

Deputy Chancellor,

Robert Forster is an internationally-recognised songwriter, performer, recording artist and critic, whose university experience gave rise to one of the great Australian musical collaborations of the late 20th century.

Brisbane-born, Mr Forster studied English and drama at The University of Queensland in the mid-1970s, when he befriended another gifted and ambitious student, Grant McLennan.

The duo formed an indie rock band, The Go-Betweens, and in 1978 released through Brisbane's independent Able Label a single which ignited their progress to widespread acclaim.

With an expanded line-up, the group set up in London in the early '80s and pressed six albums. The Go-Betweens gathered critical and popular followings – as the band continues to do to this day, long after its members went separate ways in 1989.

The songwriting partnership between Messrs Forster and McLennan garnered a high degree of credibility, including from influential American critic and long-time music editor of *The Village Voice*, Robert Christgau. In 2001 the Australian Performing Rights Association declared their song *Cattle and Cane* an all-time top 30 Australian song, and in 2014 it was added to the Sounds of Australia Registry at the National Film and Sound Archive.

Reflecting an enduring public affection for two of Brisbane's favourite musical sons, a competition in 2009 to name a new bridge over the Brisbane River selected 'Go Between Bridge' in their honour.

After spending much of the 1990s living and building a solo career in Germany, Mr Forster returned to Brisbane in 2001 and reformed The Go-Betweens with Mr McLennan. They recorded three albums, including *Oceans Apart*, winner of the 2005 ARIA award for Best Adult Contemporary Album. The project ended tragically with Mr McLennan's sudden death in 2006 – but The Go-Betweens' creative vision lives on.

A decade ago Mr Forster launched a new solo career when he accepted an invitation to be the music critic for an Australian magazine, *The Monthly*. Despite being new to the critical writing profession, he won the prestigious 2006 Pascall Prize for Australian Critic of the Year. He has published a collection of writings on music, and is in the final stages of a memoir. He continues to perform in Australia and internationally, and will release a new recording later this year.

As a highly-esteemed Australian contemporary music figure, he demonstrates an ongoing commitment to nurturing emerging artists and inspiring creative and

ambitious young people, including those UQ music students who have the good fortune to attend his occasional guest lectures.

Deputy Chancellor, I present to you Mr Robert Forster for the award of Doctor of Letters *honoris causa*, bestowed by the Senate of The University of Queensland.