

Citation for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of the University (DUniv)

Mr. Gregory John Poche AO

Mr. Gregory Poche AO is one of Australia's most successful businessmen and an inspirational philanthropist whose generous support of Indigenous Health initiatives at Flinders University and around Australia is contributing to improvements in the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Mr. Poche was born in Marrickville in Sydney in 1942. He left school at age 14, working first with the New South Wales railways and then as a builder's labourer while studying at night school, four hours a night, five nights a week. He completed his Higher School Certificate and then a degree in business at the then Institute of Technology in Sydney, now the University of Technology Sydney. He joined the sales team of a pharmaceutical company, and continued his studies completing diplomas in business management and operations management. He joined TNT as national marketing manager in 1970, leaving 14 months later to establish his own express freight company, initially called Discount Freight Express, and later renamed Star Track Express. Star Track Express is widely regarded as Australia's best and most innovative transport company. He sold this thriving business to Qantas and Australia Post in 2003.

In 2005 Mr. Poche donated \$40 million of his personal funds to Sydney's Mater Hospital to establish the Melanoma Institute of Australia. This was the largest donation by a single person to a single cause in Australia's history. In 2008, Mr. Poche donated \$10 million to the University of Sydney to establish the first Poche Centre for Indigenous Health. He also donated substantial funds to support improvements in Indigenous Eye Health by clinicians and researchers with The University of Melbourne.

In March 2010, Mr. Poche made a \$10 million endowment to Flinders University to establish two new Poche Centres for Indigenous Health, one based in Alice Springs and the other in Adelaide. The funds will be held by the university in perpetuity and the interest will fund the research and education activities of the two centres which will both contribute towards "closing of the gap" in Indigenous health. The Poche Centre in Alice Springs focuses on education, training and research to strengthen the preparation of health professionals working with Indigenous people, especially in remote communities, and to improve the health literacy of Indigenous people. The Poche Centre in Adelaide focuses on research and education related to improving the mental health and well-being of Indigenous Australians, and on strengthening support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying to become doctors, nurses and allied health professionals at our university. These two new centres enhance the work of our university's existing Indigenous health education and research activities in rural and remote areas, especially our Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs and our new Northern Territory Medical Program.

In 2009 Mr. Poche was made an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia for his "service to the community through philanthropic contributions to medical, aged care and sporting organisations, and to the freight transport industry through the introduction of innovative business practices".

Mr. Poche initially made his donations anonymously but later realised that speaking publicly about his own contributions and his motivation would inspire others to follow his lead. In a recent interview he said "Hopefully, people with a social conscience and the wherewithal might step up to the plate. They're certainly needed."

The Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir AC, has described Mr. Poche as “a visionary philanthropist who appreciates the dire need for health education among our indigenous population. He is modest man yet there is a nobility about Mr. Poche. He's certainly not a person who seeks any sort of public appreciation. We are not only impressed by the enormity of his generosity of spirit, it is an incentive to all of us to turn indigenous health around.”

Mr. Greg Poche's extraordinary generosity and his determination to make a significant difference in the lives and well being of Indigenous Australians aligns with our university's long standing commitment to equity, social inclusion, and respect for and recognition of Indigenous perspectives. He is a worthy recipient of the degree of Doctor of the University.