

Ms Natasha Jessica Stott Despoja AO

Note: incorporates edits from the hon doc recipient.

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present to you an outstanding candidate for admission to the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University (honoris causa): **Natasha Jessica Stott Despoja, AO.**

Natasha Stott Despoja has made an enduring contribution to the Australian community through public service, first as a federal politician and party leader, and beyond politics, as a social commentator, and a leader dedicated to social justice and equality for women and girls and the disadvantaged.

While studying politics and history at the University of Adelaide, Ms Stott Despoja was elected President of the Students' Association.

In 1995, at the age of 26, she was elected as a Senator for South Australia – at the time, she was the youngest person elected to Federal Parliament; today she still holds the record as the youngest woman elected to Federal Parliament. She was re-elected in 1996, and the following year she became the deputy leader of the Australian Democrats and party spokesperson for the portfolios of Science and Technology, Higher Education, IT, Employment and Youth Affairs.

She served as leader of the Australian Democrats in 2001, the youngest person to lead a political party in Australia. During her time in Parliament, she was a vocal advocate for stronger participation of young Australians in politics and government.

Ms Stott Despoja retired from the Senate in 2008. In 2011 she was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia acknowledging her service to the Parliament of Australia, particularly as a Senator for South Australia, through leadership roles with the Australian Democrats, to education, and as a role model for women.

In 2013 she was appointed as Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls, visiting more than 40 countries to promote women's economic empowerment and leadership, and to help reduce violence against women and girls.

Ms Stott Despoja was the founding Chair of *Our Watch*, a national initiative formed in 2013 that aims to prevent violence against women and children, a role she continues today.

Her advocacy, through commentary, publications, lectures, and books, on gender equality issues – such as access to education, political representation, economic fairness, and equality both here and in developing nations – continues to have an impact nationally and internationally.

Ms Stott Despoja is an Honorary Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Adelaide and sits on the Council of the Australian National University.

She is a strong supporter of this University and has provided a substantial scholarship every year since 2005 to help a commencing student with their financial needs. To date, 13 students have been supported to undertake university study through her scholarship.

Ms Stott Despoja has also been a member of the University's Alumni Advisory Committee, and she proudly initiated the idea of a Parliamentary Alumni Network. She is now also the Patron of the University's Fay Gale Centre for Research on Gender.

In 2019 she was further acknowledged by the Australia Day Honours, when she was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for her distinguished service to the global community as an advocate for gender equality, and through roles in a range of organisations.

A recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from this University, today we recognise her achievements once more – as a person who has worked her entire career to champion equality of opportunity, for women, girls, and the disadvantaged, and as someone who continues to strive for positive change in society.

Chancellor, I am pleased to present to you **Natasha Stott Despoja**, Bachelor of Arts, Member of the Order of Australia, Officer of the Order of Australia, for admission to the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University (honoris causa).