

Citation

Chancellor, the University of South Australia awards the Honorary Doctorate Degree to a recipient in recognition of distinction by the person in public service or service to the University, or in recognition of distinguished contribution by the person in a field of academic endeavour.

Donald Bruce Bursill AM is an extremely worthy recipient of this award for his public service, his contribution to the University and to science.

We might also acknowledge Don for his outstanding foresight in working on water. A July 2007 report released by the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) on the 'Big Issues Project', which involved a survey of 291 CEDA trustees, identified water as the most significant issue facing Australia. Water was the first of 100 ranked issues that will challenge Australia in the next 10 years. In answer to the question stated in the press release, 'A decade or so ago, who would have put water high on a list of issues for the nation, let alone at the top of the list with 9.3 points out of 10?', we might well reply, 'Donald Bursill'.

A graduate of the University of Adelaide, with a Master of Chemistry from the University of New South Wales, Don came to the University of South Australia in 1993 as Adjunct Research Professor, a position he still holds in the University's SA Water Centre for Water Science and Systems.

Professor Bursill spent 39 years in the water industry with his principal interest in water quality policy and management, water treatment, the development of automated analytical techniques for water quality monitoring and water resources planning and management. Throughout his career, Don has been based in South Australia, which we are used to hearing described as 'the driest state in the driest inhabited continent'. While this has been our good fortune, Professor Bursill's reputation and contribution to this critical field of science has extended far beyond the boundaries of our state.

His impact may be measured in the positions he has held, the organisations he has led and nurtured, the awards he has won, his extensive publications, and the innovations he has made. The list is impressive, but we can mention only a few:

- Chief Scientist, of the Australian Water Quality Centre of SA Water from 1990 to 2005, a position that followed other important appointments in the water industry, including SA Water (Director, Water Resources), Engineering and Water Supply Department (Associate Director, Investigations), and the State Water Laboratory (Chief Chemist)
- CEO from 1995 to 2005 of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Water Quality and Treatment, an association of 29 research and industry partners and 19 associate member organisations spanning all states of Australia and through its international links, an international research collaboration
- As CEO of the CRC, Professor Bursill played a leading role in establishment of the Global Water Research Coalition, of which the CRC was a foundation member in 2002. Don was a member of the Board and, until his retirement in 2005, Deputy Chair of this organisation which includes 14 of the world's best urban water research

- organisations. It represents the interests and needs of 500 million consumers and has access to a research program with an annual budget of more than \$100 million.
- Current Chairman of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Water Quality Advisory Committee. This is a new committee that reports directly to the CEO and provides advice on all water quality issues, including changes to national water guidelines and water research needs in relation to public health. It is influential in setting water quality policy at the national level.
 - Chair of the River Torrens Task Force from 2006 to May 2007, when the Task Force presented a report with 32 recommendations for action for the rehabilitation of the river.
 - Member of the International Water Association (IWA) Program Committee since 1998. The IWA is the largest international professional association covering a broad range of activities involved in urban water service provision. The committee coordinates a large number of specialist groups and conferences and manages the technical program for IWA international congresses.

It is not surprising that Professor Bursill has been noticed.

- In 2005, Don was awarded the inaugural Premier's Gold Medal Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution and commitment to the management and conservation of water.
- He is a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).
- He holds the highest honour of the Australian Water Association (AWA), the Peter Hughes Award, and the inaugural Australian Water and Waste Water Association (AWWA) for Innovation in Water Technologies Development.
- He is an honorary member of international organisations including the Hungarian Hydrological Society and an Honorary Professor of the Harbin Institute of Technology, with whom he has collaborated on water research and postgraduate exchanges involving our University.
- In November 1999 he was awarded a CSIRO medal for his work on the magnetic ion exchange process for the removal of organic material from water, for which he holds a joint patent.

His publications number more than ninety (90). Importantly, he has been instrumental over many years in developing capabilities in others and in forging valuable links with individuals and organisations which have led to significant cooperative arrangements for research in water quality and water treatment. One such link, with the American Water Works Association Research Foundation brought more than \$4 million worth of water research funding to Australia.

Professor Bursill has achieved a significant national and international reputation in the field of water science as applied to the Water Industry in relation to utilities and natural resources management.

Chancellor, I present Donald Bursill for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University in recognition of these significant contributions.