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Queen's birthday honours 2016: Opportunity for all; uni for some

JULIE HARE THE AUSTRALIAN 12:00AM JUNE 13, 2016



Kevin Donnelly. Picture: David Geraghty

Kevin Donnelly holds close to his heart some thoroughly old-fashioned views about school.

He believes modern education philosophies deny children the right to be intellectually challenged; that equality is not about levelling the playing field. He believes personal factors are important in determining academic success. And he thinks not everyone should go to uni.

“I’m in favour of meritocracy. All children are not the same; they don’t all have the same ability and motivation,” says Dr Donnelly, who was honoured as a member in the general division for his services to education as a researcher and author, to national curriculum development and to professional organisations.

His views were forged in the housing commission tenements of Melbourne’s Broadmeadows in the 1950s, the son of a violent and alcoholic father.

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His views are not popular with education unions and left-leaning academics. "I'm painted as a conservative, but that is how I got out of the housing commission, became successful, was able to raise a family, do postgraduate study, and undertake the national curriculum review," he says.