

## ACADEMIC BOARD

**Report title** HONORARY AWARDS COMMITTEE: REPORT TO ACADEMIC BOARD  
**Prepared by** Angela Cowburn, Executive Officer (Academic Board)  
**Reviewed by** Mrs Sylvia Walton, Chair, Honorary Awards Committee  
**Date** 11 May 2010

### I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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#### I.1 Background

The Honorary Awards Committee is a joint Committee of Council and Academic Board and meets at least twice annually (and out-of-session as required) to consider nominations:

- for the award of all honorary degrees;
- for the award of the titles Emeritus Professor and Emeritus Scholar;
- for the Chancellor's Medal;

and to recommend the award of other honours, apart from academic honours, as may from time to time be instituted.

#### I.2 Summary

- (a) The Committee received a nomination from the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering for an honorary degree to be conferred upon Dr Mary White (see Attachment A).
- (b) The Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering nominated Professor Bob Seviour, who retired from the University in March 2010, for the position of Emeritus Professor (see Attachment B).
- (c) The Committee reviewed revised procedures and criteria for the award of Honorary Degrees (see Attachment C).

#### I.3 Issues (including any financial, legal or compliance issues)

Not applicable.

#### I.4 RECOMMENDATION

- (a) *Academic Board is invited to approve the recommendation that an honorary degree be bestowed upon Dr Mary White.*
- (b) *Academic Board is invited to endorse, for referral to Council, the recommendation for the title of Emeritus Professor to be conferred upon Professor Bob Seviour – Applied Sciences.*
- (c) *Academic Board is invited to endorse the revised procedures and criteria for the award of Honorary Degrees, as detailed in Attachment C.*

### 2. LIST OF DOCUMENTS ATTACHED

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- Attachment A: Nomination letter for Dr Mary White provided by Professor David Finlay, former Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering.
- Attachment B: Nomination letter for Professor Bob Seviour provided by Professor Nick Hoogenraad, Head, School of Molecular Sciences, Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering.
- Attachment C: Revised procedures and criteria for the award of Honorary Degrees.

## Memo

To	Professor Paul Johnson, Vice Chancellor
From	Professor David Finlay, Chair, University Human Ethics Committee
CC	Angela Cowburn, Secretary, Honorary Awards Committee
Date	2 March 2010
Subject	Honorary Doctorate – Mary White

Dear Paul

Following our recent discussion I would like to propose that Mary White be considered for the award of an Honorary Doctorate. I attach a resume together with a supporting statement from Dr Meathrel the Chair of the Faculty Equal Opportunity, Diversity and Wellbeing Committee. Catherine's letter summarizes in a truncated form Mary's contribution.

Mary's contributions to Science over many years have been recognized by a number of Australian Institutions including the Queensland University of Technology and Wollongong University. Recently she received the award of Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

Mary will deliver an address to the University on the 08/04/2010.

Mary's interests and contributions have been in paleobotany but also in drawing attention to the issues of sustainability in Australia. Three titles capture this interest and contribution:

*After the Greening: the browning of Australia (1994)*

*Listen – our land is crying: Australia's environment: problems and solutions (1997)*

*Running down: water in a changing land (2000)*

As is evident from the number of awards she has received Mary has influenced a great number of people over many years. I believe the award of an Honorary Doctorate would be an appropriate recognition of her contribution and be fully in line with the University's developing sustainability policy.

As Mary is giving a public lecture in Albury on 8 April 2010 and if you support my recommendation I would like to request that the Honorary Awards Committee approval be sought out of session if possible. If the committee approves the award may I also request that Mary be awarded the Honorary Doctorate on the 8 April 2010.

