

## **Dr James Sunter Muecke AM**

*Approved by James 26/3/21*

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): **Dr James Sunter Muecke AM.**

This award recognises Dr Muecke's long and distinguished career as an ophthalmic surgeon and his abiding commitment to fighting blindness in Australia and in some of the world's most disadvantaged communities.

Having graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery, with Honours, from the University of Adelaide in 1988, Dr Muecke quickly put his general medical skills to use as a volunteer doctor in Kenya. After completing his ophthalmology training in Adelaide in 1995, he worked as an eye surgeon in Jerusalem, before undertaking subspecialty training in eye cancer in London.

On his return to Adelaide in 1998, Dr Muecke co-founded a million-dollar Australian Government funded initiative, the *Vision Myanmar Program*, at the South Australian Institute of Ophthalmology, to deliver eye health and blindness prevention projects in Myanmar.

Inspired by this program's success, Dr Muecke joined with local colleagues to establish *Sight For All*, a social impact organisation delivering eye health initiatives in partnership with ophthalmic services in several low-income countries. This work has led to direct healthcare and community benefits in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

Dr Muecke has created low-cost programs to fight blindness through collaborative research, sustainable education, and the support of infrastructure, including the comprehensive training of colleagues in *Sight For All's* partner countries, making significant steps in the battle to eliminate avoidable blindness.

Through *Sight For All*, Dr Muecke has enlisted the support of over 170 Australian and international specialists to help with their varied projects. These ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists, ophthalmic nurses and scientists donate their time, expertise and goodwill with the ultimate aim of alleviating poverty. Today, nearly 100 Fellows have been trained in 10 countries, supporting the delivery of invaluable eye care and health awareness to more than a million patients annually.

Back home, Dr Muecke has been raising awareness of the major blinding diseases that afflict mainstream communities and First Nation's peoples.

Understanding that 90% of the world's blindness is found in the poorest countries and communities, and that 90% is avoidable, Dr Muecke treats blindness as a human rights issue, and has dedicated his life to redressing that injustice.

His work has been acknowledged with many awards over the past 20 years, including: the Outstanding Service to the Prevention of Blindness Award from the Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology; the Rural Health & Wellbeing Award for service to Aboriginal eye health; the President's Leadership Award from the Australian Medical Association; the Eye Health Hero Award from the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness; South Australian of the Year in 2019; and in 2020, he was named Australian of the Year.

Dr Muecke was made a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2012 Queen's Birthday honours for service to ophthalmic medicine.

In 2019, the University of Adelaide awarded Dr Muecke a Distinguished Alumni – Vice Chancellor's Award, in recognition of outstanding and sustained contributions made by alumni in their local communities and beyond.

Today we extend that recognition, in awarding the highest honour the University can bestow.

Chancellor, I am pleased to present to you **Dr James Muecke**, Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery, Member of the Order of Australia, for admission to the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University (honoris causa).