



The University of Sydney

Election of Chancellor

Six months ago I reached a firm decision that I would not offer myself for election for a further term of four years. The paramount reason is one of principle. By the end of May of this year I will have served 5½ years. The first 1½ years were the balance of Dame Leonie Kramer's term and I was then re-elected for a further four years. Put simply, it is my conviction that 9½ years would be too long for a Chancellor to serve Sydney University in this contemporary era.

I have loved every minute of my time at the University, even some of the fraught ones. I intend, with your support, to complete with undiminished vigour my remaining months till the end of May. And I will make sure that my successor, whoever he or she may be, takes over with my fullest support.

Harold Bloom, known I am sure to Margaret Harris as one of the great Shakespearean scholars, has a wonderful meditation on the subject "Completing the Work". Some 1,750 years ago, Rabbi Tarphon spoke these words which I have long cherished: *"It is not necessary for you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it"*.

I said that I came to this decision six months ago. I did not consider I was subsequently free to desist from the task of making sure we had a proper process for selection of the next Vice-Chancellor – surely one of the most crucial appointments that Senate ever has to make. But it is no less important than Senate's choice of my successor. Choosing a Chancellor calls for the same impartiality, objectivity and wisdom as choosing a Vice-Chancellor. In Professor Gavin Brown, the University continues to enjoy visionary leadership allied to a clear and realistic assessment of what is necessary if we are to achieve the moral and intellectual tasks that are fundamental to a great university. He especially would recognise the importance of making sure his successor knows who is the next Chancellor.

I have wanted to share this decision with the **whole** of Senate and with Gavin's senior executive group – all of you individuals of extraordinary dedication and accomplishment. Senate is choosing a Chancellor not just for it but for the University as a whole. That is why it is fitting that the senior executive group should be present. No less important are the vital constituencies of this University. I mean our staff, academic and general, our alumni and our students for whom we serve, as well as the wider community. All are represented on the Senate, charged to place the interests of the University above all else.

I have chosen this time with some care for making clear my own intentions. Had I done so earlier, we would not have had in place a process for selecting the next Vice-Chancellor at a time when stability at the top was important. As you know, the last preparatory step was taken only last week when the Selection Committee chose David Pumphrey and his firm Heidrick & Struggles to assist it. We also needed to see to successful accomplishment securing the US Studies Centre where I played a role both in confidence-building and in working with the Vice-Chancellor and Don Nutbeam to secure the critical elements of a successful bid. In saying that, I want to emphasise how indispensable has been the role of others and in particular the Vice-Chancellor, the Provost, Sean Gallagher and his team and most importantly, Professor Robert O'Neill.

The time from February to May for a proper process to select the next Chancellor will be sufficient – neither too much nor too little. I have asked Bill Adams to whom I have turned

because of his independent role as Secretary to the Senate, to give thought to how that process should be best achieved and to place that before the Senate for consideration. I have not seen what he has proposed. My only injunction to him, recognising that Senate is ultimately sovereign in these matters, is that the process should give confidence to the Senate that we will secure the best person, whether internal or external, as Chancellor of the University. I might add that had my decision been that I would have wished to seek a further term I would still have proposed that there be a proper process for determining who is best to lead the University for the next four years. Such a process should ensure Senate is best informed about prospective candidates, who in turn need to have confidence that their names will be kept confidential to Senate alone. This is a reflection of the task that I set myself 5½ years ago when I became Chancellor – both to bring healing and with your backing to ensure that our governance has integrity, is as free of politics as possible, and puts in place proper processes for succession based on merit and nothing else. Above all, I have tried to encourage mutual respect within Senate, between town, gown and students, and between Senate and our senior management.

I will now ask Bill Adams to take you through the process that he proposes. Now is most certainly **not** the time to discuss particular names for Chancellor. Rather it is to allow all of you to be satisfied that, putting the interests of the University ahead of all others, you are in a position to select the very best person.

G F K Santow
Chancellor
5 February 2007

***NOTE:** Senate subsequently adopted proper procedures for the election of the next Chancellor.*