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Promoting and positioning psychology: Professor Kevin McConkey Hon FAPS

At the 2005 APS Annual General Meeting, Professor Kevin McConkey was elected as an Honorary Fellow of the APS – the highest recognition the Society can offer – for his extraordinary and distinguished contribution to psychology and the Society. The information in this article was extracted from citations by Dr F D Naylor Hon FAPS and Emeritus Professor S H Lovibond Hon FAPS, nominating Professor McConkey to the Honorary Fellowship.

Professor Kevin McConkey is a graduate of the University of Queensland and was awarded his PhD in psychology in 1980. He has held academic positions in the USA and Canada, as well as in Australia at Macquarie University and the University of New South Wales. He has been a member of the Australian Psychological Society since 1976.

Through his involvement in the (then) Division of Scientific Affairs in the 1980s, Professor McConkey provided a model and a method to the Society in how to assertively look outwards and involve itself in the activities of government and the wider community. For instance, his initiation of submissions to government on *The role of psychology in research directions for Australia's future*; *The social sciences, the humanities and science and technology in economic development: The place for psychology*; and *The economic and social value of psychology* served important purposes as formal submissions from the APS. They also served as a basis for members of the Society to strengthen their own capacity to promote their discipline and profession within their own organisations.

As President-Elect and President of the Society in the early 1990s, Professor McConkey was a central and influential figure in helping to develop the Society into one that had contemporary governance and management. During this period, Professor McConkey was strongly committed to, and competent in, managing an enormous amount of change. He did this in ways that ensured the individuals involved, and the APS as a whole, moved forward in a positive and constructive spirit. The activities of that period included a move from rented to owned accommodation, changes to improve the professionalism and functionality of the National Office, and very significant changes to the Society's Constitution.

Although others played essential roles in these and other changes, Professor McConkey was often the 'face' of the APS. His presentations around Australia helped members develop a stronger belief in their own professionalism; his interactions with other scientific and professional bodies helped them better understand psychology; and his appearances in the media informed and educated the broader community.

Professor McConkey also played a central role in determining and achieving major changes in how the formal bodies of Australian psychology organised their relationships and communicated among themselves. For instance, in the context of a divisive discussion about 'competencies', he brought together representatives of the APS, the Psychologists' Registration Boards, the National Committee for Psychology, the Heads of Departments/Schools of Psychology, and the Federal Government to

find a way forward. Notably, this was the first time these bodies had met, and Professor McConkey's management of both the interactions and the issues of that period clearly established the APS as the peak body for psychology in this country.

Professor McConkey has also been a central person in the organisation of a number of events in contemporary Australian psychology. He was actively involved in the *XXIV International Congress of Psychology*, a benchmark congress for international psychology in terms of its organisation and content. He organised the landmark forum *Psychology for the Clever Country: A Forum for Psychological Science*, which attracted many psychologists, other scientists and professionals, and Federal and State government advisers.

He is recognised internationally not only for the breadth of his knowledge and influence in psychology generally, but also for his specific achievements in research and practice. As well as having been a Fellow of the APS since 1988, he is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, of the American Psychological Society, the American Psychological Association, the Society for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis, and the Australian Society of Hypnosis. In addition, he has a very strong record of publication of books, chapters and articles.

Professor McConkey's influence on, and his work on behalf of, the APS has been extensive, positive and exceptional. Election to the grade of Honorary Fellow is a fitting recognition of his sustained and substantial achievements in the interests of Australian psychology and the APS.