

Presented by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney in the Great Hall on 31 March 1990 to Ms Leona Geeves, Adrien Albert's cousin.



DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SCIENCE *HONORIS CAUSA*

presented by the Vice Chancellor

The Late Adrien Albert

Deputy Chancellor:

I have the honour to recommend to you the late Emeritus Professor Adrien Albert, AO, for posthumous admission to the Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*). Professor Albert died on 29 December 1989, aged 82, after a brief illness. He pioneered medicinal chemistry in Australia and his remarkable scientific career, begun in 1934, continued right up to his death. His funeral in Canberra was attended by a large number of Australia's most distinguished scientists, many friends and colleagues.

Adrien Albert obtained his BSc at the University of Sydney, graduating with first class honours and the University Medal in 1932. At the University of London he gained his PhD in 1937 and DSc in 1947. He served on the teaching and research staff of the University of Sydney (1938-1947), acted as advisor to the Medical Directorate of the Australian Army (1942-1947) and worked at the Wellcome Research Institute in London (1947-1948). In 1948 he was appointed the Foundation Professor of Medical Chemistry in the newly established John Curtin School of Medical Research in Canberra and held this post until his retirement. He established the Department of Medical Chemistry in Canberra and built up a research unit of major significance in the area of the design and synthesis of heterocyclic compounds of biological importance. He officially retired in 1972 but remained very active in research, teaching and writing, and held visiting posts at the Research School of Chemistry and the Department of Chemistry at the Australian National University in Canberra, and at the Department of Pharmacological Sciences at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Albert's classic studies on the antimicrobial activity of aminoacridines in the 1940s led to the development of the bacteriostatic agent, 9-aminoacridine and represented a breakthrough in understanding the importance of physical properties in governing drug action. His major book, *Selective Toxicity*, first appeared in 1953 and is now in its seventh edition (1985). This book introduced the now familiar concept of selective toxicity to pharmacology and toxicology, and is still a recommended text in many student courses worldwide. His last book, **Xenobiosis: Foods, Drugs and Poisons in the Human Body**, published in 1987 is also of significance, presenting a most readable and fascinating overview of the different dietary and toxicological problems that confront the human race. He also wrote important books on more purely chemical topics,

including **Ionization Constants**, **Heterocyclic Chemistry**, and **The Acridines**, and was the author of more than 200 research papers mostly in medicinal chemistry. Albert received numerous awards throughout his distinguished career, including the Smissman Prize of the American Chemical Society and the Olle Prize of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. He was made a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science in 1958. He was Patron of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute Division of Medicinal and Agricultural Chemistry, which named its most distinguished lectureship The Adrien Albert Lectureship. In 1989, Adrien Albert was made an Officer of the Order of Australia by the Queen for his contributions to medical research.

Adrien Albert worked towards the discovery of the laws and principles of drug action. It is important to note in the current economic climate, when basic research is under threat, that Albert's basic research continues to lead to significant advances in applied research. The award of his AO in 1989 prompted a congratulatory phone call from a soldier who served in the second world war. He told Professor Albert that in 1945 the use of 9-aminoacridine had prevent the loss of one of his legs and the foot of the other. While it is difficult to estimate the saving of life and limb that has resulted from Albert's basic research in medicinal chemistry, it is reassuring to see how a life's work devoted to such research can have so rich a yield.

Deputy Chancellor, I commend to you the late Emeritus Professor Adrien Albert, AO, for posthumous admission to the degree of Doctor of Science (*honoris causa*).
