

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA DEGREE CEREMONY

Conferment of the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University to Anne Deveson OA. AM.

Citation by Eleanor Ramsay, Pro Vice Chancellor (Equity)

Chancellor

Anne Deveson has made an exceptional contribution to Australian society through an unusually diverse range of activities which she has pursued with passion and distinction. She has significantly enhanced human rights and social justice in our community through her extensive and surprising influence on government policy at state and national levels while at the same time maintaining a creative, distinguished and international involvement in radio, television, newspaper journalism and documentary film-making for a period of over 30 years. She has a unique ability to work effectively and successfully across the public and private sectors, fulfilling many roles, with integrity and with an extraordinary impact. And at both the national and international level she is widely acknowledged as one of the leading journalists in Australia.

Anne Deveson is a person committed to improving the quality of life for the community in general as well as for individuals and groups whose needs have been overlooked or passed over as just too difficult or controversial. Her research, publications and productions have contributed significantly to progress in human rights, social justice, women's affairs, and mental health reform, particularly in the area of schizophrenia. As a result, Ms Deveson has been appointed by government as a member of various commissions, boards and major public enquiries, including the Royal Commission on Human Relationships, the New South Wales Anti Discrimination Board, the Better Health Commission and the Brotherhood of St Laurence Child Poverty Campaign. And she became a well known face on Australian television as a result of her work for World Vision.

Ms Deveson has made a particularly significant contribution in the area of schizophrenia, her public, professional advocacy on this issue arising from tragic personal experience. She is the Deputy Chairperson of the national organisation, Schizophrenia Australia, she played a prominent role in founding the NSW Schizophrenia Fellowship and she has chaired two special Ministerial Committees on the NSW Mental Health Act. Through all this, with courage, insight and skill, Ms Deveson has removed the stigma from what had been a hidden disease and has been instrumental in the mental health reforms which have occurred as a result.

From the beginning of her long and illustrious media career, Ms Deveson has defied boundaries and challenged assumptions and prejudices. One of the first women in Australia to conduct her own current affairs programs on radio, her interviews on a range of highly difficult and complicated issues were exemplars of rational discussion and civilised, insightful debate. And in the 1960s and '70s she made a series of ground-breaking television documentaries about subjects which were extremely controversial if not taboo at the time, such as unmarried mothers, homosexuality, abortion and autism. Her international media reputation arises from her work in radio, television, film, and newspaper journalism throughout the world and is reflected in the invitation to represent the Australian Government on media issues at the 1992 Global Forum of Women Leaders in Dublin.

As a documentary film maker Anne Deveson has a remarkable ability to present an issue multi-dimensionally, with sensitivity and intelligence, and a rare capacity to touch and make profound changes to peoples' lives. She has made over 40 television documentaries for networks across the world including the ABC, the BBC and ATN Seven. Her documentary films have won national and international awards including the United Nations Media Peace Prize Special Gold Citation in three consecutive years for films in South East Asia, Africa, and the Philippines, awards from the New York and San Francisco Film Festivals, and two Logies for the Best Documentary Series. She was the producer, director and co-author of her remarkable and award winning documentary 'Spinning Out' which breaks down the many myths and ignorance surrounding schizophrenia. Two of her ABC series have won national awards, 'Faces of Change', about the changing roles of women in the 1980s, and 'A Matter of Chance' which was made for the International Year of the Disabled.

Anne Deveson's contribution to the Australian film and television industry in Australia has not been limited to her role as a practitioner. As Director of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, as a Board Member of the Australian Film Finance Corporation, as Chairperson of the South Australian Film Corporation, as Chairperson of the Centre for Independent Journalism and as Chairperson for the Australian Government's National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women in the Media, she has had a significant and lasting impact on the industry as a whole. Her contribution in the last role resulted in broadcast and television organisations changing their employment practices towards women, and in commercial television and radio stations establishing the first guidelines for the portrayal of women.

Her international recognition is not limited to her achievements in film and television. In 1992 she won the Human Rights Award for Non-Fiction for the book Tell Me I'm Here, a personal and courageous account of her son's seven year struggle with schizophrenia which was published world-wide. She has published two other books, Faces of Change, based on her documentary series of the same name, and Australians at Risk, as well as numerous papers and articles on social change, women's issues, the media and mental health.

Anne Deveson's involvement in everything she does is both intense and intensely personal and she is engagingly self deprecating, preferring to recognise and support others than to accept acknowledgment and praise for her own work. Despite this preference, she has been twice honoured, in 1983 being awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for her services to the media, and in 1993, an Officer of the Order of Australia for her work in community health, particularly in increasing public awareness of schizophrenia. And she has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Letters by the University of New South Wales for 'Eminent Services to the Community'.

In proposing Anne Deveson for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University, I believe that the University of South Australia is itself honoured to be able to include in its collegiate a person who has served the people not only of Australia but throughout the world with such distinction, humility and personal and professional integrity.

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Anne Deveson for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University.