

Citation for Thomas Keneally AO
Wednesday 29 March, 2017 at 3:00pm

Officiator: Mr Jim McDowell

Award recipient: Thomas Keneally AO

Award being conferred: Honorary Doctor of the University (DUniv)

Citation delivered by: Professor Denise Meredyth
Pro Vice Chancellor Education Arts and Social Sciences

Chancellor, the University of South Australia awards the Honorary Degree of Doctor of the University to a person of eminence who has made a distinguished contribution to public service, or a field of academic endeavour or artistic pursuit. It is my pleasure to present Mr Thomas Keneally AO for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.

Thomas Keneally is a prolific and well known Australian author who has published over 30 fiction and non-fiction books, dramas and screenplays. Born in 1935 in Bronte NSW, he spent his early years in northern NSW. His committed Catholic parents and grandparents were deeply affected by what they lived and witnessed during the Depression; from this they passed on a strong sense of social justice to young Thomas. KMr eneally commenced his schooling in a small Catholic school in Kempsey, but moved to Wauchope (WAR HOPE) shortly after due to his father's employment with the postal service.

His secondary schooling was completed at St Patrick's Seminary in Manly, NSW. A fascination with the big questions in life and what he calls the 'cosmic drama' of the church led him to study for the priesthood for six years. After suffering a nervous collapse and doubting the narrow path he had chosen he left just before ordination.

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From 1960, he worked as a schoolteacher in Sydney before assuming a writing career after the publication of his third novel, *Bring Larks and Heroes* in 1964. Perhaps his most famous novel, *Schindler's Ark*, was published in 1982 and would later become the basis of the movie *Schindler's List*.

In 1966 he won a Commonwealth Literary Fund grant and by 1968 was living, lecturing and writing in London. He spent the next few years juggling teaching and writing commitments across the United Kingdom, the USA and Australia.

In 1983, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for his services to Australian literature and in 1997 was declared an Australian Living Treasure. The Australia Council awarded him a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2015. In February 2016, he delivered the first ebook, his latest work, *Napoleon's Last Island*, to the National Library of Australia's digital collection.

Mr Keneally continues to contribute to the rich public discussion of what it means to be Australian. His body of work builds a humanistic picture of the arrival and development of a European/Australian history. His appeal as a novelist has afforded him the opportunity to share Australia's history with greater reach than the average historian.

Mr Keneally's body of work has given Australia an incredibly detailed portrayal of the pursuit of Australian identity, contributing to the foundation on which current and future discussions take place.

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His generous and enthusiastic contributions to books and publications across his passions, including literature, history and football, keep him acutely available in an overcrowded and fast-moving Australian media space. Mr Keneally is a writer as agent of social change and his longevity and perseverance consolidate his place in history.

Chancellor, on behalf of the University of South Australia, I am pleased to present Thomas Keneally AO for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University, in recognition of his distinguished service to the community.