Yours sincerely,

  
Professor David Finlay  
Chair, University Human Ethics Committee

**HONORARY AWARDS COMMITTEE**

**Report title** ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING DR MARY WHITE'S  
NOMINATION

**Prepared by** Professor David Finlay, Chair University Human Ethics Committee &  
Director. Development (Academic)

**Reviewed by** Angela Cowburn, Executive Officer (Academic Board)

**Date** 15 March 2010

Mary White's strength is not the originality of her scholarship, but in recent years her work has been to bring scientific issues to the attention of the public (and it is this work that has been recognised by at least 3 other Australian Universities awarding Hon Docs). Most of this work was done after reaching 60 years of age and in 'retirement'. I would argue that Mary has achieved eminence as a communicator of scientific issues to the public – mostly in the areas of environmental damage and sustainability. In terms of her contribution to La Trobe University Mary has delivered three public addresses—one at Bundoora in 2009 to a large audience and two in the Albury /Wodonga region in 2010. I understand, although I was not able to be present, that Mary spoke to a capacity audience at Beechworth this year. I take this as a measure of her eminence amongst the broader community many of which have read the many books she has written conveying a deep knowledge of the palaeogeological/botanical history of Australia through to the environmental degradation that has been brought to bear on the country and more positively what can be done to move towards a more sustainable future. Mary also spoke to the Graduation ceremony and was extremely well received. Mary has a strong scientific background and has perhaps unusually made her mark later in life (indeed after the age of 60) by conveying broad and complex ideas in accessible and I would add beautifully presented formats. The readership of her earlier books including the Greening of Gondwana has very extensive although I can't produce exact numbers and would include school children through University staff and students through to members of the public. As well most of her books, if not all, will be found in University libraries around Australia.

Although now in her eighties Mary has taken on a new venture in establishing a property that captures her piece of Gondwana on the North Coast of NSW to extend her ability to convey ideas about the environment to a wide range of individuals and groups. "Dr Mary E White is a palaeo - botanist, a specialist in prehistoric plants and the environment. She is also a person who has taken the issue of preserving ancient native rainforest very personally. At 79 Mary White has been a full-time writer for two decades, but just over a year ago decided to put her money where her mouth is, buying and placing a covenant over rainforest on the mid north coast. She has settled comfortably at the foot of the 210 million year old Middle Brother mountain, surrounded rainforest remarkably similar to the vegetation of 45 million years ago when Australia was part of a super-continent called Gondwana."

In summary I posit that Mary has contributed a great deal to Environmental education and sustainability in the country and through that contribution has achieved eminence. Her eminence has been recognised by at least three other Universities. Mary has made a contribution to this University as set out above and will continue to do so to the advantage of the University.

Regards  
David Finlay. Professor  
Chair University Human Ethics Committee &  
Director. Development (Academic)  
La Trobe University Foundation  
NR8--Institute for Advanced Study  
Level 2 Room 2.05  
0438524280  
9479 3470

RECEIVED

19 APR 2010

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

March 30, 2010

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE
15 APR 2010

**Nomination of Professor Bob Seviour for appointment of Emeritus Professor**

We would like to nominate Bob Seviour to be appointed an Emeritus Professor in applied Sciences at LA Trobe University.

Bob Seviour has brought exceptional distinction to La Trobe University through his work on waste water treatment. Indeed, he has gained an outstanding international reputation in this field as evidenced by the invitations he has received to present his work at international conferences, his contribution of numerous book chapters and the co-editing of the books.

Bob joined the forerunner of La Trobe University at Bendigo in 1974 and has worked up through the ranks from lecturer to being appointed to a personal chair in Applied Sciences in 2002. This achievement is all the more meritorious as he achieved his international reputation in the difficult environment of the Bendigo campus which did not have a strong and supportive research environment.

He has published an outstanding 172 refereed papers and has consistently obtained external research funding for his work.

Bob has remained active until his retirement this year and in retirement he will no doubt continue to be active in research. For example, he has applied for a new ARC Discovery grant this year despite his retirement in March.

We strongly support the appointment of Bob Seviour the position of Emeritus Professor.

