

ACU farewells Pro-Chancellor Julien O’Connell AO

After seven years of distinguished service, Julien O’Connell AO will finish his term as ACU’s Pro-Chancellor at the end of June 2022.

In his role as Pro-Chancellor, he served on ACU’s Senate where he was Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee for more than six years. He has also been a member of the Victoria State Chapter, and Chair of the PM Glynn Institute Advisory Committee.

Since 2015, his considerable professional experience in insurance, accounting and risk management, as well as service as an executive on several public bodies, provided Senate with invaluable expertise, notably in his capacity as Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee for six and a half years. During this time, he was responsible for approving six university budgets, including signing off on the almost-complete Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building in Melbourne.

Mr O’Connell is also a member of ACU’s Victoria State Chapter and has served as Chair of the PM Glynn Institute Advisory Council since its establishment in 2016.

Having been made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2013 for his service to the community, it was during his time with ACU that he was promoted to AO (Officer of the Order of Australia) in 2020, celebrating his contributions to community health in the aged care sector, and to higher education.

Chancellor The Hon Martin Daubney AM QC acknowledged Mr O’Connell’s indefatigable service to the ACU university and community.

“Julien is held in the highest esteem not only in the university sector, but also in business and political circles and in the wider Australian community.

“Whether representing the university with Church officials, with families of graduating students or in his capacity leading Senate and engaging with its Sub-committee, Julien has at all times exercised grace, an understanding of institutional complexity and an appreciation of the individual strengths of the many people who contribute to ACU and those whose lives are in some way touched by the university.

“His calm and measured leadership played an important part in healing the soul of the university after the death of my predecessor, The Hon John Fahey AC GCSG in 2020. For the next 15 months he took on the role of Acting Chancellor, fulfilling this leadership with dignity and skill.

“He is a man of practical and realistic wisdom, born of years of service and commitment to the missions of the Church – a passion that will undoubtedly live on in him beyond his time at ACU. His wise counsel will be sorely missed on Senate.”

As tribute to acknowledge his significant contributions to the university, the Senate has resolved to name the major lecture theatre in the Saint Teresa of Kolkata Building the “O’Connell Lecture Theatre”.

The theatre will be the largest teaching facility in the new building, accommodating 300 seats with state-of-the-art learning technology.

Mr O’Connell will complete his official commitments as Pro-Chancellor on 30 June. Ms Virginia Bourke will take up her position as Pro-Chancellor on 1 July 2022.

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