

2016 UQ DECEMBER GRADUATION CEREMONIES

Friday 16 December 2016 – 2.00pm
UQ Centre, Union Road, UQ St Lucia Campus

Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences

CITATION FOR HONORARY DOCTORATE RECIPIENT, MS KARYN WALSH

Chancellor

Ms Karyn Walsh is a catalytic leader of the social sector who has brought tangible improvements to policies, services, and the lives of countless vulnerable people.

Ms Walsh, Chief Executive Officer of the not-for-profit Micah Projects, has been making substantial contributions to social justice and inclusion in Queensland for more than forty years.

Growing up in regional Queensland, she saw the different ways that people respond to adversity, and decided to become a nurse. While training at the Mater Hospital in Rockhampton in the mid-to-late 1970s, she volunteered at a women's shelter and was the first outreach youth worker for homeless youth. These experiences helped shape a more sophisticated understanding of the causes and consequences of social marginalisation, and started her thinking about viable solutions.

In 1995 she became a founding member of Micah Projects, which has a mission to create justice and respond to injustice at the personal and structural levels. Starting with three staff and one office in South Brisbane, it now has 12 sites in Brisbane and regional Queensland, 200 health and social work staff, and 100-plus volunteers, who collectively give advocacy and support to well-over 6000 people each year.

Since the early days of volunteering on the streets of Rockhampton, the pool of people who have benefited from Ms Walsh's vision has continually expanded and diversified. It includes ex-residents of children's institutions, young mothers and their children, victims and survivors of domestic and family violence, people who have experienced or are at risk of chronic homelessness, people with disabilities – and many more.

Ms Walsh has approached the tough challenge of affecting systemic change by not simply raising awareness of problems, but also by offering integrated and inclusive solutions that are backed by research and international experience.

She has earned the confidence and respect of people in power, and used this status to promote much-needed reforms and opportunities for people who do not have a seat at the top table.

During her nine years as President of the Queensland Council of Social Services, until 2013, the council achieved a number of results. For instance, it influenced housing and homelessness policies and early intervention services for families, and contributed to a successful wage campaign for community services sector employees.

Ms Walsh's list of significant involvements is too long to detail here, but it includes being a former executive member of the Coalition for Gun Control, a past co-ordinator of the Domestic Violence Resource Centre, and a current member of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Implementation Council. She is also Co-Chair of Anti-Poverty Week in Queensland, and one of only three members of the Queensland Independent Remuneration Tribunal.

She once worked as a research assistant with The University of Queensland, and is known as a stickler for evidence-based practice and policies. Micah has partnered on research with UQ and other universities, and hundreds of UQ students have gained from professional placements with Micah, or with its network of health partners.

Chancellor, I present to you Ms Karyn Walsh for the award of Doctor of Social Work and Nursing *honoris causa*, bestowed by the Senate of The University of Queensland.