

Donna Ah Chee

Chancellor, I have the pleasure of presenting to you Donna Ah Chee, who council has determined should be awarded the honorary Doctor of Arts.

Ms Ah Chee is a Bundjalung woman from the far north coast of New South Wales, but she has lived in Central Australia for over 30 years.

She has devoted herself to the movement for health and justice for Aboriginal people across the nation.

Donna is currently the Chief Executive Officer of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, one of the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services in Australia.

Her advocacy to improve health and wellbeing outcomes through collaborative action, and her firm commitment to holding governments accountable for closing the gap in health outcomes has earned her a national profile as an Aboriginal leader.

Ms Ah Chee has developed a deep practical knowledge, a capacity for strategic leadership and an extensive experience which she has put to the service of Aboriginal people in remote and regional settings.

She has been appointed to numerous high level Aboriginal health and government boards including serving as

Chairperson of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT), as Chairperson of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum, and as a Director on the Menzies's School of Health Board. She has also been appointed as the independent chair of the inaugural NT Children and Families Tripartite Forum.

Ms Ah Chee has made a significant contribution to the health of Aboriginal people through her involvement with primary health care, research, education and public health. She has also made important contributions to reducing the harms that alcohol causes, and to improving early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal children.

Under her leadership, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress has developed into what internationally renowned public health expert Professor Fran Baum has described as one of the best comprehensive primary health care services in the world.

Over the last two years she has led the organisations response to the threat of COVID and she has made a significant contribution to keeping Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory relatively safe from the disease.

In the last two decades, Ms Ah Chee has fostered an evidence-based approach to service delivery which has helped develop strong evidence base for what works to improve health and wellbeing.

In 2016 she was jointly awarded the AMA Excellence in Health Care.

In particular, she has helped to pioneer greater engagement of Aboriginal people in research.

She was a founding director of the first Cooperative Research Centre in Aboriginal and Tropical Health in 1997 and has served on the Board of the Lowitja Institute (Australia's national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research organisation). She was also instrumental in pioneering the development of the Central Australian Academic Health Science Network.

Chancellor

In recognition of her significant contribution to the health of First Nations peoples, Charles Darwin University Council awards Donna Ah Chee the title of Honorary Doctor of Arts.