

EMERITUS

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Go8 calls for integrated tertiary sector, independent policy body

Federal-state relations in education and research need to be ‘re-envisaged’ and reframed to create a tertiary education system that will meet Australia’s needs in the next 30 years, the Group of Eight universities has said in its submission to the Australian Government’s consultation process to develop the Australian Universities Accord.

To achieve that, the Go8 says, ‘the tertiary higher education and vocational training systems should be redesigned to form an integrated training and higher education sector oriented to lifelong learning’.

The submission argues that the integrated sector should incorporate flexible pathways between vocational training and higher education in both directions and at various qualification levels, including research training.

‘This new integrated sector would be supported by a redesigned upper-secondary education and appropriately supported academic and vocational pathways,’ the Go8 says. ‘Within this re-imagined sector, the Go8 recommends that we set a target of 75 per cent for the proportion of the Australian resident population aged 25–39 years who have attained or who are attaining a post-Year 12 or equivalent qualification by 2040.’

Vision of a ‘seamless, responsive’ sector

As part of this new system, the Go8 advocates the creation of an independent tertiary education commission that would sit between government and the tertiary education sector, and which would exist to provide ‘long-term, coordinated and expert advice to government on higher-education policy’. It says that this would ensure that the tertiary education sector was established and maintained as ‘a seamless sector, responsive to the changing needs of the Australian community and economy and with a continuity of approach across electoral cycles’.

The Go8 submission is one of 300 that had been made by mid-April as part of the consultation process, described by the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, as ‘the first big and broad review of Australia’s higher education system in 15 years’.

Mr Clare said earlier this month that submissions had come from across higher education, business and government, including from students, higher-education staff, unions, peak bodies and policy experts. As well, more than 120 groups and

individuals had attended face-to-face and virtual meetings and roundtables with the Universities Accord Panel by 18 April.

In making its submission, the G08 said that, having been given a ‘blank canvas’ on which to define and advocate its future role, the sector owed the nation a ‘bold and determined response’.

Its submission had been developed with that in mind, though it acknowledged that member universities might want to make their own submissions which would differ in emphasis and detail.

It saw the submission as being ‘aspirational for Australia, for the role and responsibility of universities in underpinning future economic and social prosperity’.

It remarked that universities and the overall education system were social infrastructure, and as such were essential to security, sustainability, prosperity, and social and economic wellbeing. ‘Universities are the foundation of strong, healthy, and inclusive societies and are a powerful tool for overcoming entrenched socioeconomic disadvantage,’ it says.

The Go8 says that the Accord process could be ‘genuinely nation building’. With that in mind the submission, ‘in being bold and farsighted, will concentrate on those high-level principles and system design changes that will deliver for our shared future’.

The submission sets out 15 ‘bold’ ideas to implement a seamless tertiary education and research system. They include developing a national research strategy, having an overarching government body for research and innovation, full economic cost support for government research grants, removing the sector’s reliance on international fee revenue, especially for funding research, national doctoral training centres, support for lifelong learning, and redesigning post-secondary education as a seamless tertiary education system that supports equity, mobility and provides pathways to advancement. The Go8 submission is available at <https://go8.edu.au/submission-australian-universities-accord-panel-discussion-paper-consultation-15-ideas-to-deliver-a-seamless-tertiary-education-system>.

UA calls for funding boost to R&D

Australia’s level of research and development investment should be increased so that it is at least equal to the OECD average by 2030, Universities Australia has said in its submission to the panel developing the Australian Government’s universities accord.

Universities Australia recommends working towards funding the full cost of research by that date, and in the short term implementing a target for indirect cost of research at 50 cents to the dollar by 2025, funded across the whole of government.

In a discussion paper that makes 29 recommendations on strengthening the university system, access, equity and student experience, creating knowledge and skills, supporting research, and innovation and industry cooperation,

Universities Australia emphasises the need for policy and funding settings that recognise that university education and research make the nation stronger.

‘The highest priority for the Australian Universities Accord is to ensure that every Australian has access to higher education, regardless of their location, background or financial position,’ the submission says. ‘We have a diverse and talented population which we are not fully tapping into, which is holding back individuals and our nation. This is a cost Australia cannot afford.’

It notes that Australia exists in a rapidly changing industrial, technological and geopolitical environment. More future jobs will require a university education if Australia is to keep pace with its competitors and continue to grow economically, socially and technologically.

‘Further, our workers will need to continue accessing different types of education throughout their lives,’ it adds. ‘Without these flexible, lifelong learners fuelling our workforce, Australia will fall behind.’

Among the key recommendations, Universities Australia urges the creation of a new vision- and ‘place-based’ deal with government to enable universities to best serve their communities and meet the nation’s priorities.

It recommends replacing the Job-ready Graduates package with a funding model that recognises the value of all university degrees to Australia, as well as breaking down barriers to university study to allow all Australians to achieve their potential. That would include extending uncapped places to all Indigenous peoples.

National lifelong learning strategy advocated

It advocates a national lifelong learning strategy and increased focus on work-integrated learning and placements, as well as boosting cooperation with industry to drive innovation and create new industries and exports.

Commenting on the submission, Universities Australia Chief Executive Catriona Jackson said more than half the one million jobs to be created in the coming years would require a university degree, yet investment in research and development was at a 15-year low.

