

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science Honoris Causa, John Duncan Mathews.

John Mathews attended Coburg High School in the mid 1950's, where he was awarded the Gowrie Scholarship. During his later studies at the University of Melbourne, John was awarded the Major Resident Scholarship for Ormond College, and the Thomas and Elizabeth Ross Scholarship for Medical Science. He graduated from the University of Melbourne with degrees in science and medicine.

He worked in the highlands of New Guinea from 1964-68, where he studied the epidemiology of kuru. He then returned to the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute where he published on the epidemiology of autoimmunity, computer diagnoses and related topics.

From 1972-75, he worked at the University of Oxford, having gained the CJ Martin Fellowship in 1972. During his time there, he co-authored publications on cancer in nickel workers and the side effects of vasectomy.

From 1975-85, John Mathews was a Research Fellow funded by the NHMRC, the National Health and Medical Research Committee, and later became the Principal Research Fellow for the Department of Medicine at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. It was here that John helped to establish the Australian Twins Registry and the discipline of genetic epidemiology in Australia.

Over this period, he was an adviser to government on radiation matters, and he served as the Senior Scientific Adviser to the Agent Orange Royal Commission. It was also during this time that he served on a number of committees and Advisory Councils, including the Board of the Australian Institute for Family Studies, the Australian Ionising Radiation Advisory Council, and a number of NHMRC Committees.

In 1984, Professor Mathews was appointed as the Robert Menzies Professor of the University of Sydney and the Foundation Director of the Menzies School of Health Research. He consequently moved to Darwin in 1985, and worked at establishing the Menzies School of Health Research as a centre of excellence in Aboriginal and tropical health, using the substantial research expertise he had accumulated in areas covering the social to molecular sciences.

An early challenge on his arrival in the Northern Territory was for him to develop an understanding of the origins of the poor health of Aboriginal Australians. Under his leadership, the Menzies School of Health Research contributed to the debate on Aboriginal health by

helping to fill important gaps in understanding communication and implementation. As a result of John's inspired academic leadership and high standards, the Menzies School of Health Research now has a national and international reputation for the quality of its research. In particular, it has become known for its capacity to bring together a range of disciplines and to demonstrate linkages between the educational, social, biological and medical determinants of health and disease. Much of this stems from Professor Mathews' vision and ability to take a broad view of the social and historical changes that have influenced health through the effects of nutrition, bacterial infection and substance abuse. He also argued that many health problems of Aboriginal people today are similar to those seen a century ago in city slums.

Professor Mathews emphasised that professionals from a range of backgrounds – scientists, educators, economists, health workers and epidemiologists – must work together to determine how optimum services could be provided effectively and efficiently. He actively encouraged multi-disciplinary research to provide new insights to help alleviate the potentially devastating consequences of rapid cultural change.

In 1994, Professor Mathews' substantial contribution to medical research was recognised by his being appointed as a Member of The Order of Australia.

Professor Mathews also provided leadership in the Menzies School's successful bid for a Cooperative Research Centre in Aboriginal and Tropical Health which was developed in partnership with the Northern Territory University, Flinders University, government health service organisations and Aboriginal Medical Services. His tireless determination to obtain funding for the Cooperative Research Centre and his persistent approach to gain the support of the Aboriginal Medical Services, in particular, were important to the success of this venture. That Cooperative Research Centre is the only one in the country with a majority Aboriginal Board and an Aboriginal Chair.

His leadership at Menzies and his mentoring of young Territorian researchers is reflected by the various awards which Menzies students have accumulated, including Queen's Trust for Young Australians and Young Australian of the Year Awards.

While in the Northern Territory, Professor Mathews expanded his interests and influence, with active participation on the Northern Territory Division of the National Heart Foundation, the NT Research and Development Advisory Council, and as President of the Mental Health Association of the Northern Territory, to name but a few.

He was appointed by the Administrator as a Foundation Member of the Northern Territory University Council in 1989, and he served on that Council for ten years. His extensive experience on other committees as well as his strong academic background enabled Professor Mathews to provide insightful academic guidance and support, and objective analyses of issues during the University's critical formative years, and he was a well-respected member of the Council.

In July 1999, Professor Mathews resigned from the Menzies School of Health Research to accept the position of Head of the National Centre for Disease Control. Professor Mathews has been a leading academic for many years, and his time in the Northern Territory leaves a legacy of which he can be extremely proud.

CHANCELLOR

In recognition of his outstanding achievements in the area of Aboriginal and Tropical Health, and for his vision and leadership in establishing and developing the Menzies school of health research, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science - Honoris John Duncan Mathews