



The University of Melbourne

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For immediate release

Sir Edward “Weary” Dunlop Asialink Medal
Professor Nancy Viviani

Professor Nancy Viviani has been awarded the 2009 Sir Edward “Weary” Dunlop Asialink Medal.

The Dunlop Asialink Medal, announced today, provides recognition for an outstanding record of achievement in improving Australia-Asia relations and enhancing the quality of life in the region.

Professor Viviani has made a profound contribution to the “re-creation” of Australia, still resonating today.

Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne and member of the Asialink board, Professor Glyn Davis, will present the award this evening.

From as early as 1973 - the year the White Australia Policy was finally and totally abolished - and continuing today, Professor Viviani’s work has reflected an aspiration and an optimism that Australia will “beat history” and avoid the racial tensions and conflict endemic in other multi-racial societies.

Ideas are powerful things. A scholar, a teacher, and above all, a mentor, Professor Viviani’s influence extends far beyond the academic sphere, beyond the lecture halls and university courses continuing to incorporate her numerous scholarly works.

Ever keen to praise and promote the work of others, especially the pressure groups and politicians who contributed through the 1960s and 1970s to the abolition of White Australia, she once said of these people that they created a “new” Australia – “an Australia-in-the-world”. They changed people’s minds.

What she said of them, we can say of her: She made a difference. She made a difference in the quality of her ideas, and most importantly, in how she made these ideas matter in government and in the public debate.

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The significance of her work on immigration, especially Vietnamese immigration, still resonates today.

The immigration stakes in the 70s and 80s were much higher than today. The Fraser Government, in response to the humanitarian disaster in Vietnam, allowed refugees on a scale and at a speed not seen before or since. More than 100,000 Indochinese immigrated in the period.

Professor Viviani said of the role of the Government at the time: "For Australians, Vietnamese refugee entry was the first real test of the disestablishment of the White Australia policy and a test successfully passed."

Over the course of 35 years as a teacher, Professor Viviani mentored numerous rising scholars, many of whom now hold this country's most influential positions in international affairs.

These men and women are now in senior positions in the diplomatic service, in the United Nations, in Universities and in Government, here, and in Asia.

She was Professor of Political Science at ANU and Professor of International Relations at Griffith, and from 1993 to 1996, Dean of the Faculty of Asian Studies at Griffith, then the largest Asian studies faculty in the country.

But it was her work as a developer of policy which made her an important figure not only in academia, but also in government and other circles.

In 1991, she was pivotal in conceptualising and writing a report on the need for studies of Asia in Australian schools, a report which became forerunner to the national Asian languages and studies strategy.

Nancy's leading edge research and scholarship on East Timor, Vietnam and Indonesia, her contribution to public policy, and in particular to the place of migrants and refugees in Australia, are the foundation on which much of our current thinking rest.

The Dunlop Asialink Medal provides recognition for exemplary Australians committed to excellence in both their vocations and their contributions to Australia-Asia relations. The Medal and Dunlop Fellowships seek to further Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop's vision for peace and prosperity in the region through people-to-people exchange and interaction.

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