

Chancellor

Mr David Ritchie AO, is a widely-respected career diplomat who represented Australia's interests during some of the most momentous international developments of the past four decades.

He has won high praise for his bravery and actions to address terrorism, given strategic advice at the most senior levels, helped Australians in trouble overseas, and strengthened some of this country's most vital relationships.

Mr Ritchie was born in pre-independence Papua New Guinea and moved to Brisbane for high school and university. In 1975 he graduated with honours in German language and literature from The University of Queensland (where his father, Jim Ritchie, was Deputy Vice-Chancellor).

His study choice would prove to be inspired. It helped him not only land a Department of Foreign Affairs graduate traineeship, but also be posted to the Cold War capital of West Germany, Bonn, within months of graduating.

As his career progressed, he worked at the Australian embassy in East Berlin; at the Australian High Commission in Kenya; and at increasingly influential levels in Canberra. From 1999 he was Senior Advisor (International Relations) to the Prime Minister, and he subsequently became Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

In 2002 Mr Ritchie was announced as the next Ambassador to Indonesia, Australia's largest overseas mission. He landed two days after the horrific Bali bombings, which killed 202 people (including 88 Australians) and injured more than 200 people.

Sadly, this was the first of many bleak events to mark his term in Indonesia.

He was there for the 2003 Marriott Hotel bombing and the 2005 Bali bombing, and was in the Australian Embassy when a massive car bomb exploded, close by, in September 2004. It killed at least 10 Indonesians and maimed many others.

Mr Ritchie's leadership during this crisis earned a Group Bravery Citation, and he was later made Officer of the Order of Australia for his contribution to the fight against terrorism in South-East Asia.

But within four months of the embassy bombing, catastrophe again struck Indonesia, where the Boxing Day tsunami killed at least 168,000 people. Australia made a substantial contribution to the huge recovery and rebuilding effort, in which Mr Ritchie, as Ambassador, was deeply involved.

He returned to Canberra late in 2005 and served a further four years as Deputy Secretary of DFAT, before becoming Ambassador to Italy. In this role he helped secure the safe release of a fellow UQ graduate, lawyer Melinda Taylor, who was held hostage, accused of spying, in Libya in 2012.

He became Ambassador to Germany in 2013, and is the only Australian diplomat – and one of very few in the world – who has served on each side of the Berlin Wall *and* in reunified Germany.

Upon his retirement in July 2016, the German President awarded him the Grosses Bundesverdienstkreuz (Grand Cross of the Order of Merit) for services to German-Australian relations.

Chancellor, I present to you Mr David Ritchie, Officer of the Order of Australia, Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, and Bachelor of Arts with honours of this University, for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa* bestowed by the Senate of The University of Queensland.