

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

17 April 2025



# **Rowena McNally awarded honorary doctorate for faithful service to the Church**

Australian Catholic University has awarded former corporate lawyer Rowena McNally with an honorary doctorate for her dedicated service to the Catholic Church across two decades.

Ms McNally was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Doctor of the University (Honoris Causa) on 16 April.

Ms McNally has been a long-serving member of numerous Catholic organisation boards for the past 20 years, helping to shape the Church's approach to governance, professional standards and health care.

In 2005 she was appointed director of Professional Standards for the Catholic Church in Queensland managing Queensland's Towards Healing process. She also became the first female chair for Catholic Health Australia in 2012.

Today Ms McNally is chair of the Mercy Partners' Mercy Community Services ministries in Southeast Queensland, Central Queensland and North Queensland, on the board of advisors of St Elizabeth Hospital in Hyderabad, Pakistan, a committee member of Cherish Life Queensland, and is the Australian Chapter Coordinator for Fondazione Centesimus Annus - Pro Pontifice, a foundation established by St Pope John Paul II in 1993 to promote Catholic social doctrine.

ACU Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Zlatko Skrbis said Ms McNally had left a lasting legacy of service to the Catholic Church.

"Rowena's achievements have shaped her understanding of faith as a catalyst for positive change, particularly in times of great challenge and, leave a lasting legacy of leadership and service in the spirit of the Church's mission," Professor Skrbis said.

"In recognising Rowena with an Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University, we commend her for forging pathways of grace and service globally, reaffirming the power of faith to uplift, transform, and inspire across communities."

Having served on the board of Church organisations for 20 years, Ms McNally said the work agencies and institutions did was "part of the mission of the Catholic Church".

"The Church's fundamental function is to lead all humanity towards God and the extraordinary Redemption taking place in Jesus Christ's suffering and crucifixion for us, and His Resurrection," Ms McNally said.

"Without our mission and Catholic identity, we diminish Christ's Church and we become, as Pope Francis put it, just another Non-Government Organisation (NGO).

"How we, as Catholic organisations live out our mission is a measure of our authenticity as a ministry of the Catholic Church."

Ms McNally said she was "astonished" to receive an honorary doctorate for her humble service to the Catholic Church.

"It was completely unexpected," Ms McNally said.

A former corporate and banking lawyer and national president of the Australian Corporate Lawyers Association, Ms McNally said swapping a successful career in law to work with Catholic agencies in health, education and mission wasn't a sudden or conscious decision but "an invitation from God".

"God is very invitational," Ms McNally said.

"Many of us will have had the experience of recognising, possibly much later, a path that has been made up of one quiet invitation or another, which we might have accepted, or perhaps did not.

"But then there will be another opportunity, which again, we might take, or not. God will knock on the door, but it is up to us whether we take up the invitation or choose not to do so."

Ms McNally is wife to the Honourable Justice John Bond, mother to son Sean, and a member of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

"I have been very blessed," Ms McNally said.

"My husband and I have been happily married now for more years than seems possible, and we have the opportunity through our various roles to serve the community and our Church.

"Although our son Sean is grown now and has settled overseas, I do love watching younger ones in our extended family, workspaces and faith communities as they grow up and become more accomplished.

"I have also had the privilege of working with and mentoring some lovely young men and woman and it is wonderful to see them blossom into faithful, values-driven leaders."

**Additional photos available on request.**

**Media Contact: Emilie Ng, 0475 963 606, [emilie.ng@acu.edu.au](mailto:emilie.ng@acu.edu.au)**