

Chancellor, the University of South Australia awards the Honorary Doctorate Degree to a recipient in recognition of distinction by the person in public service, or service to the University, or in recognition of distinguished contribution by the person in a field of academic endeavour.

Professor Leanna Christine Read is currently the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of TGR Biosciences Proprietary Ltd – she is a scientist of distinction, an award winning research leader and a champion of the translation of research findings beyond the walls of academia into applications in the real world designed to improve health outcomes and to grow employment through a stronger national biotechnology industry.

Born in Adelaide, Leanna graduated with a Bachelor of Agricultural Sciences and a First Class Honours Degree in Biochemistry from the University of Adelaide, followed by a PhD in Biochemistry at Flinders University. In her early years as a young scientist, Leannas interests were focussed on understanding the biology of the factors present in growing tissues which regulate how the cells present in those tissues grow normally during development and how such growth factors could be used to repair tissues when growth was poor or abnormal in disease states. This

focus on tissue growth and repair was to be a lifelong interest for Leanna and one that took her, as a young doctoral graduate, to the US on a prestigious NIH Fogarty Fellowship where she established and coordinated a 7-year research program involving 20 scientific staff at the University of California, Davis. Luckily for South Australia, however, in 1989, Leanna decided to take up the next challenge in her career back in Adelaide where she was appointed as Inaugural Director of the Child Health Research Institute located in the Women and Childrens Hospital. At the time of her appointment, the Child Health Research Institute was a great concept with enormous promise – but no staff.... Leanna characteristically took up this challenge and through vision, energy and persistence worked over the next ten years to build the institute into a thriving, vibrant hub employing over 60 staff and students, with a turnover exceeding \$3 million p.a. and with an international reputation for its research of clinical relevance into tissue growth, development and child nutrition. It is all the more remarkable that at this time as well as engaging in scientific and strategic planning, fund raising and all the other myriad of tasks that new Institute Directors find are in the fine print of their job descriptions, Leannas own research team also thrived and published a series of groundbreaking studies on the clinical potential of

growth factors for the treatment of gut disease and on the novel identification of specific growth factors in milk, and their potential clinical applications. In order to grow these and all of the programs in the Institute, Leanna led her young research team by example, writing successful grants to national and international funding agencies and securing funding support from industry and biotechnology companies who had identified the international potential for clinical trials of the novel factors which her group discovered and tested. During this time I had the privilege of working on the Institutes Scientific Review Committee and would observe Leanna in a lab coat working with her team during the morning, then changing into corporate mode to present to a high level Board meeting in the afternoon and then finishing the day in sparkling evening dress speaking at a formal Variety Club Dinner in the evening to raise the awareness and profile of child health research. It was this energy and capacity to move in fine style from the bench to the boardroom that built a successful Institute and led to her next and major leadership role as CEO of a National Cooperative Research Centre for Tissue Growth and Repair where she had overall funding and research responsibilities for 100 staff and students and an annual budget of \$6 million. These were the early days of the national CRC scheme and it

quickly became clear that successful leaders of CRCs had to be able to carry out industry relevant research and manage complex partnerships between public and private organisations. Leanna again demonstrated that great scientific skills and excellent people skills are not mutually exclusive and she seamlessly steered the CRC to deliver research outcomes of real value to her industry partners and eventually this resulted in the spin out of a new incorporated company, TGR BioSciences, in 2002. A key platform for this new biotechnology company was the clinical development of a milk growth factor formulation for the prevention of the terrible mouth ulcers suffered by patients undergoing chemotherapy, for which there is no existing therapy. Leanna was the founder of TGR Biosciences and as its CEO has been at the helm of this new endeavour since its inception. She has built the company brick by brick and it has now grown to a staff of over 20, attracted significant venture capital investment and is growing apace at its premises in the Thebarton precinct – a South Australian success story.

The journey from scientist to leader is one that many researchers take – but Leannas journey has been a unique one - at critical steps in her career she has taken what many of her colleagues might have imagined to be a

leap of faith- from academia to a new Institute, from leading a successful Institute to running a multimillion dollar CRC and from leading a CRC to running a biotechnology company. Many junior researchers today can aspire to taking their work through from an idea to realise clinical or commercial outcomes because of the commitment of leaders such as Leanna, who carved the way through and in doing so laid down a new path for others to follow – a path which is critical if Australia is to realise the importance of investment in bright minds, good ideas and quality science.

Remarkably, however, Leannas commitment to ensuring that great science and research underpins a healthy economy and a healthy nation has also included longstanding roles in policy development and implementation at both the State and Federal Government level through membership of peak policy boards and councils. This has included membership of the Commonwealth's Industry Research and Development Board for six years, and she currently serves on the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council. Her work in industry and research policy and development have been recognised through numerous awards, medals and honours including a Fellowship of the Australian

Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and the award of the Centenary Medal and last year she was presented with the Premier's Award for Science, Technology and Innovation Management Excellence and was also made the South Australian of the Year in the Category of Science and Technology.

In summary, Leanna Read is an outstanding scientist and entrepreneurial leader; her 'can do' approach, her natural inclusive style and commitment to ensuring excellent research generates great outcomes for all South Australians are qualities which our own institution value highly and therefore Chancellor, I present Leanna Read for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University.