

CITATION DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR K.R. MCKINNON, VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG ON THE OCCASION OF THE ADMISSION OF FRANCO BELGIORNO-NETTIS TO THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF SCIENCE, HONORIS CAUSA ON 12 OCTOBER 1990.

Chancellor, I present Franco Belgiorno-Nettis.

Mr Belgiorno-Nettis was born in Italy in 1915. He graduated from the University of Turin with a Bachelor of Science degree specialising in Civil and Electrical Engineering.

In 1951 he migrated to Australia and met on his journey a fellow Italian engineer – Carlo Salteri. Both had been engaged under contract to build Australia's first steel towers for high voltage transmission lines. Within 5 years, these two men put together their own savings and a small amount of borrowed money to form Transfield Pty Ltd.

Transfield's first major contract was the \$200,000 extension to the Slab Mill at AI & S Port Kembla. So began Mr Belgiorno-Nettis' long and mutually rewarding association with the Illawarra region.

From their head office in North Sydney, Mr Belgiorno-Nettis with his partner, oversaw the development of Transfield into the nation's largest engineering project organisation. Transfield expanded to six major companies. It became known for acute business skill, high technical ability and a resulting talent for innovation and improvisation. *Carpe diem* – "seize of the day" – would be a fine motto for Mr Belgiorno-Nettis and his company. They took opportunities as they came, capitalised on their skills and won the prizes. Transfield's engineering, design and construction projects include the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, the ANZAC Ship Project, the oil and gas platforms in Bass Strait and most steam generation power projects in the mainland states.

Mr Belgiorno-Nettis' achievements go beyond his success as a manager and engineer. He has helped to build a company which has been a centre of employment and support for other Italian migrants. This is especially true of Transfield's operation in the Illawarra. He has given time and the benefit of his expertise to this University as a member of the Visiting Committee for the Faculty of Engineering. Above all, he has been a patron of the arts in the grand Medici tradition.

Franco Belgiorno-Nettis has devoted his creative flair for management and made use of the resources of his successful company to promote the arts. It began with the organisation of exhibitions amongst Transfield employers and grew to become the Transfield Art Prize and then the Biennale of Sydney. Mr Belgiorno-Nettis is the Founding Governor of the Biennale – a now famous summer celebration of the arts in their various forms.

Amongst his other affiliations with the arts, Mr Belgiorno-Nettis is a Director of the International Cultural Corporation of Australia and Trustee of the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation. He has been a Trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and member of the Crafts Board of Australia.

Franco Belgiorno-Nettis' rare combination of talents finds a relevant symbol in Bert Flugelman's Lawrence Hargrave sculpture. Transfield provided the labour and fabrication for the statue which is a fine work of art, a monument to an early engineering genius and, in its construction, a test of engineering skill and ingenuity.

Mr Belgiorno-Nettis has been honoured before for his services to industry and to the community. In 1974, he became a Commander of the Order of the British Empire and in 1985, a Member of the Order of Australia.

The University is proud to applaud the full-range of Franco Belgiorno-Nettis' achievements as an engineer and manager, and as a patron of the arts. He is a man of great energy and vision. He has given the people of Australia, the Illawarra region and this University a model of dynamic motivation in a variety of fields. He has shown members of the community that very practical skills need not be divorced from the pursuit of beauty and grace. In this, his life reflects, on a large canvas, the lives of his fellow Italian migrants who came to this land to provide skilled labour and stayed to contribute to our society a fervour for life and an appreciation of its finer things.

Chancellor, it is a privilege to present to you a truly Renaissance man – Franco Belgiorno-Nettis – for admission to the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa.