

Citation: The Hon John von Doussa AO QC
28 September 2011, 10:00am

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present to you the Hon John William von Doussa AO QC.

John von Doussa is being admitted to the degree of Doctor of the University for his distinguished service to the University.

John von Doussa graduated in law from the University of Adelaide in 1962, winning the Bennet, Gepp and Stow Prizes in his final year.

He cofounded the firm of von Doussa, McGregor and Co and in 1978 he was appointed Queen's Counsel and joined the independent bar at Bar Chambers and then Jeffcott Chambers. He was also actively involved in legal education and the Law Society. As well as tutoring at the University of Adelaide, he was one of the pioneers of the Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice to replace Articles which were increasingly problematic. In 1982 he became President of the Law Society, and in 1985 Senior Vice-President of the Law Council of Australia.

John von Doussa's judicial career began on the South Australian Supreme Court Bench in 1986. He was appointed to the Federal Court on 1 December 1988 and remained there until 15 August 2003. During this time he was also the President of the Australian Competition Tribunal, an additional judge of the ACT Supreme Court and he held commissions as a judge of the Supreme Court of Vanuatu and the Supreme Court of Fiji. From 1994 he was a judge of the Commonwealth Industrial Relations Court and was a presidential member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

He gained increased prominence nationally as the President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) from May 2003 to 8 September 2008. As President of HREOC he demonstrated an ongoing commitment to the promotion and improvement of the rule of law, the public interest and the administration of justice within Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

On 26 July 2004 John von Doussa was appointed Chancellor of the University of Adelaide, a post he held until July 2010. During his time as Chancellor his strong inclusive leadership, commitment to the principles of equity and community, and his status locally, nationally and internationally proved invaluable to the University.

During his Chancellorship, he guided the University through a major upgrade of University facilities including the new engineering building, the establishment of the School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences and the redevelopment of the Hughes Plaza. He also oversaw changes to the University's governance, including amendments to the University of Adelaide Act 1971. As Chancellor he was also actively engaged with the University community through the recognition of the University's alumni, the promotion of National Reconciliation Week and regular attendance at international events.

John von Doussa has spoken and written extensively about the protection and promotion of human rights in Australia and has made a significant contribution to the public debate on a range of issues. He has also been a strong supporter of human rights education and has made important contributions to the study of the human rights implications of climate change.

He has been a vocal advocate for the role of national human rights institutions in the United Nations human rights system and was extensively involved in the organisational development of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

On 14 June 2010, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the law, particularly as President of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, as a Judge through contributions to Federal and International Courts, and to higher education.

I am very pleased and proud to present to you Chancellor, for admission to the degree of Doctor of the University —John William von Doussa.