

## **MS AUDRAY MARGARET BANFIELD**

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

Audray Margaret Banfield was born in Melbourne in December 1931, the daughter of Winifred and Frank Williams. Audray was introduced to the world of literature at an early age, and encouraged by her mother soon became an avid reader. Audray's father had a long and distinguished career in the Victorian Police Force, and in 1947 accepted a posting to the rural city of Benalla, a move that was to have a lasting impact on Audray's future.

Audray lived in Benalla for the next 33 years, raising her three children, Rodney, Fiona and Robyn, and becoming involved in her dual passions of education and the arts. She was active on local school committees and in 1965 Audray was an inaugural member of the Adult Education Centre in Benalla. She was also a member of the steering committee that set up the Special Education Unit in 1975. This mobile service, designed for children with special needs, is still operating successfully today. Audray was also an energetic member of the Benalla Theatre Group and Secretary of the Benalla Arts Council. It was in her enthusiasm for these activities that Audray developed her now distinctive determination to enrich, encourage and serve her community and to forcefully redress perceptions that rural life is dull.

Audray began her public career in visual arts with her appointment as the inaugural Director of the Benalla Art Gallery in 1968. During her twelve-year tenure as Director the Gallery flourished, and Audray widened her involvement by her appointment to the Boards of the Regional Galleries Association of Victoria and the Australian Galleries Directors Council.

In 1980 Audray was appointed as the inaugural Director of the Albury Regional Art Gallery. This Gallery has been transformed under Audray's leadership, from modest beginnings to what is now widely recognised as one of Australia's premier regional art galleries. In her capacity as Director Audray has been a passionate advocate of Australian photography, which has had a powerful impact not only on the Gallery, but also on the development of fine art education at Charles Sturt University (CSU).

Audray's association with CSU is long-standing. In 1985 she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in History and Literature. On a professional level she has sat on Course Advisory Committees, was a member of the Friends of the Murray Campus Art Centre, and has been a willing guest lecturer on numerous occasions. The link between arts education and the Gallery has been a fruitful and important relationship.

Audray has also been professionally active at state and national levels of the arts industry. For nearly a decade she sat on the Regional Galleries Association of New South Wales, both as a board member and as Chair. In 1987 she was appointed to the Ministerial Cultural Council - NSW Ministry for the Arts. She was also elected to the National Council of Museums of Australia in 1996. Audray has written over 20 essays and articles for exhibition catalogues, conferences and industry journals and was a regular presenter and commentator on ABC Regional Radio for over nine years. In 1999 Audray was convenor of Museum Australia's fifth national conference held in Albury/Wodonga.

In 1993 Audray Banfield's contribution and service to the Albury Regional Art Gallery was nationally recognised when she was admitted as a Member of the Order of Australia. In

addition, the Albury City Council recognised her unique contribution with an Award of Excellence in 1990 and again in 2000.

Reflecting her determination to enrich local cultural life Audray has also served on performing arts committees and boards. From 1989 to 1994 she was a member of the Flying Fruit Fly Circus Foundation and in 1996 joined the National Artistic Directorate of Hothouse Theatre.

A key word in the biography of Audray Banfield's professional life is inaugural. She was the inaugural Director of both the Benalla and Albury Galleries and was a foundation member of several community groups and organisations: she was there at the beginning. Even more importantly, projects initiated by Audray continue to flourish. Not only is Audray endowed with vision, but also with the energy to sustain her creations. Through her work Audray has successfully promoted the arts and enriched life in Albury-Wodonga. This achievement is widely appreciated in the community by her cultural colleagues, and by her peers in the arts industry. Phillip Adams, the prominent Australian writer and critic, affectionately describes her as, 'Audray of Albury'

Chancellor, I commend to you for conferral of the award Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*), Audray Margaret Banfield, visionary and energetic contributor to the arts, and a strong supporter of the University.

**Dated this Fourth Day of May Two Thousand and One**