

## Emeritus Professor Alan Atkinson

For his outstanding contribution beyond the expectations of the person's particular field of endeavour which has influenced the thinking or general well-being of the wider community.

*Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) [Hon DLitt]*  
*Conferring ceremony: 13 May 2015*

### Citation

Chancellor, it gives me great pleasure to present Alan Atkinson to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa).

In January, Emeritus Professor Alan Atkinson received the Victorian Prize for Literature, a foremost award in Australia, in competitive acknowledgement of Volume III of his major work, *The Europeans in Australia*. **The same book has just been shortlisted in the New South Wales Premier's awards, for which the citation reads in part**

Combining a vastness of ideas and a depth of understanding with a poetic sensibility, Atkinson draws the reader into the multi-textured life of the mind underlying both ordinary daily relationships and endeavours, and the life of a nation.

Recently, Alan was the subject of a two-day lifetime achievement conference at the ANU, entitled 'History from Within'.

Alan earned his PhD from ANU in 1977 for "The Political Life of James Macarthur". He graduated with Honours from Sydney in 1970 and First Class Honours for his MA thesis in 1972 - "The Position of John Macarthur and His Family in New South Wales before 1842". His fourth formal qualification was the Master of Education Dublin, (1973) – with a thesis "A Review of Main Principles of History Teaching Applied in British and Irish Schools".

From 1977-2008 he was employed at Murdoch University, UWA, and ANU, and for 27 years at the University of New England, concluding with a five-year Australian Research Council Professorial Fellowship. Alan has been Senior Tutor at St Paul's College since 2010, the place where his undergraduate studies began in 1964 and where his commitment to the young within the University, continues.

Alan was born in Sydney at the end of World War II and grew up on a cattle station in Southern Queensland. Formal learning began with the Queensland Primary Correspondence School, and continued at The Armidale School. Alan is married to Catherine Pound, a lawyer. Their three adult children are scattered across the continent he writes about.

His teaching career was marked by visiting Fellowships at ANU, Cambridge, London, and Melbourne, and since 1993 he has been a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. From 2005-07 he was a member of the Australian Research Council's College of Experts. Alan has written or jointly edited ten books - from *Australians 1838* ([1987] and *Camden: Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales* (1988) which won a Victorian Premier's Literary Award and the Ernest Scott Prize. The two early volumes of *The Europeans in Australia* won various prizes. In 2003, he received the Centenary Medal "for services to Australian society and the humanities in the field of Australian colonial history". The title of his work *The Commonwealth of Speech* discerns a hardwired poetics in the vernacular.

*The Europeans in Australia* concludes with a succinct four-word telegram from Dubbo to the Western Front of World War I (INA DAUGHTER BOTH WELL). A shell-shocked forebear had a new world open to him. Alan perceives the significance of the then modern communications technology and its personal significances within ordinary lives.

Chancellor, I present Alan Atkinson for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.