

**Citation for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Letters (DLitt)
*honoris causa***

**Ms Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur
Diploma of Aboriginal Studies**

Aunty Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur was born in 1936 at Hamilton Bore, about 100kms from Oodnadatta, north-west South Australia. Ngitji Ngitji is her Anangu (Aboriginal) name meaning *Cicada*. Aunty Mona spent the early years of her life in a bush camp with her mother, the late Mary Inawantji Carroll, a Yankunytjatjara woman and her father, the late John Edward (Jack) Kennedy an Irish man.

As a child of the Assimilation era where all children of mixed descent, so-called 'half-castes' (an offensive term to her people), were to be absorbed into the white community regardless of their parents' wishes Aunty Mona was always under threat of being stolen and removed from her family. At the age of 7, due to a shortage of bush foods caused by extensive cattle and sheep grazing, Aunty Mona's family relocated to the township of Oodnadatta. Here they were able to access rations being distributed by government welfare agencies but, as Aboriginal people, they were relegated to the margins of the community to become fringe dwellers. Aunty Mona recalls life changing significantly and it was at this time that she entered Oodnadatta Mission to begin school. Aunty Mona did not speak any English and spent two years in Grade 1, two years in Grade 2, one year in Grade 3 and two years in Grade 4. At the age of fourteen she was sent to the Bagshaw family in McLaren Flat, Adelaide to work as a domestic where she helped raised their three boys. Throughout this time Aunty Mona continued to see her mother, and her little sister, Gloria, and was still able to speak her mother tongue, Yankunytjara-Antikirinya fluently. This skill would lead to a life long career as a translator and interpreter.

In 1973 Aunty Mona began teaching Pitjantjatjara at the Summer School of the University of Adelaide and began interpreting for the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement. This was the beginning of a career that spanned almost 40 years as an interpreter for Anangu people where Aunty Mona was employed with the Ethnic Affairs Commission and as a court interpreter on the North West circuit. Aunty Mona has only recently retired from these roles.

Aunty Mona Ngitji Ngitji Tur is a distinguished cultural educator, oral linguist and interpreter who has worked in all three Adelaide universities, Flinders, Adelaide and UniSA. Mona Ngitji Ngitji was given Eldership status at the age of 46 from the Antikirinya/Yankunytjatjara community northwest of South Australia in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara lands (APY lands). She has been a tireless advocate and cultural broker for the Anangu community in relation to land rights, health provision, and maintenance of Anangu languages and as an interpreter. Mona Ngitji Ngitji was given permission and selected by Pitjantjatjara Elders to teach and interpret Pitjantjatjara (as this is not her mother tongue) in courts, prisons, hospitals, for Native Title claims and as a lecturer with the University of South Australia.

More recently Ngitji Ngitji has been a cultural broker for Aboriginal women in South Australia, who have been affected, either directly or through their family, as members of the Stolen Generation. A cultural women's group was formed called Kungka Kakararajaku Inma (Women from the East) where traditional knowledge about land, Dreaming, song, dance, art and craft is taught by senior Anangu women from Coober Pedy, Kupa Piti Kungka Tjuta. Ngitji Ngitji is the cultural broker from Adelaide.

Aunty Mona is an inspiration to all. In addition to her role as teacher and linguist she was the first Aboriginal Artist in Residence with Carclew Youth Performing Arts Centre, performing in numerous schools teaching children about Anangu culture, storytelling, song and dance.

Aunty Mona has had Adjunct status at the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research, UniSA and is currently writing her life story *Cicada Dreaming*.

Aunty Mona is a humble woman and Elder who has acted as mentor, friend, cultural advisor, leader, mother, grandmother and senior knowledge holder to many Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians alike.

29 September 2010