

HONORARY DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SCIENCE

GAVIN BROWN

LAUREATION ADDRESS – 29 June 2010

LAUREATOR – Professor Alastair Gillespie

Mr Vice-Chancellor, in the name and by the authority of the Senatus Academicus, I have the honour to present for the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science

Gavin Brown

Gavin Brown is a mathematician of outstanding ability who has also made significant contributions to the governance of higher education both in Australia and beyond. He hails from Fife and, following a distinguished undergraduate career at St Andrews University, undertook postgraduate study at Newcastle University. He completed his PhD in 1966 and in the same year accompanied his doctoral supervisor, Professor Frank Bonsall, to the University of Edinburgh. Gavin held the position of Junior Research Fellow here before accepting a Lectureship at the University of Liverpool. In 1975, his academic career took an important turn when he was appointed to the Chair of Pure Mathematics at the University of New South Wales. This was to mark the beginning of a remarkable career of leadership in the antipodes.

Following service as Head of Mathematics and then Dean of Science at the University of New South Wales, he moved to the University of Adelaide in 1992, first as a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and then as Vice-Chancellor. His period at Adelaide saw a major restructuring of the university, coupled with an increased emphasis on establishing links with industry. He took on a new challenge in 1996 with his appointment as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, a position he held with great distinction until his retirement two years ago. During his tenure, the University of Sydney reasserted its leading role within Australia. At the same time, Gavin played an important part in establishing the Academic Consortium 21, a global partnership of leading education and research institutions. Not content to relax in retirement, Gavin has now taken on yet another challenge as the inaugural Director of The Royal Institution of Australia.

Despite the onerous commitments of high office, Gavin has remained extremely active as a research mathematician, with a steady flow of publications of the highest quality. His most significant work is in harmonic analysis, involving the study of oscillatory phenomena. He also finds time to enjoy sport, particularly visits to the racetrack, where he puts his mathematical talent to good use – though as his wife says “as a punter not a gambler”.

Gavin’s achievements have been recognised with numerous awards, including the Whittaker Prize of the Edinburgh Mathematical Society, the Australian Mathematical Society Medal, Fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science, Corresponding Fellowship of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and appointment as an Officer of the Australian Order.

Today is our opportunity to mark Gavin's outstanding achievements within mathematics and his contributions to higher education both in Australia and in the wider international arena.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, I now invite you to confer on Gavin Brown the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science.