwin University in late 2003 completed another chapter in the life of an extraordinary Territorian.

As Chancellor of the Northern Territory University, Nan Giese made a remarkable contribution to the former institution which was recognised at the recent Charles Darwin University graduation ceremony held 20 May where Mrs Giese was awarded the degree of Doctor of Education Honoris Causa.

Elected to the position of Chancellor in 1993, Mrs Giese continued her life-long commitment to improving education for all Territorians. She was notable for not only chairing the Council meetings but also attending every standing committee meeting. Nan also took a very active role in the University Art Collection Committee and the University's Foundation.

Born Nancy Wilson in January 1922, Nan Giese was educated at Brisbane Girls Grammar School and the University of Queensland Teachers Training College.
After graduation in 1936 she became a physical education teacher and was appointed to the 'flying squad' traversing Queensland, instructing primary school teachers how to teach physical education. She remained a physical education teacher with the Queensland Department of Education until 1946.

On 4 May 1946, she married Harry Giese, the inaugural director of Physical Education in Queensland who had appointed her to the 'flying squad'. A year later she and her infant daughter Diana accompanied Harry to Canberra where he took up a new position.

In early 1955, changing location yet again, Nan, accompanied by her two children, Diana and Richard, travelled to Darwin to join Harry who had been appointed as Director of a newly established Welfare Branch. She found, to her dismay, that the house the family had been allocated on Myilly Point had no flywire on the kitchen windows and none of the bedrooms had overhead fans. She set about making the house a home.

Nan came to public prominence in 1968 when she became Vice President of the North Australian Eisteddfod Council, a post she held until 1972. Not content with one position, Nan was also a member of the Darwin Hospital Advisory Board from 1969 to 1973. She also served as Director of the Darwin Performing Arts Centre Board from 1981 to 1993, becoming a life member in 1993, and was President of the Northern Territory Arts Council for 10 years from 1971 during which time she was also a member of the Northern Territory Museums and Art Galleries Board.

Whilst serving as a member of the Northern Territory Post Schools Advisory Council, Nan was appointed to the Interim Planning Committee of the Darwin Community College in 1972. Prominent in getting the Community College back on its feet after Cyclone Tracy had badly damaged the facilities, Nan became Chairman of the College Council in 1976. She held this position until 1985, overseeing the change from the Darwin Community College to the Darwin Institute of Technology and the resulting furore over the change in name and alleged government interference in the institution.

After undertaking other roles in the arts and education, Nan Giese was appointed to the Interim Council of the Northern Territory University and was elected as Deputy Chancellor. She was elected Chancellor in February 1993 - a position she was to retain until the Northern Territory University became the Charles Darwin University ten years later.

In her role as Chancellor, Nan travelled both within the Territory and in South East Asia and China. Throughout her term as Chancellor, Nan continued her commitment to the arts in the Northern Territory as a life member of the Darwin Entertainment Centre and Darwin Chorale and a Friend of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra. She remains one of the Northern Territory's most passionate advocates of local talent in both the visual and performing arts.

Nan Giese was awarded with the Membership of the British Empire (MBE) in 1971, which was superseded by the award of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1977. She was appointed an Officer in the Order of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday Honours list in 1997.

Since the death of her life partner Harry, Nan has taken on the role of custodian and caretaker of one of Darwin's most important and magnificent tropical gardens. These gardens surround Nan's home of 47 years, one of the few surviving National Trust homes at Myilly Point in Darwin. She recently credited the upkeep of her garden with keeping her fit at 81 years of age.

Nan Giese, a much-respected Territorian, epitomises an active, dynamic, contributing and caring Territorian who gave so much to the Northern Territory University and its predecessor institutions during their existence.