PROGRAM
THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2013

6.00pm Event commences
The Great Hall

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

Welcome to Country
Mr Charles Madden
Director, Aboriginal Medical Service

6.40pm Vice-Chancellor’s address
Dr Michael Spence, Vice-Chancellor and Principal
The University of Sydney

6.50pm Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Oration
Mr Shane Phillips: “Youth in our community”

7.10pm 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
Prize presented by Dr Michael Spence and Mr Adam Perkins

8.00pm Close of official proceedings
Professor Shane Houston

Refreshments served
The Great Hall

8.30pm Event concludes

Cover image: The University of Sydney appreciates the generous permission of the Perkins family and the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children & Students, for the use of this photograph. © Robert McFarlane.
Image (left): Reconciliation Week 2013, photograph by Camille Nuttall Photography.
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.

**SPEAKER**
Mr Shane Phillips  
CEO, Tribal Warrior Association  
Topic: “Youth in our community”

Shane’s past work with young people in child protection, juvenile justice, and with the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody has made him an outstanding community leader. He is a highly influential member of the Redfern Aboriginal community, where he is regarded as their voice on a range of youth and justice issues.

Shane is a strong believer in proactively empowering Indigenous people to overcome disadvantage through education and training, and is respected by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike for his integrity and hard work. He is the full time CEO of the Tribal Warrior Association, and was named as Australia’s Local Hero 2013 in this year’s Australian of the Year Awards.

**MASTER OF CEREMONIES**
Professor Shane Houston  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor  
(Indigenous Strategy and Services)

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

He was previously executive director of systems performance and Aboriginal policy with the NT 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.

In April 2011, he was appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Strategy and Services) at the University of Sydney. Previously he had 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.

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

**PERFORMERS**
Mrs Megan Hanlon and Ms Morag Ayres

Megan Hanlon and Morag Ayres are graduates of the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Sydney. They are originally from Cairns, Queensland and have a Torres Strait Island (Ugar) and Aboriginal (Yalandji) background.

Morag is currently studying to become a high school music teacher and Megan is studying special education. At the same time, both women are raising families of their own and pursuing their love of music.
Established by the Koori Centre in 2000, the Dr Charles Perkins AO Annual Memorial Prize commemorates the lifelong achievements of Charles Perkins, 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 honour’s 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 all faculties of the university and the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children & Students.

THE 2013 DR CHARLES PERKINS AO ANNUAL MEMORIAL PRIZE WINNERS

Mr Todd Rowling
Bachelor of Engineering (Honours)

Ms Janelle Evans
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)

Ms Emma Hicks
Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours)

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2012
Mr Luke Hart
Mr Robert Grant
Mr Timothy Gilbey

2011
Ms Lauren Booker
Mr Jacob Munro
Ms Janette Saunders

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

2009
Mr Adam Ridgeway
Mr Chad Todhunter
Ms Sarah Callan

2008
Ms Alana Moffett
Ms Naomi May Cook
Mr Paul Gray

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

2006
Mr Dylan Hughes
Mr John Henderson
Ms Stephanie Walton

2005
Ms Kate Makin
Mr Percival Knight
Mr Victor Wood

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

2003
Mr Christopher Davis
Ms Jodie Wellington

2002
Ms Llewellyn Williams

2001
Ms Tracey Sharon Kickett
HIS STORY

Charles Perkins’ grandmother, Nellie Ererreke Perkins, and his mother Hetti, were Eastern Arrernte women, 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 boy’s 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 joined the University of Sydney in 1963 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1966. He was the first Aboriginal man to graduate from university. At this time, he was 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, Bowraville 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 Commissioner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission 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 spokesperson. 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 Arrernte.

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 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.

Image: Sea of Hands at the Reconciliation Week 2013, photograph by Camille Nuttall Photography.