

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you John Ah Kit whom Council has determined should be awarded the Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa*.

Born in Alice Springs, John Ah Kit went on to become the Northern Territory's first Aboriginal Cabinet minister in the Martin Labor Government in 2001, a position he held until his retirement in 2005.

Born fifth into a family of 13, Jack moved with his parents to Darwin in 1954 and went to Darwin and Parap primary schools, followed by a brief stint at Darwin High School. After leaving school he worked on a number of Top End cattle stations including Litchfield, Elizabeth Downs, Douglas and Elsey. Jack also had a career as a truck driver on Darwin Wharf and, after Cyclone Tracy, went to Alice Springs working with the Department of Transport and Works on road projects.

In 1977 Jack left to study at the Aboriginal Task Force at the then South Australian Institute of Technology where he obtained a Certificate in Community Development and an Associate Diploma in Social Work. He then work in this field across the Territory.

In 1983 Jack was elected to the Full Council of the Northern Land Council (NLC) representing Aboriginal people in the Katherine region. In 1984 he was appointed Director of the NLC, a position he held until he resigned in 1990 to contest the seat of Goyder for the Labor Party.

In the late 1980s Jack was part of the negotiating team, working with elders, to secure Coronation Hill in Kakadu from further exploration or mining.

In 1991, Jack was appointed Director of the Katherine-based Jawoyn Association. During this period he was part of the negotiating team, working with the elders, that reached Australia's first Native Title settlement over mining at Mt Todd, as well as establishing with the Jawoyn Executive sustainable enterprises at Nitmiluk National Park.

In 1995 he resigned from the Jawoyn Association to contest the seat of Arnhem, a seat he held until his retirement in 2005. For the majority of his time as a member of the Martin Labor government, he was the Territory's first Aboriginal minister, serving as Minister for Community Development, Housing, Local Government, Sport and Recreation, Regional Development and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Indigenous Affairs.

After his “retirement” in 2005, Jack has served as the Chairman of the Nitmiluk National Park Board of Management and adviser to the Jawoyn Association. He also served on the Reference Group to the Anderson-Wild inquiry into child abuse on Aboriginal communities.

In 2007 at the National NAIDOC Awards held in Darwin, Jack Ah Kit was awarded the life time achievement award.

CHANCELLOR,

In recognition of his contribution to the people of the Northern Territory in particular in his role with the Northern Land Council, the Jawoyn Association and as a Minister in the Northern Territory Government, he has been awarded by the Council of Charles Darwin University, the degree of Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa* John Ah Kit