

DR EVELYN CRAWFORD

Citation for the conferral of a Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*)

Evelyn Crawford a Baakkanji elder and Aboriginal artist has served over 30 years in Aboriginal affairs in New South Wales.

From very unassuming beginnings Evelyn grew in stature and prestige. She has initiated many Aboriginal educational and social justice programs for her people; has worked tirelessly to develop a better understanding and awareness of Aboriginal people; and has brought people, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal together, changing attitudes and perceptions.

Imagine if you can a young woman born under a gum tree on the banks of the Darling River in New South Wales, growing up observing the very strong traditional Aboriginal lifestyle of her parents, eventually working successfully in a system that initially shunned her.

Without obtaining any formal education qualifications, Evelyn worked all over the far west of New South Wales and Southern Queensland, as a nursery maid, cook, house maid, in shearing sheds, as a rodeo rider and drover.

After marrying at a young age, Evelyn and her husband were forced under the Government Aboriginal Protection Policy to reside on Brewarrina Aboriginal Mission Station. She raised the first few of her 14 children on the mission, and then she and her husband literally escaped from the mission because of the harsh conditions

Many years after setting up home in Brewarrina, and following the death of her husband, Evelyn ventured into Aboriginal education by doing voluntary work at Brewarrina Central School. It wasn't long before her unique skills and talents were recognised by the Principal and staff and she was offered the position of Aboriginal Teachers Aide. Upon accepting this position Evelyn was required to undertake formal training at The University of Sydney. This was the very first time she participated in any type of formal education. After successfully completing her training, Evelyn spent eight years in this position before becoming the Aboriginal Home School Liaison Officer.

After resigning from this position, she became the first Aboriginal person appointed to the position of TAFE Aboriginal Regional Co-ordinator for the western region of New South Wales. She was instrumental in the establishment of the TAFE campus at Wilcannia and initiated numerous vocational training courses for Aboriginal people in these far western communities.

She served on many different educational committees at local, regional, state and national levels and created many educational opportunities for her people, coupled with fostering and developing empathy and understanding of the many difficulties confronting them.

Evelyn is a foundation member of the New South Wales Aboriginal Education Consultative Group. Her contribution to this organisation was rewarded with life membership. Involvement in various committees was high on Evelyn's list of priorities: she was a founding member of the Proclaimed Place (Blugan Place) in Brewarrina; founding member of Ngemba Housing, Orana Haven Rehabilitation Centre and Brewarrina Community Centre Committee; she was instrumental in the construction and operation of the Brewarrina Aboriginal Pre School.

She is a board member of the Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Education Corporation and the Brewarrina Cultural Tourism Aboriginal Corporation. She has assisted the National Parks and Wildlife Service with site recordings in the far western regions of New South Wales.

Currently her pride and joy is the fully operational Brewarrina Aboriginal Cultural Museum. Evelyn was responsible for the planning and development of the Museum and she is the current chairperson. In recognition of her work and contribution to the Brewarrina community, she was awarded the Edith McCarthy Award. Her life experiences are recorded in her autobiography *Over My Tracks* which won the Anita Kibble Award.

Evelyn's contribution to advancing the interests of Aboriginal people in New South Wales was recognised in the 1993 Australian honours list, when she was awarded the Order of Australia.

At this time of reconciliation, it is with much pride and pleasure that Charles Sturt University recognises the contribution of Evelyn Crawford to Aboriginal affairs within New South Wales, and confers on her the award Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*).

Dated this Seventeenth Day of April One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety Eight