

## CHANCELLOR

I have the honour to present to you John Hadley Thompson AM, who Council has determined should be awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa*.

Jack Thompson, as he is known to so many people around the world, is an iconic Australian who is best known for his career in the film industry and his support for the sustainability of Indigenous communities and culture. His early years included a period as a stockman in the Northern Territory and time in the Army Medical Corps. However, it was whilst studying at the University of Queensland that Jack Thompson decided to devote his life and career to acting. After some 28 auditions, he landed his first acting role in 1968 on the television soap opera *Motel*. Since those early times Jack's acting career has evolved to span more than 40 years and he has appeared in more than 50 films, including such notable Australian films as *Sunday Too Far Away*; *Breaker Morant*; *The Man from Snowy River*; and *Australia*. Latterly his career has included appearing in many international films including *Star Wars Episode II*, *Leatherheads* and *The Great Gatsby*.

In recent years Jack Thompson has started recording iconic bush poetry from some of Australia's greatest poets including Banjo Patterson, CJ Dennis and Henry Lawson. His rendition of the *The Battlefield Poems of Banjo Paterson* became a top selling recording.

Jack Thompson is an outspoken environmental and Indigenous activist. For many years he has been actively involved with Landcare Australia for which he is a Landcare Ambassador. He advocates passionately for sustainable land management at the local and national levels.

From early in his career Jack Thompson has been a strident activist for Indigenous Australians. He has been outspoken on the need to preserve Indigenous rock-art and culture more broadly and has been a regular attendee at the Garma Festival. In the 1980s he along with others advocated for the establishment of an Indigenous Advisory Group at the National Museum.

In 2007, whilst at the Garma Festival the concept of the *Jack Thompson Foundation* was launched. The basis of the Foundation is a two-way concept, the "Living ground" and "Two-way learning". With the vision *to house homelands communities into the future*. By assisting with projects that address unemployment and housing shortages, the Foundation's aim is to facilitate the teaching of Indigenous Australians in how to build their own houses from the materials and resources available on their own country.

The Foundation is only young and yet already has achieved much. The Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation has been able to set up a timber mill and carpentry workshop near Yirrkala. A multi-faceted project of housing construction, the development of a cultural village and the

establishment of an aquaponic system for fresh vegetables food, is being undertaken with the peoples of the Urapuntja and Aherrenge homelands.

In order to expand the opportunities available the Foundation is forming alliances with many other organisations such as the ACTU, Hands on Learning Australia, the Jimmy Little Foundation and the University of Sydney as well as working with Charles Darwin University.

These are projects designed to changes people's lives in these communities. Through training and mentoring, Indigenous peoples can make best use of local resources to create a sustainable community.

Throughout his expansive career Jack Thompson has received many awards including two AFI Awards for best actor; a Cannes Film Festival Award for best supporting actor; the Special Achievement Award from the Film Critics Circle of Australia; and in 2005 he was presented with the Living Legend IF Award by the Inside Film Awards. He has two Logie Awards and has been inducted into the Logie Hall of Fame and the Australian Film Walk of Fame.

He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1986 for services to the film industry.

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In recognition of his outstanding contribution to Australian society through the film industry and his significant commitment to advancing Indigenous culture and community sustainability, John Hadley Thompson AM has been awarded by the Council of Charles Darwin University, the degree of Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa* - Dr John Hadley Thompson AM