

Mr Phillip Adams AO Citation

For almost 40 years, Phillip Adams' prolific, and sometimes controversial, columns, interviews, books and films have provoked discussion and on occasion, indignation.

Largely self-educated (he left school in his mid-teens), Phillip is the author of over 20 books, including *Adams Versus God*, *The Penguin Book of Australian Jokes*, *Retreat from Tolerance*, *Talkback* and *A Billion Voices* – which have sold almost a million copies.

His writing has appeared in many of Australia's most influential publications and he has been a contributor to the *New York Times*, *The Times* and *The Financial Times* in London. He has been a columnist for *The Australian* since the 1960s.

Described as “the godfather of the Australian film industry”, his features include *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*, *The Getting of Wisdom*, *Don's Party*, *Lonely Hearts* and *We of the Never Never*.

Phillip's Australia was part of BBC TV's contribution to Australia's bicentennial celebrations. Other TV programs include two series of *The Big Questions* with Professor Paul Davies, and *Death and Destiny*, filmed in Egypt with Paul Cox.

As a consultant to prime ministers and premiers, Phillip played a key role in the establishment of the Australia Council, the Australian Film Development Corporation, the Australian Film Commission, the South Australian Film Corporation (which became a model for similar organisations in most states) and the Australian Film Finance Corporation.

As a broadcaster, he has interviewed over 6000 of the world's most prominent politicians, philosophers, economists, scientists, theologians and scholars. His radio program, *Late Night Live* is broadcast twice a day over the 200-station network of ABC's Radio National – and around the world on Radio Australia and the Internet.

A foundation member of the Australia Council, Mr Adams has been Chair of the:

- Australian Film Institute
- the Australian Film Commission
- the Commission for the Future
- the Film Radio and Television Board
- Film Australia and
- the National Australia Day Council and
- is a former president of the Victorian Council for the Arts.

His board memberships have included:

- Greenpeace Australia
- Ausflag
- Australian Children's Television Foundation
- Film Victoria
- CARE Australia
- the National Museum of Australia

and he was co-founder of the Australian Skeptics.

Phillip is currently a director of Families in Distress Foundation, the Montsalvat Artists' Society and the Australian International Organising Committee for the Restitution of the Parthenon Marbles. He is the Australian representative on the International Committee of Index on Censorship, London, and is a board member of the Don Dunstan Foundation, serves on the advisory board of the Centre for the Mind at Sydney University, is a member of the Council for Media Integrity, New York, and a board member of the Research Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney.

Phillip has been awarded two *Orders of Australia* – in 1987 and 1992 - for his service to Australian film and television. In 1981 he received the *Longford Award*, the film industry's highest accolade and in the same year was appointed a *Senior ANZAC Fellow*. Mr Adams was *Australian Humanist of the Year* and the recipient of the *Henry Lawson Arts Award* in 1987. In 1998, the National Trust elected him one of Australia's *100 Living National Treasures*. Internationally, he has won a *Golden Lion* at Cannes, and the *Responsibility in Journalism Award* at New York University. He has also been awarded an *honorary doctorate* from Griffith University.

Phillip lives on a cattle property specialising in the production of chemical-free beef. He is a collector of rare antiquities, including Egyptian, Roman and Greek sculptures and artefacts. Perhaps these two facts about his private life provide some explanation of his different approach to the media - laid back approach, his humour, curiosity, his amazing store of knowledge of details, and his ability to raise rare insights from the wide diversity of people he interviews.

Whatever the explanation, the importance of Phillip's work in the media would be hard to overstate. We live in an age in which, in global terms, a very few people dominate the international economy and international relations, and the views of this dominant minority dominate the media, like never before. Like a shout in an echo chamber, their views seem to come from us from all directions and leave no space for other voices and alternative points of view. Phillip Adams' great contribution to Australian public life – which underlies his extraordinary contribution to Australian writing, broadcasting and film-making – has been through all his work to provide a space for scrutinising the dominant views, and allowing us to hear other voices.

Deputy Chancellor, it is my great pleasure, on behalf of the University of South Australia, to present to you, Mr Phillip Adams, for the award, 'the honorary degree of Doctor of the University' in recognition of his contribution to the survival of independent, crucial thought in Australian civic life.