PROGRAM
THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER 2012

6.00pm Event commences
The Great Hall

6.30pm Official proceedings commence
Professor Shane Houston
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services)
Master of Ceremonies

Welcome to Country
Mr Charles Madden
Director, Aboriginal Medical Service

6.40pm Vice-Chancellor’s address
Dr Michael Spence (BA ’85 LLB ’87), Vice-Chancellor and Principal
The University of Sydney

6.50pm Dr Charles Perkins AO Memorial Oration

Ms Gail Mabo
Topic: ‘Mabo The Man’

Dr Bryan Keon-Cohen AM QC
Topic: ‘Eddie Mabo as Principle Plaintiff: Tragedy and Triumph’

7.20pm Vote of thanks and introduction to the Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Prize
Professor Shane Houston

Presentation of the Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Prize
Prizes presented by Dr Michael Spence and Ms Hetti Perkins

8.00pm Close of official proceedings
Professor Shane Houston

Refreshments served
The Great Hall

8.30pm Event concludes
ABOUT THE ORATION
In 2001, the University of Sydney, in collaboration with the Koori Centre, launched the Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Oration.

The establishment of the Oration began as a recommendation of the Committee to Review Aboriginal Education at the University of Sydney, of which Dr Perkins was a member.

The University, in consultation with the Koori Centre, adopted in principle that the University establish an Annual Oration, “to be given by an internationally high-profile race relations leader... as a demonstration of its continuing commitment to fostering excellence in education and leadership among its Indigenous staff and graduates.”

The University, in consultation with the Koori Centre, believed it would be fitting to name the Oration in honour of the University’s first Indigenous graduate, Dr Charles Perkins AO.

The Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Oration was established with the full support of the Perkins family and in acknowledgement of Dr Perkins’ tireless dedication to human rights and social justice for Indigenous Australians.

Vice-Chancellor’s Preliminary Response to the Report of the Committee established to review Aboriginal education at the University of Sydney, 2000.

SPEAKERS
Ms Gail Mabo
Artist, performer, choreographer, cultural consultant and daughter of Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo and Bonita Mabo.

Gail was born and raised in Townsville, Queensland.

With the family originally from Mer (Murray Island) in the Torres Strait, Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo was the political activist and land rights campaigner whose crusade famously resulted in the Mabo Decision being handed down in the High Court on 3 June 1992.

As well as appearing in short films and sitting on the board of the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA), Gail acted as a cultural consultant to Blackfella Films during the production of the highly anticipated film Mabo starring Jimi Bani as Eddie ‘Koiki’ Mabo and Deborah Mailman as Bonita. Directed by Rachel Perkins, the film marks the 20th anniversary of the historic High Court decision.

Dr Bryan Keon-Cohen AM QC
Junior counsel on the Mabo case.


Mr Keon-Cohen appeared as junior counsel in Mabo (No 1) and (No 2), and in numerous additional native title matters in the Federal and High Courts, including Wik, Waanyi and WA v Commonwealth cases.

He has lectured and written extensively on native title and indigenous rights. His book Mabo in the Courts: Islander Tradition to Native Title: A Memoir (2011) formed the basis of his PhD, awarded by Monash University in 2012. On 26 January 2012 he was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM).
MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Professor Shane Houston
Deputy Vice-Chancellor
(Indigenous Strategy and Services)

With a strong background in education and health, Shane Houston leads the University’s institution-wide strategy to advance Indigenous participation, engagement, education and research.

Professor Houston was previously executive director of systems performance and Aboriginal policy with the Northern Territory Department of Health and Families. He has been actively engaged in Aboriginal advancement issues for more than 30 years at a community level, working in government and in a number of international settings, including various United Nations-related activities. He has a long-standing interest in the development of culturally secure health services and systems, and in health economics – especially in finding greater equity in how health systems allocate and use resources.

Professor Houston was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services) at the University of Sydney in April 2011. He had previously been a board member of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Lowitja Institute.

WELCOME TO COUNTRY
Mr Charles ‘Chicka’ Madden

A respected Elder, Mr Charles Madden has lived in Cadigal country in the Sydney region for most of his life.

