



Darwin City Council

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Media Alert

New Freeman of the City of Darwin

On Monday 29 January Austin Asche AC QC will be awarded the title Honorary Freeman of the City of Darwin in recognition of outstanding service to the city at a ceremony at the Darwin Civic Centre.

The distinction, Honorary Freeman of the City, is the highest acclamation a city can bestow upon one of its citizens. To date, this honour has only be granted to four other people in the history of the City of Darwin.

Mr Asche is a former RAAF Officer, NT Chief Justice and Administrator of the Northern Territory.

The Acting Lord Mayor, Bob Elix, will present Mr Asche with a document declaring him a Honorary Freeman of the City of Darwin plus a special conferment scroll will be signed, sealed and presented.

The status of Freeman dates back to medieval times when cities drew a distinction between free men and servants of a feudal Lord. Early Freeman were bestowed with privileges such as the right to earn money and own land, and have protection within the town. Today the award is generally granted to recognise those who have served the city or town in some exceptional capacity.

What: Granting of Freeman of the City to Austin Asche AC QC

When: 6pm, Monday 29 January 2007

Where: Darwin Civic Centre

NOTE: Biographical details attached

Date: 25 January 2007

Contact: Liz Conway, 8930 0504 or 0403 - 457 374

Biography

Keith John Austin Asche was born in Melbourne on 28 November 1925, and spent his childhood in Darwin and Melbourne. He served with the RAAF for two years from 1944 to 1946, mostly in the Northern Territory and Northwest Australia. After the war he practised as a barrister in Queensland and Melbourne and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1972.

In 1976 he became a Judge of the Family Court of Australia, and was Acting Chief Judge from 1985 to 1986.

In 1986, he returned to Darwin as a Judge of the NT Supreme Court and in 1987 was appointed Chief Justice. In 1987, he was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature, by Deakin University. In 1992 he was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education and in 1994 he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Law from the Northern Territory University.

Mr Asche was appointed as the fifteenth Administrator of the Northern Territory on 1 March 1993, a position he held until 16 February 1997. In addition, he held appointments as Chief Scout in the Northern Territory, Honorary Colonel of the North West Mobile Force, and Deputy Prior in the Northern Territory of Order of St John. He was appointed a Knight of Grace of the order St John in 1993. On Australia Day 1994 he was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) for service to the law, to tertiary education and to the community, particularly the people of the Northern Territory. The Governor-General invested him with the insignia of this appointment at Government House, Darwin on 17 June 1994.

On 29 January 2007, Mr Asche was conferred an Honorary Freeman of the City of Darwin.