



## 2023 Weary Dunlop Medal Recipient Citation John McCarthy AO

Each year, in honour of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, Asialink pays tribute to an individual who has championed Australia's relationships with our closest Asian neighbours.

The **Dunlop Asia Medal** is awarded for an outstanding record of achievement in improving Australia-Asia relations and enhancing the quality of life in the region. The Medal recognises exemplary Australians who have dedicated their life's work to strengthening and broadening Australia's engagement within the region, with a record of sustained commitment to excellence in both their vocations and their contributions to Australia-Asia relations.

Tonight, we honour John McCarthy.

Throughout his career, John has had a substantial impact on Australia's reputation and global standing in the world and particularly in Asia.

Having practised briefly as a lawyer in London and New York City, John joined the then Department of External Affairs in 1968.

In a diplomatic career which spanned 40 years, John served as Head of Mission in seven posts, including Washington. Five of his ambassadorial level posts were in Asia including Hanoi, Bangkok, Jakarta, Tokyo and New Delhi. Arguably only James Plimsoll can claim so many ambassadorships to so many important posts.

By any measure John has had a remarkable reputation and the emphasis has often been on his work behind the scenes. But in truth, John has been at the forefront of Australia's international engagement-in particular with the Indo Pacific.

Within 10 years of starting in government, and after postings in Vientiane, Washington and Damascus he became Chief of Staff to the then Minister for Foreign Affairs – Andrew Peacock.

His first ambassadorial appointment in Vietnam in 1981 came after Vietnam's intervention in Cambodia which was as a difficult period in the Australia-Vietnam relationship. And yet he noted that he was always treated with great civility by the Vietnamese and was able to get things done. In mid-1983, nearing the end of John's tenure, the then Foreign Minister – the late Bill Hayden - visited Vietnam and reinvigorated a relationship which has continued to improve over the years. More recently John has again been involved in Australia's dealings with Vietnam.

John's later appointments also had some challenges.

His tenure in Thailand began with the 1992 conflict between the army and demonstrators at Sanam Luang in Bangkok and the consular issues generated by the crisis. Much of his work in Bangkok centered on the important Thai approaches to the Cambodia settlement in which Australia had played a major part.



John's appointment of Ambassador to Indonesia coincided with the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997/98, the downfall of Suharto in 1998 and the East Timor crisis in 1999. He managed a volatile relationship with skill and on his departure received praise from an Indonesian media then generally hostile to Australia.

John's role as High Commissioner to India included the 2009 violence against Indian students in Australia. John led a highly visible government response in India to contain the damage to Australia's reputation. He was also in Mumbai during the 2008 terrorist attacks and managed the consular response to those attacks.

John's time as Ambassador to Japan from 2001-2004 was more tranquil -with a major focus on the Australia-Japan Trade and Economic Framework concluded by then Prime Ministers John Howard and Junichiro Koizumi. In 2020, John was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star by Japan for his contribution to strengthening bilateral relations between Japan and Australia. Since 2010, he has been a Senior Adviser to Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, Tokyo.

Since leaving government, John has continued in the service of Australia's relationships with Asia. From 2011-2016 he was the National President of the Australian Institute of International Affairs. He was Chair of the Australia-India Council over the same period and co-convened the Indonesia-Australia Dialogue from 2011 -2016

Following a 7-year tenure as Chair of the Advisory Board of the Griffith Asia Institute, John received an honorary doctorate for his service to the University and to the community, particularly in his role in enhancing Australia's international relations in Asia. He has also received an honorary doctorate from Murdoch University premised on work with Murdoch on Asia.

John's contributions as a Sugden scholar at Queen's College Melbourne, as Vice-Chancellor's Fellow at Melbourne University and as a Senior Adviser to Asialink continue to build on his commitment to the Asia-Australia relationship.

In 1999, John was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for service to the enhancement of Australia's international reputation and to the development of Australian regional policy.

John, in recognition of your impact and your commitment to advancing Australia's relationships with our closest Asian neighbours, it is my great pleasure to present you with the Dunlop Asialink Medal for 2023.