For over 35 years he has served as a Director of the Aboriginal Medical Service, Redfern, and is a Life Member of the Redfern All Blacks Junior Rugby League Football Club.

Mr Madden is also a board member of the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

PERFORMERS
Mrs Megan Hanlon & Ms Morag Ayres
ABOUT THE PRIZE

Established by the Koori Centre in 2000, the Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Prize commemorates the lifelong achievements of Dr Perkins AO, the first Indigenous Australian graduate of the University of Sydney.

The prize is awarded annually to Indigenous Australian students who have completed a bachelor’s or honours degree and have achieved outstanding results during their studies.

The single prize was increased to a maximum of three recipients in 2003, with the support of the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children & Students, the Koori Centre and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors of the University of Sydney.

THE 2012 DR CHARLES PERKINS AO ANNUAL MEMORIAL PRIZE WINNERS

Mr Luke Hart
Bachelor of Applied Science (Physiotherapy) Honours

Mr Robert Grant
Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery

Mr Timothy Gilbey
Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery

Previous winners of this prestigious prize are listed below.

2001
Ms Tracey Sharon Kickett

2002
Ms Llewellyn Williams

2003
Mr Christopher Davis
Ms Jodie Wellington

2004
Ms Cheryl Davis
Ms Simone Nelson
Ms Yvette Balla-Gow

2005
Ms Kate Makin
Mr Percival Knight
Mr Victor Wood

2006
Mr Dylan Hughes
Mr John Henderson
Ms Stephanie Walton

2007
Ms Jade Swan
Ms Kerry Wallace-Massone
Mr Nicholas Beeton

2008
Ms Alana Moffett
Ms Naomi May Cook
Mr Paul Gray

2009
Mr Adam Ridgeway
Mr Chad Todhunter
Ms Sarah Callan

2010
Ms Amanda Porter
Ms Rebecca O’Brien
Ms Yvonne Payne

2011
Ms Lauren Booker
Mr Jacob Munro
Ms Janette Saunders

THE CHARLIE PERKINS TRUST
for Children & Students
Arrernte and Kalkadoon Man
1936 – 2000

Charles’s grandmother, Nellie Errerreke Perkins, and his mother Hetti, were Eastern Arrernte
customers, born at Arltunga. Hetti’s young life was
spent around the mines and working on pastoral
stations. During this time she had eight children:
Percival, Bill, George, Nita, Margaret, Alec, Don
and May. Nita and Margaret were taken away
from her at a young age and sent to Adelaide.
She never saw them again. In 1935, Hetti met
Martin Connelly while living at the Bungalow near
Alice Springs. Martin’s mother was a Kalkadoon
woman from the Mt Isa region and his father was
Irish. Hetti had two children to Martin. They
named their first child, who was born in 1936,
Charles Nelson Perkins, and his young brother,
Ernest. Charles did not meet his father until he
was 33 years old.

In 1945, Father Percy Smith, an Anglican priest,
took Charles and a number of other boys to
Adelaide, with the permission of their mothers,
to further their education. While Charles tried to
make the most of the opportunity offered to him,
he recalled the harsh discipline of the boys’ home,
particularly after the departure of Father Smith. At
St Francis House, the boys formed a strong, lifelong
bond with Father and Mrs Smith and each other. It
was during his years in Adelaide that Charles began
to understand the extent of discrimination against
Aboriginal people.

Charles’s outstanding skills as a soccer player led
him to England in 1957 to play for Everton. On
his return to Australia, he married Eileen in 1961
and they moved to Sydney. His soccer career
culminated in him playing as captain/coach for Pan-Hellenic in Sydney. He was passionate
about soccer and it helped finance his way
through university. In Sydney, Ted Noffs was to
influence and support Charles in his endeavours.
Charles entered the University of Sydney in 1963
and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in May
1966. He was one of the first Indigenous
Australians to graduate from university. At this
time, he was also instrumental in establishing
the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney
and forged a lasting connection with the Sydney
Aboriginal community.

