**Professor Emerita Margaret Harris**

Wednesday, 25 May 2022 - 12.00pm

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Professor Emerita Margaret Harris for the award of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the arts in Australia and internationally.

Margaret has been a long-standing member of the University community. She enrolled as a student in Arts in 1959, taking a position as Teaching Fellow in the Department of English in 1964. After completing her doctorate at London University, she returned to a Lectureship in Sydney in 1969. Recognising Margaret’s academic talents and commitment to the University, she was appointed Professor of English Literature (Personal Chair) in 1994 and was subsequently appointed to the Challis Chair. In 2007 she shifted the emphasis of her activities, becoming one of the key people running the research advisory team in the Faculty of Arts assisting other staff to develop research grant applications. She served as an outstanding mentor to many colleagues across the University in addition to her stellar research advisory leadership, working closely with the University’s Research Portfolio.

The respect and esteem in which Margaret was held by her peers led to her election as a Fellow of Senate of the University, a role she held for over 10 years.

Margaret is renowned for her research expertise and has a distinguished international reputation in the field of Victorian literature, particularly the work of George Eliot and George Meredith. She also has a significant international reputation in the field of Australian literature, particularly the work of Christina Stead. Margaret had a major role in preparing for publication the incomplete manuscript of a previously unknown Patrick White novel which appeared as The Hanging Garden (2012). Her publications include The Journals of George Eliot (with Judith Johnston), The Magic Phrase: Critical Essays on Christina Stead, Dearest Munx: The Letters of Christina Stead and William J. Blake, and George Eliot in Context.

Her research established new interpretations of the lives and works of these notable authors, based on original analysis of their unpublished writings. Her informative and imaginative commentaries have paved the way for a younger generation to discover these foundational early writers.

During her career, Margaret has demonstrated her longstanding commitment to rigour and excellence in academic research and is known and respected for her vision across the humanities, creative arts and social science disciplines. She was Acting Director of the Sydney College of the Arts from 2000 to 2002 and resumed the role again from 2016 to 2017. She has been a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities since 2011. She was Director of the University of Sydney’s former Research Institute for Humanities and Social Science and a member of the Australian Research Council College of Experts and maintains an active interest in supporting the research of others. She served for many years on the Council of the University’s International House, chairing that body for two years until the House closed for renovations.

Margaret’s portrait by celebrated Melbourne artist Celeste Chandler hangs in our University’s MacLaurin Hall - a fitting tribute to her academic excellence and her commitment to research and teaching. In a world captivated by novelty and newness, it is wonderful to be able to take a moment to appreciate our own national treasures, the writers, artists, and poets on whose shoulders our cultures stand - and Margaret understands this truth.

Presiding Pro-Chancellor, I present Professor Emerita Margaret Harris for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) and invite you to confer the degree upon her.