Brian Mc Gaw,  
Dean FSTE

Nick Hoogenraad  
Head, Molecular Sciences

✓ c.b. 19/4/10  
 ① cc → Dean, FSTE  
 cc → A. Coulburn, EOC (Academic Board)  
 ② → R. Mickus, P & C

I support this nomination

19/4/10

## AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREES (Draft)

### 1. Background

Section 4 of the *Degrees, Diplomas and Other Awards Statute 2009* provides that:

*The Academic Board may confer an honorary degree on a person if the Academic Board has determined that it is appropriate to do so in recognition of the person's eminence or original and distinguished contribution to one or more branches of learning.*

### 2. Criteria for consideration of award of honorary degree

The Honorary Awards Committee may support or recommend to Academic Board the award of an honorary degree under Section 4 of the *Degrees, Diplomas and Other Awards Statute 2009* in the following circumstances:

- (i) to reward exceptional service to the university as a whole or to some part of the University;
- (ii) to recognise outstanding academic, social, economic or cultural contributions to the international, Australian, Victorian or Melbourne communities by a person having an identifiable connection with the university; or
- (iii) to recognise outstanding work, public service or contribution to society more generally in areas of particular relevance to the University's values and mission;
- (iv) to associate the University with a person of eminence and personal qualities which will reflect credit upon the University;
- (v) to recognise outstanding achievement by an alumnus/a, especially in combination with one of the above.

Serving staff members of the University will not be eligible for honorary degrees until their time of service is close to completion.

Applications from persons desirous of receiving an Honorary Degree from the University shall not be considered.

### 3. Procedures for consideration of nominations

All proposals for the award of honorary degrees must be submitted to the Vice-Chancellor with the following documentation:

- completed Nomination Form (*to be available from the Governance, Policy and Planning website: [www.latrobe.edu.au/governance](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/governance)*) setting out the rationale for the nomination, including association of the nominee with La Trobe University, if any;
- draft citation;

- *curriculum vitae* (if this can be obtained without breach of confidentiality: as noted below, the nominee must not be advised until the formal approval process has been completed).

If supported by the Vice-Chancellor, the nomination will then be submitted to the Honorary Awards Committee and thence to Academic Board.

If approved, the secretary to the Honorary Awards Committee will prepare correspondence for signature by the Vice-Chancellor, notifying the nominator and the Manager, Ceremonies and Protocol as well as the recipient.

#### **4. Procedures for conferral of honorary awards**

Detailed procedures for the conferral of honorary awards are available from the Ceremonies and Protocol Office *[to be placed on website - [www.latrobe.edu.au/eap](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/eap)]*.

#### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

*It is important from the beginning of the process of nomination through to the point at which a decision is reached and the successful candidates have notified by the Chancellor that a high level of confidentiality be maintained. It would be a major embarrassment if a nominee was made aware of their nomination and was then subsequently unsuccessful. Equally it would be embarrassing for the University if there was public disclosure prior to successful nominees receiving official notification from the Chancellor.*

**HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATION FORM**
**COVER SHEET**

<b>Full name of nominee</b> (including title/s)	
<b>Date of birth</b> (if known)	
<b>Current office/positions</b>	
<b>Former offices/positions</b>	
<b>Honorary degrees already held</b>	
<b>Correspondence details</b> (including email address and home/business phone numbers)	
<b>Principal Sponsor</b> (Name and position/Faculty/Campus)	
<b>Second Sponsor</b> (Name and position/Faculty/Campus)	
<b>Date</b>	

## HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATION FORM

<b>Name of Nominee</b>	
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**Principal grounds upon which the recommendation is based: *[please tick]***

**Academic Achievement**

*and/or*

**Other Achievement(s)**

**Please outline why the nominee should be considered for award of an Honorary Degree by La Trobe University**

**Brief chronological account of the nominee's life**

HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATION FORM

**Outline of the nominee's most significant academic and/or other achievements, including a summary of the nominee's published works, if applicable (*please provide additional relevant material here*):**

**Assessment of nominee's national and/or international standing:**

**Connection with La Trobe University (*please provide evidence of what benefit has been received by the University or its communities*):**

**Any other information which should be taken into account by the Honorary Awards Committee:**

**HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATION FORM****Signed:**.....  
**(Principal sponsor)**.....  
**(Second sponsor)**

Date:

Date: