

Recognition for two doyens of intellectual leadership

Gerard and Anne Henderson have been recognised with honorary doctorates from Australian Catholic University (ACU) for their influence on how Australian history and contemporary public policy issues are understood and debated.

The award, presented by ACU Vice-Chancellor Professor Greg Craven AO GSGC, in a small ceremony in Sydney on Tuesday 6 October 2020, honours the Hendersons' contribution to Australian history, public affairs and civil discourse.

The Hendersons' establishment and work with The Sydney Institute, and their involvement in public debate through other media outlets, has allowed Australians to understand some of the great people who have shaped our story and their legacy.

Born and educated in Melbourne, **Dr Gerard Henderson** began his academic career with a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Melbourne, and a Doctor of Philosophy from La Trobe University, where he subsequently worked in the Politics Department and the Department of Political Science, then as a teacher and scholar at the University of Tasmania.

Outside of academia, Dr Henderson's career has seen him work extensively in politics and governance. He held the position of private secretary to the Hon. Kevin Newman and later was senior private secretary to the Hon. John Howard MP. Dr Henderson has also served with the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. His political activities have involved participation in the Australia 2020 Summit in 2008 and the Australian History Summit in 2006.

Also a Melbourne native, **Anne Henderson** has long played a role in the education of young Australians and refugees. After **earning** a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education at the University of Melbourne, she taught in Catholic schools for 17 years and raised a family while continuing her career, becoming part of an early generation of working wives and mothers. She has been widely recognised and awarded for her work and her publications, which highlight the impact of Catholics and Catholic education in Australia.

Together, Gerard and Anne Henderson established what would become The Sydney Institute. The forum was one of the first privately funded institutes for debate and discussion in Australia. It became a place where diverse people from various political groups and interests could engage with each other on matters of great importance in the country.

In congratulating the Hendersons, Professor Craven said The Sydney Institute was a "remarkable institution and a remarkable achievement. From the beginning it was remarkable in the willingness of Anne and Gerard to provide a platform for people on all sides of different issues; not just in politics, but in art, religion, literature, history, law, economics, international affairs, media, indigenous affairs; the list goes on.

"It has become even more remarkable and more important in our divided age of cancel culture and deplatforming and tribalism, where the default towards disagreement for too many people – including those who shape public debate – is to screech and silence rather than listen and maybe learn something. The Sydney Institute reminds us what a genuinely robust public debate looks like. It also serves as a reminder to universities about what the free exchange of ideas is meant to be about."

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