

MS GLYNIS ANN INGRAM

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

Ms Glynis Ingram has worked tirelessly to protect children and young people who are most at risk of abuse and to deliver human services in some of the most remote and isolated areas of New South Wales.

Upon relocating to Wagga Wagga over 20 years ago, Ms Ingram held the role of Area Manager for the New South Wales Department of Community Services responsible for the Riverina/Murray, however in 2000 became Regional Director for the whole Western Region, covering over 72% of the State of New South Wales.

Following the creation of the Department of Family and Community Services in 2013, Ms Ingram currently holds the position of District Director for Murrumbidgee/Far West. She continues to oversee one of the largest and most diverse geographic areas in the services network. The rural and remote regions for which Ms Ingram is responsible are home to significant Aboriginal populations. The regions face severe infrastructure and transport issues, dispersed and increasingly diverse populations, high levels of disadvantage and high unemployment rates. These combine to make this a challenging environment in which to work, let alone achieve success.

Despite these challenges, by working alongside communities and Aboriginal Elders, being visible across the region and improving child protective services, Ms Ingram has achieved this success. She has tailored services and policies to suit the differing needs of such diverse communities. Her deep cultural awareness and knowledge of Aboriginal protocol has enabled her to develop a strong relationship with Aboriginal communities. Indeed, Ms Ingram's respectful engagement and dialogue has enabled her to work closely with all communities and ensure that social justice and social inclusion are core to her work. Her broad knowledge and experience of the region has, time and again, been recognised and valued by New South Wales and Commonwealth Government agencies alike.

As a result of her outstanding leadership, the region developed a novel and useful tool to enable staff to more accurately assess the levels of service required in relation to Out of Home Care Services. A separate tool was also developed to assess the needs of the community; with both tools leading to a significant improvement in targeted funding to ensure transparency and equality within and between communities. Under Ms Ingram's leadership, in the past 6 years, the number of Non Government Out of Home Care services across Western NSW increased from three to 14. Concurrently, three Aboriginal specific Out of Home care services were established through partnership arrangements where none had existed before.

Ms Ingram is a fierce advocate for regional New South Wales and is consistently proactive in anticipating the impact of major infrastructure changes on communities, such as the impact of drought and the issues related to water security in the Murray Darling catchment area.

As part of her commitment to regional communities, Indigenous education, equity and providing a skilled workforce to work alongside and contribute to economic growth and development in regional Australia, Ms Ingram has been a staunch supporter of Charles Sturt University since her move to Wagga Wagga. In addition to providing opportunities for workplace learning for students and employment for graduates, she has supported the establishment of two joint positions between Charles Sturt University and the various iterations of the Department of Family and Community Services. The joint-appointment model developed was a constructive integration of academia with the application to the field of Child Protection and was informed by the criteria for effective partnering developed by the Caledon Institute of Social Policy in Canada. Ms Ingram used the Wagga Wagga based joint position to develop future and current employees of the Child Protection Services. This included using the joint appointment for supervision of middle management staff in addition to the training and development of non-government partner organisations; especially in relation to the introduction of legislative changes and new ways of cross institutional, cross community collaboration – in other words finding ways for all to work together for the benefit of the whole community. The model developed by Ms Ingram for these appointments went on to become the template for joint appointments across the State.

At the commencement of the joint appointments, students did not consider Child Protection as a career area of choice and this was clearly reflected in low student placement numbers in this area. Three years later, however, the number of student placements had more than tripled and the Western Region of the Department was seen by Charles Sturt University students as the placement of choice. Not only did this provide an increase in skilled graduates in this area but it also provided greater community support and led to a significant reduction in the number of unfilled departmental positions in remote areas of western New South Wales. In an area of high Aboriginal populations, in 10 years Ms Ingram's approach increased the percentage of Aboriginal staff in the agency from 11% to 20%, including senior and middle management as well as community based casework staff.

The joint appointment also became the Executive Officer of the innovative Western Region Best Practice Panel which introduced external consultation and expertise for children severely damaged and traumatised by abuse. Ms Ingram also tasked the appointees with collaboratively driving change in Aboriginal homelessness at Deniliquin and developing innovative, culturally-appropriate and embedded changes to lessening illicit drug use and misuse in the communities of Brewarrina, Bourke and Walgett.

Ms Ingram developed an Intensive Service Placement Panel and tasked the joint appointees to assist the Western Region in the development of strategic planning for a number of complex reviews, ministerial enquiries and complaint conflict resolution.

Responding to the inability of the Department to undertake foster care recruitment and training in very small and very isolated communities, Ms Ingram also used the joint appointment and financial resources to develop a mobile student unit from Charles Sturt University that saw 38 new foster carers recruited and trained in remote areas by students from the University. The students also ran programs for children in Out of Home Care, undertook Life-Story training for current carers, as well as undertaking community profiling of the communities using a Participatory Rural Appraisal approach.

Ms Ingram was instrumental in establishing an agreement between the Department and Charles Sturt University to provide dental treatment, oral health checks and nutritional advice for all at risk children in care in the region. This agreement extends to the carers and their families with all routine checks and treatment being provided by students and staff within the University's clinics.

Ms Ingram's approach has been to work not only with Charles Sturt University but other government and community organisations in highlighting mutually achievable goals that have been achieved by working together to resource and address those goals to the benefit of the communities they serve as well as the staff, students and clients of the various organisations. She is held in the highest regard by the human service sector across Western New South Wales and was publicly recognised by the recently awarded Public Service Medal. Her passion and commitment to children and young people at risk of abuse and neglect, our Indigenous communities and to the University's inclusion and importance in training and education to provide a better future for all in regional Australia is unwavering.

Ms Ingram's approach is one of thoughtful consideration, absolute ethical integrity and a commitment to innovation in delivering appropriate and useful service.

Vice-Chancellor, I present to you, Ms Glynis Ann Ingram, a very worthy recipient of the award of Doctor of Arts (*honoris causa*), in recognition of her contribution to Regional Australia, our communities and to Charles Sturt University.

Dated this Fourteenth Day of December Two Thousand and Fifteen