

## Distinguished Professor George Williams AO, Vice-Chancellor and President, Western Sydney University



Distinguished Professor George Williams AO is the Vice-Chancellor and President at Western Sydney University. He is proud to lead an institution renowned for providing broad access to higher education and for achieving real-world impact through positive social, environmental and economic change in Western Sydney and globally.

Professor Williams commenced as Western Sydney University's fifth Vice-Chancellor in July 2024, bringing decades of experience as a constitutional law scholar and teacher, senior leader in higher education, barrister and as a national thought leader.

He began his academic career at the Australian National University before joining the University of New South Wales as the Anthony Mason Professor and later a Scientia Professor. He was the first legal academic selected as an Australian Laureate Fellow, the nation's top research award, and has held visiting positions at Columbia University, Durham University, Osgoode Hall Law School and University College London.

Professor Williams' 43 books include *Australian Constitutional Law and Theory*, *The Oxford Companion to the High Court of Australia* and *Human Rights under the Australian Constitution*. As one of Australia's pre-eminent experts in constitutional law, he has made significant contributions both nationally and internationally in the areas of human rights, federalism, Indigenous justice, electoral law and national security. Professor Williams' passion for providing opportunities for students and a quality education is evidenced through many years of teaching constitutional law and having authored the leading student text in this field.

As Dean of Law and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Transformation, Planning and Assurance) at UNSW, Professor Williams instituted innovation and reform through student digital literacy, global engagement, the pioneering of industry and community partnerships, and by driving high performance and integrity through planning, prioritisation, organisational transformation and strategic development. He has been instrumental in supporting Indigenous advancement, having led the first Australian law school to graduate over 100 Indigenous students.

Outside of academia Professor Williams practised as a barrister for over 25 years, advising

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government, business and community organisations and has appeared in the High Court of Australia on matters relating to freedom of speech, freedom from racial discrimination, Indigenous rights and the rule of law. Internationally, he has appeared in the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal of Fiji, most notably on the legality of the 2000 coup.

Professor Williams' contributions to public policy include serving as chair of the Victorian Human Rights Consultation Committee that led to Australia's first State bill of rights and chairing the NSW Government inquiry into Options for a New National Industrial Relations System that produced the historic referral of State industrial power over the private sector to the Commonwealth. He also served on a High-Level Advisory Group on Federal-State Relations to a former Prime Minister, was a member of the NSW Government's Panel to Examine Recall Elections and assisted the Northern Territory in its attempt to become Australia's seventh State. As a member of the Australian Government's Constitutional Expert Group, Professor Williams played an important role in providing advice on the Voice Referendum.

Professor Williams has a long and respected record of thought leadership on public policy and constitutional law. For over two decades, he was a regular newspaper columnist for *The Australian*, *The Canberra Times*, and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. In 2011, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the law in the fields of anti-terrorism, human rights and constitutional law as an academic, author, adviser and public commentator.