

Chancellor, I have the honour to present to you Dr Chris Burns, who Council has determined should be awarded the degree of Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa*.

Dr Burns was born in Sydney and completed his Bachelor of Pharmacy and Bachelor of Science at the University of Queensland. He first arrived in the Northern Territory with his wife and three children in the late 1970s, and was employed as a Recreation Officer in Maningrida. Throughout this period, he was involved in many community development initiatives, including intervention programs aimed at petrol sniffing. He remained engaged in this work until the late 1980s, when he left the Territory to assume a position lecturing at the University of New England – it was during this time in which he also completed his Bachelor of Science Honours. His deep commitment to Indigenous issues continued throughout this period with his involvement with the Aboriginal Health Worker Training Programs.

He returned to the Territory in the 1990s where he commenced working with the Menzies School of Health Research – it was during this period he completed his PhD through the University of Sydney, which was recognised by the awarding of the Harding-Burns prize for the best thesis in Drug and Alcohol research. His thesis again involved the issue of petrol sniffing, and his broader research during this time concerned Aboriginal Health - in particular, the delivery of health Services and the development of programs to address drug and alcohol issues. In 1997, he became the Director of the National Heart Foundation (NT), with national responsibilities to develop collaborative programs in a range of areas to address cardiovascular health in the Indigenous population.

Dr Burns was elected the member for Johnston as part of the first Northern Territory Labor Government, under the Honourable Clare Martin in August 2001. In the same year he was appointed Chair of the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and later Chair of the first Estimates Committee in the NT Parliament. Dr Burns enjoyed a distinguished and diverse career as a parliamentary Minister, with portfolios including Tourism, Primary Industries and Fisheries, Transport and Infrastructure, Police Fire and Emergency Services, Gaming, Licensing and Alcohol Policy, and Education and Training. In addition, in December 2009, he was appointed the Leader of Government Business.

In his capacity as the Minister for Education and Training, he was heavily involved with the development of the Centre for School Leadership Development – the Centre represents a partnership between the Northern Territory Government and CDU, with a mission to provide professional development for current and aspiring school leaders, including principals, curriculum staff and teachers.

Throughout this time, Dr Burns had a longstanding involvement with the St Vincent de Paul Society of the Northern Territory, as both a committee member and a volunteer – an

association which still exists today. In addition, he continued to write, contribute to and have published, many academic papers, primarily concerning issues of public and, more specifically, Indigenous health. His research has informed his many conference presentations in such areas as petrol sniffing, the social context of Kava and the establishment of regionally controlled Health Services, with a view to directly impacting on the people and communities of the Northern Territory.

He has remained a passionate supporter of education for all Territorians, and since his retirement from Parliament in 2012, has been involved with the University through lecturing in the areas of Physiology and Public Health.

Chancellor,

In recognition of his contribution to the development of tertiary education in the Northern Territory and commitment to serving the community Dr Chris Burns has been awarded by the Council of Charles Darwin University, the degree of Doctor of Letter, Honoris Causa