

Alison Gay Mackinnon Citation

Alison Gay Mackinnon was born in Shepparton in Northern Victoria, and educated at a series of Victorian country schools and then the University of Melbourne, where in 1964 she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English, History and French.

Like many academically inclined women of her time, after graduating she completed teacher training and entered the professional workforce without delay, teaching for some years in Victorian secondary schools before moving to Adelaide with her husband.

By the time she completed an Advanced Diploma of Education in 1977 and then a Masters of Education by research in 1981, both at the University of Adelaide, Alison was the mother of three sons, and had embarked on an academic career as a tutor and later lecturer in education at the University of Adelaide. When she began her Ph D, after the completion of her Master of Education, she was juggling a family, full-time work and part time higher degree study. It is not surprising that as she worked to develop a set of academic interests which might become the focus of her career, women's experiences in negotiating the conflicting demands of children and family, education and career, became the central concerns of her scholarship.

Alison completed her Ph D in 1990. By this time she had also co-authored three research books on women's history. These years of her career reveal the secret of the success of many women academics who, like Alison, were establishing themselves in universities in the eighties – an enormous capacity for hard work.

Alison's career was not focused wholly on research and teaching. She also accepted leadership positions, serving as the Head of the School of Library and Information Management for two years in the early 90s. Later in her career she took on a series of very important research leadership positions, including Foundation Director of the University of South Australia's Research Centre for Gender Studies, Director: University Research Development and Director of the Institute for Social Research. In 1997 she became the Foundation Director of the Hawke Research Institute, which under her leadership became the third of the University's funded research institutes in 2004.

While undertaking these leadership positions she rose through the academic ranks to Professor of History and Gender Studies in 1997, though her promotions were not so much in consequence of her contribution to research development in the University – which has been very significant indeed – but more for her sustained contribution as a researcher.

In the twenty odd years since she was able seriously to embark on a research career, Alison has attracted more than \$1m of Australian Research Council grant funding including four Discovery and three Linkage grants, along with many thousands of dollars of funds from other competitive sources. She has published nine books, including three sole authored volumes among them *Love and Freedom*, published by Cambridge University Press, which won the 1997 NSW Premier's Literary Award for literary and cultural criticism. The nine books have been accompanied by over 60 refereed articles, book chapters, encyclopaedia entries and editorials.

Her reputation led to invitations to deliver lectures from the University of Victoria in British Columbia to Auckland in New Zealand, with at least Chicago, Ontario, Texas, Philadelphia, Washington, Harvard, Connecticut, Belfast, Sheffield, Sussex, London, Norway, Sweden, Helsinki, Austria, India and Shanghai in between.

Alison has been a visiting fellow at the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Centres of the Australian National University on five occasions, including coordinating the Gender Strand of the Reshaping Australian Institutions: Towards and Beyond 2001 project in 1993-4.

She was appointed by the Swedish Research Council to the Kerstin Hesselgren Guest Professorship in 2002, was the Lansdowne Lecturer at the University of Victoria in British Columbia in 2004, and gave the Clare Burton Memorial Lecture Series in the Australian Technology Network Universities in 2005.

In recognition of her contribution to the study of the history of women and education, in 2000 Alison was awarded the degree of Doctor, honoris causa by the University of Umeo in Sweden.

Alison's crowning achievement was to be elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, in 2005. Summarising the words of the Academy, Alison's election recognised her contributions to the history of women's education, particularly higher education, and its impact on women's approaches to planning their families - at both an individual and demographic level.

It will already be clear that this impressive list of achievements was not won by single-minded commitment to her personal research at the expense of any other engagement or contribution. I have already referred to Alison's contribution to research development in the University in a series of leadership positions. She has been similarly generous with her time in the professional societies of her discipline.

It would take nothing away from Alison's achievements if I were to observe – as I am sure she would want me to do – that she has been strongly supported in her career by her husband and family. But neither would it belittle her record in any way if I observed that the achievements I have summarised have mainly been the work of her last 20 years. Who knows what other heights she may have climbed if our social arrangements were such that the tensions between education and career, and motherhood and family, which her research has done so much to illuminate, had been ameliorated by the employment practices and social supports which are required to allow young women to contribute to their full potentials. Alison's work has demonstrated, both by her scholarly contribution and the conditions of its production, how much society has to gain by achieving gender equality in work and family, which surely has been her major achievement.

Chancellor, I present Alison Gay Mackinnon for the title of Professor Emeritus.