

Emeritus Professor Tony Vinson

The degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa) was conferred upon Professor Tony Vinson at the ceremony held on 15 April 2005.

Citation

Chancellor,

I have the honour to present Professor Tony Vinson for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa). Professor Vinson, an Honorary Professor at this University, is one of Australia's most distinguished social scientists. His career spans the disciplines of social work, social policy, psychology, education, public administration and social research. In each of these fields, he has been a pioneer, humanitarian, leader and man of courage in the promotion of social justice.

After graduating from the University of Sydney, Professor Vinson began his life-long service to the people of New South Wales in 1957 as one of three Parole Officers in the newly formed Parole Service, with the then New South Wales Department of Prisons.

His first leadership role in public administration was in 1971 when he was appointed Foundation Director of the New South Wales Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research where he established the need for policy and practice to be underpinned by systematic social research. His consistent publication of innovative crime research during this period resulted in successful challenges to the accepted way that the criminal justice system dealt with social problems. His innovative work in penology continued when he was appointed Chairman of the New South Wales Corrective Services Commission in 1979. He undertook sweeping reform following the Nagle Royal Commission into the state's prison system. Professor Vinson chaired the inquiry into social services in the ACT in the mid-1980s and most recently in 2001, chaired the Independent Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in New South Wales. Yet again he excelled at bringing together parties with diverse interests to achieve common goals.

Tony Vinson's eminent contribution to higher education began in 1962 when he started teaching Sociology at the University of New South Wales, where in 1965 he was instrumental in establishing the School of Social Work before moving to the School of Social Work and Social Policy at the University of Sydney in 1969. In 1976 he was appointed the Foundation Professor of Behavioural Science in Medicine at the University of Newcastle. He emphasised the social context of health and patients as whole people, translating that view into a problem based learning curriculum. He served as Professor of Social Work at the University of New South Wales from 1981-1997 and as Dean of the Faculty of Professional Studies there from 1988-1993, subsequently being appointed Emeritus Professor.

Professor Vinson's recent social science research includes studies of the distribution of social disadvantage, which have been highly influential in shaping political debate and public policy. Through this research, he has provided a compelling argument for the implementation of community development strategies as a vital force for social change.

He has, through this outstanding service and his numerous publications of scholarly journal articles, conference papers, research and inquiry reports, books and monographs, raised the national profile of social science in public life. He has an extraordinary capacity to communicate with people from all walks of life. Tony speaks simply, with candour, judgment and humour, adding recently to his repertoire with the writing of political song. He remains a strong voice reminding government and the community that poverty remains a significant social problem in Australia. The promotion of social justice is the consistent theme throughout his career, one that he continues to pursue strenuously in all his endeavours.

Chancellor, I have great pleasure in presenting to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa) scholar, social scientist, activist and public intellectual, Professor Tony Vinson, and I invite you to confer the degree upon him.