

MR TIMOTHY ANDREW FISCHER

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

Timothy Andrew Fischer, the “boy from Boree Creek” or “Two-Minute Tim”, has in over 30 years of political life been many things to many people: army officer, farmer, politician, humanitarian, diplomat, negotiator, husband, father, and a leader in every sense of the word.

Born in 1946 at Lockhart NSW to Ralph and Barbara Fischer, Tim was educated at Boree Creek Public School and Xavier College Melbourne, where he spent his formative years as a boarder. In 1966 he was conscripted into the Australian Army, graduating from the Officer Training Unit and serving as a Platoon Commander (2nd Lieutenant) and Transport Officer with the 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment before seeing active duty in South Vietnam (1968-69). This posting would no doubt add to the empathy Tim felt for those he was to serve as Shadow Minister for Veteran’s Affairs some twenty years later. The Army recognised Tim’s potential and made him an officer, teaching him skills in managing people, leadership, organisation and scheduling. Tim’s life has been about dogged adherence to goals. It has also been about risk-taking, grabbing opportunities and perseverance.

Upon completion of his army service, Tim returned to farming at Boree Creek and experimented with the growing of lupins. In 1970 he won Country Party pre-selection for the New South Wales seat of Sturt and in 1971, at 24 years of age, was elected to the New South Wales Parliament as Member for Sturt. Tim held the redistributed seat of Murray until 1984 when he resigned to contest the Federal seat of Farrer. During his time in the NSW Parliament, he served in several portfolios as a Shadow Minister and was also the National Party Whip (1981-84).

With a successful career in State politics behind him, but never too far away from his grass roots, Tim entered Federal Parliament in 1984 as the National Party Member for Farrer. With courage and commitment Tim moved into high-profile roles as one of Australia’s most prominent politicians during the 1990’s, as Leader of the National Party (1990-99), Deputy Prime Minister (1996-99), and Minister for Trade (1996-99). Arguably Australia’s most travelled politician, Tim has crossed Australia on foot, by car, by rail or by air in the service of his constituents and of this nation.

Almost halfway through his term in 1992 Tim married Judy Brewer and took a new direction in life as the proud father of sons, Harrison and Dominic. The forced separation from his young family as a result of the demanding hours of public office caused Tim to reassess his priorities. As they travelled through the town of Howlong one June evening in 1999, Tim and his wife reflected on the irony of the name of this town, culminating in his resignation as Deputy Prune Minister, Minister for Trade and National Party Leader on 30 June 1999. While this sudden departure was to dramatically change the landscape of Australian politics at its most senior levels, it opened up new directions for Tim and improved his quality of life. Tim did not remove himself completely from parliamentary responsibility, leading the official Australian Delegation to East Timor to oversee the ballot for independence in August 1999 and continuing as the local Member for Farrer.

In the valedictory speeches delivered in the House of Representatives at the time he announced his retirement, Tim evoked sentiments of universal praise and was described as the “much loved” Member. The “boy from Boree Creek”, a loner at Xavier College with an

awkward gait and a speech impediment, the idiosyncratic Australian with the Akubra hat and mangled English expressions, had scaled this nation's highest peaks.

Perhaps the values that exemplify Tim Fischer are best described in the words of that famous Australian poem *Around the Boree Log*, by Father Hartigan of Narrandera, alias John O'Brien.

*Oh, stick me in the old caboose this night of wind
and rain,
And let the doves of fancy loose to bill and
coo again.
I want to feel the pulse of love that warmed
the blood like wine;
I want to see the smile above this kind old
land of mine.
He'll fill his pipe, and good and well, and
all aglow within
We'll hear the news he has to tell, and yarns
he has to spin;
Yarns -yes, and super-yarns, forsooth, to set
the eyes agog
And freeze the blood of trusting youth
around the boree log.*

As the long-serving Member for Sturt and Murray in the NSW Parliament and Member for Farrer in the Federal Parliament, Tim has been a staunch supporter of Riverina College, the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education and more recently, of Charles Sturt University. He took a special interest in the incorporation of Wagga Wagga Agricultural College into the Riverina College of Advanced Education, the development of the Albury-Wodonga campus, especially in the rational provision of higher education in Albury-Wodonga, and in the University's international marketing efforts in South East Asia, particularly in Thailand.

Chancellor, I present to you for admission to the degree Doctor of the University, (*honoris causa*), Timothy Andrew Fischer, a son of the Riverina, and one who has served its citizens, its University and this Nation with distinction for more than 30 years.

Dated this Fourth Day of May Two Thousand and One