

LEE KUAN YEW

CITATION FOR AN HONORARY DEGREE

Chancellor, it is my privilege to present to you for a degree of the University, the Honourable Lee Kuan Yew.

Lee Kuan Yew has lived a life of extraordinary achievement. Most famously, he is the father of modern Singapore, but he is also a statesman of unique standing in the Asia-Pacific region and an honest friend of Australia.

He was born in Singapore in 1923, his great grandfather having emigrated from China to what was then known as the Straits Settlements, in 1862. Mr Lee's early education was in Singapore and after the Japanese occupation of Singapore during the Pacific War, he went on to study law at Fitzwilliam College in Cambridge. In 1949 he returned to Singapore to practice law.

After early involvement on the margins of colonial electoral politics, Mr Lee, together with a group of other English-educated Singaporeans, founded the People's Action Party in 1954. The party triumphed at the 1959 election, and Mr Lee became the country's first Prime Minister under the self-government framework with Britain. Mr Lee steered his country through the brief and turbulent period of federation with Malaya, before separation and full independence in 1965.

Mr Lee was Prime Minister of the independent Republic of Singapore for a quarter of century, from 1965 until 1990. Since retiring from the prime ministership, he has continued to serve his country in a uniquely influential advisory capacity as Senior Minister and more recently, as Minister Mentor.

Mr Lee has made an unparalleled contribution to the development of his country. Indeed, few leaders have had such a singular impact on their country's history. Under Mr Lee's leadership, Singapore became a stable and secure independent country, moved from a state of extreme economic vulnerability to its current position as the region's most vibrant economy whose people enjoy standards of education, health and welfare among the highest in the world. One quality of Mr Lee's leadership that is worthy of special mention is his relentless and extraordinarily successful drive to eliminate corruption in government.

Along with his enormous contributions to the development of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew has also been an important statesman in our region. He played a key role in the normalisation of difficult relations with Indonesia and the foundation of ASEAN in the 1960s, the development of APEC in the 1980s and 1990s, and the nurturing of a sense of community across East Asia in recent years while not neglecting the importance of keeping the United States actively involved in the region.

Mr Lee has spoken out strongly on a range of major international issues, ranging from Asian values, democracy, the international Chinese diaspora, and the place of both China and the United States in our emerging regional order. Many people have contested the views he has set forth, but no one has doubted his sincerity, his integrity or his commitment to advancing the causes of peace and prosperity.

Mr Lee has been a long-standing and candid friend of Australia. He has not hesitated to tell us when he thinks we are in error. We have not always wanted to hear this and not always appreciated it. But there can be little doubt that there have been few leaders in Asia who have been better friends of our country.

Chancellor, it is with great pleasure that I present to you Lee Kuan Yew, that you may confer on him the degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* on the grounds of his service to the development of Singapore, his international statesmanship and his friendship with Australia.

Professor Ian Chubb AC
Vice-Chancellor
The Australian National University
28 March 2007