

CHANCELLOR,

I have the honour to present to you Veronica Dobson, who Council has determined should be awarded the title of Companion of the University.

Veronica is an Eastern Arrernte woman from Santa Theresa. When she was young, her parents worked on cattle stations to the east of Alice Springs – when her parents weren't working, the family would camp out bush, where Veronica gained an early and in depth understanding of her country. Veronica, herself, began working with at the Alice Springs Institute of Aboriginal Development as a cleaner some 30 years ago. However the skills that she developed as an Arrernte leader, and her knowledge of both her land and her language, soon led to a greater demands for her time.

Veronica has taught Arrente to countless Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal school children and adults, and has helped to establish it as a written language - she was a pioneer in the development of language curriculum materials at Yipirinya School and is also the co-author of the Eastern and Central Arrente to English Dictionary. She was instrumental in the Institute of Aboriginal Development's transition to becoming a nationally recognised leader in teaching, interpreting and translating Australian Aboriginal languages.

She has also worked as an interpreter through the court system and in hospitals and has translated English news radio programs into Indigenous languages for broadcasting into communities. In addition to this, she is also a respected, contributing member of the Many Hands art movement.

Veronica is a skilled educator in the area of botany and ecology, often using the natural world as her classroom. Her expansive botanical expertise stems from her deep knowledge of country, and the necessity to work with the land in harsh desert conditions – her knowledge of plants and their uses for both food and medicine, has been compared by CSIRO ecologist Fiona Walsh, as the “Arandic equivalent of a professor of science”.

Veronica remains committed to ensuring that the current generation of young Indigenous people in Alice Springs know and respect the language and culture of their grandparents, whilst also living and thriving within the greater Alice Springs community. She has always strived to develop and pass on her knowledge of land, country, language and culture.

Veronica is a published author in both storytelling and oral history and in 2011 was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for services to the Indigenous community as a linguist, a naturalist and an ecologist.

CHANCELLOR

In recognition of her outstanding contribution to the preservation and advancement of the Arrente language and culture, Veronica Dobson has been awarded by the Council of Charles Darwin University, the title of Companion of the University