In the summer of 1965, Charles organised a
group of 30 students to travel to Walgett, Moree,
Boweraville and Kempsey to protest against
discrimination and poor living conditions. In his
autobiography, Charles said “The Freedom Ride
was probably the greatest and most exciting
event that I have ever been involved in with
Aboriginal affairs.” This unprecedented protest
exposed the apartheid of rural Australia and gave
him a national profile in the media. He recognised
that the media was a valuable tool to inform
Australians of the plight of Indigenous Australians
and he used it adeptly. In Canberra in 1972, he
joined other young Aboriginal men at the Tent
Embassy and defiantly called for compensation
and recognition of Aboriginal land and human
rights. It was also in this year that Charles received
a life-saving kidney transplant.

Charles dedicated his life to achieving justice
for Indigenous Australians. His extraordinary
achievements included appointments as Secretary,
Department of Aboriginal Affairs; Chairman, Aboriginal
Development Commission and Aboriginal Hostels Ltd.
He was actively involved in Indigenous organisations
wherever he lived. He was elected ATSIC
Commissioner in both Alice Springs and Sydney. In
1987 he was awarded the Order of Australia.

But it was at the community level that he was a
household name. He was a renowned activist and
a fearless spokesman. The last 30 years of his life
were made possible by the kidney donation. This
miraculous gift made him determined to make a
difference to Indigenous Australians and he did.

Later in his life, Charles proudly fulfilled his
cultural obligations with his passage through law
with his people, the Eastern Arrerrnte.

Charles loved his family. He and Eileen have
three children, Hetti, Adam and Rachel and seven
grandchildren, Tyson, Thea, Lille, Madeleine,
Charles, Remy and Arnhem. His spirit is with us all.
ON ABORIGINAL CULTURE:
“It’s just another world. There’s another world out there and I didn’t really understand it, but I do now. It’s the same as when my friend, who came from up Derby way, saw his first white man. He was about eighteen and he saw the first white man he’d ever seen coming towards him on the first horse he’d ever seen. Imagine that. Everything changes straight away doesn’t it ... you sit there at night, with the fires burning and maybe 200 people dancing: it was awe-inspiring ... you’re going back 50,000 years in time. It writes new chapters in your brain.”

ON BEING A BUREAUCRAT:
“Tread new fields. Break new ground. Make mistakes in achieving objectives. That’s what it’s all about. You’ve gotta do things in the space of one year that takes normal bureaucratic mechanisms to do in five to ten years. So you’ve gotta break a lotta rules – not deliberately so, but the best way you possibly can – so you achieve that objective in the quickest possible time ... You’ve got people out there you’ve probably never met sleeping under trees, bad health, no chance of employment and probably need a feed and a decent drink of water. So what are you doing about it?”

ON THE FREEDOM RIDE:
“That’s the beginning. The eyes. The meaning of the eyes. The relationship, the eye conversation between people. The incident outside the RSL club, that was the most dramatic part of everything. A lot of things fell in place after that. We knew what we had to do. It set the pattern, the template. The eye conversation I had with hundreds of Aboriginal people. In the semi darkness, the fading afternoon and in the heat of the day. Just looking. Just looking. At something. And I was looking back at them. We were wondering what it was all about. One day I’ll be able to explain it all I suppose. That was the magic message I got from the Freedom Ride.”

ON HIS LIFE:
“I am a descendant of a once proud tribe from Central Australia – the Arrernte people. Today we number very few and own nothing. We cringe like dogs at the prospect of the ‘White backlash’. We pray eternally that the White authority structure will not turn on us and impede what little progress we have made. We ask for land rights with tongue in cheek knowing full well in our hearts that the land belonged to us in the first instance. We stagger and stumble into each other in confusion when our identity ... is contested and thus allow ourselves to be moulded by others. Our land, our pride and our future has been taken away from us and our people buried in unmarked graves. We wander through Australian society as beggars. We live off the crumbs of the white Australian table and are told to be grateful. This is what Australia Day means to Aboriginal Australians. We celebrate with you but there is much sadness in our joy. It is like dancing on your mother’s grave.”

Many thanks to the Perkins family for permission to include this extract from ‘State Funeral’ program, Sydney Town Hall, 25 October 2000.
The University reserves the right to make alterations to any information contained within this publication without notice. 10/2012

ABN 15 211 513 464