‘Australia urgently needs more of what universities offer and we’re calling for the government’s full support to make this possible,’ she said. ‘Universities are vital to how Australia responds to shifts in global, domestic and economic landscapes.’

‘Skill shortages, economic uncertainty, geopolitical tensions and a new industrial revolution are changing the way we live and operate. We have no time to waste in preparing for these challenges, and universities have a crucial role to play.’

Universities Australia’s submission can be found at <https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UA-2023-010-Accord-V5.pdf> .

ANU supports Voice ‘unreservedly’

The Council of the Australian National University has declared that it ‘unreservedly supports enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution, recognising its alignment with the University's national mission’.

The council announced its support in a statement issued on 4 April, noting that the call for a First Nations Voice had been made in the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017 after extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples.

It acknowledged that there were differing views within the university community, and noted that the university was a place where respectful informed debate and freedom of expression were actively encouraged.

The council thanked the Academic Board for its work and guidance, and acknowledged that it also unreservedly supported enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution.

In further comments the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brian Schmidt, encouraged members of the ANU community to approach the referendum from an informed position.

Diversity of views acknowledged

‘Like our Council, I acknowledge the ANU community has a diversity of views on how to vote in the forthcoming referendum on the Voice,’ he wrote. ‘My personal view is that establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament and enshrining it in the Constitution is a positive step for our nation.’

However, he added, council’s endorsement and his own views were not an expectation that staff and students will vote in a particular way or actively advocate for a ‘yes’ vote.

In encouraging people to take an informed position, Professor Schmidt also asked that conversations be respectful. People should not assume that anyone had a particular point of view.

With reference to ANU’s national mission, Professor Schmidt said the university’s First Nations Portfolio had produced ‘an excellent document to guide Australians through some of the common concerns about the Voice’. The FNP, a branch of the university’s Executive Group, was established in 2020 to provide a whole-of-university approach to First Nations issues by drawing upon the intellectual resources of its colleges, schools, departments and institutes. It reports directly to the vice-chancellor.

‘ANU will do what it always does when our nation faces a critical decision,’ Professor Schmidt said. ‘We will lead and facilitate a balanced and informed national conversation, bringing our expertise to bear on complex issues and helping guide Australia through.’

Legislation should underpin, clarify ARC's role, review panel says

Giving the Australian Research Council's work a legislative basis and clarifying its role in key programs are among the principal recommendations put forward in the final report of *Trusting Australia's Ability: Review of the Australian Research Council ACT 2001*. The final report was issued on 20 March.

The review panel has made ten detailed recommendations 'which aim to enhance the trust in the ARC by the government and the research community', panel members say in their executive summary. The federal Minister for Education, Jason Clare, has said the government will respond to the report in due course.

The panel recommends clarifying the purpose of the ARC to give a legislative basis for funding basic, strategic basic and applied research through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP), and to manage stakeholder expectations by defining the NCGP's scope by its historical purpose: that is, of providing funding to universities and their partners in all areas except clinical health, medical and dental research.

Apart from administering the NCGP, the panel also calls for the ARC's role in underpinning and shaping the national research landscape to be clarified and given a legislative basis. It also suggests giving 'further clarity and insight to the role and impact of the ARC in relation to supporting academic careers'.

The review, the first comprehensive assessment of the ARC in 22 years, was set in train at the end of August 2022 with the task of ensuring that the organisation could meet the current and future needs of the research sector.

It was led by Professor Margaret Sheil, Vice-Chancellor and President of Queensland University of Technology and a former CEO of the ARC. She was joined by Professor Mark Hutchinson, Director of the Centre of Excellence for Nanoscale BioPhotonics and Professor of Medicine at the University of Adelaide, and Professor Susan Dodds, Senior Deputy-Vice Chancellor and Vice-President (Research & Industry Engagement) and Professor of Philosophy at La Trobe University.

The review panel noted that the ARC had been a leadership incubator within the higher education sector; supported the technology underpinning solar cells and quantum computing; collaborated to bring the internet to Australia; and helped our understanding of the past. It had helped to attract and retain thousands of outstanding academics and led changes to policy and practice within and outside our universities.

The panel's extensive consultations had revealed a 'high level of respect and historical goodwill' towards the ARC and its work. The practice of expert and peer review, while imperfect, 'has repeatedly been demonstrated to be the best system to identify talent and foster new opportunities,' the reviewers say.

However, they note, 'the level of trust in the ARC by the responsible minister has varied over the past 20 years and has been dramatically eroded by

ministerial interventions on a least five separate occasions over that period, most recently in 2021. The negative consequences of the perception of arbitrary intervention have been significant both within Australia and with our international partners.’

Hence the need for the responsible minister to exercise proper and necessary oversight of the guidelines and levels of funding available under the NCGP. ‘The ARC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) should have the capability and expertise to oversee the administration of the grants program,’ the reviewers say. ‘Individual grants under the NCGP should not require approvals by the minister, but recommendations and approvals should be made by those best placed to judge the intrinsic merit of the proposals.’

The final report can be accessed at <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/review-australian-research-council-act-2001>.

Obituary

Emeritus Professor William (Will) Lee Steffen 25 June 1947 – 29 January 2023

At the time of his passing, Will Steffen was an emeritus professor with the ANU, associated with the Fenner School of Environment and Society and the Institute for Climate, Energy and Disaster Solutions. Fully consistent with a life very fully lived, he was also Senior Fellow at the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Adjunct Professor at the University of Canberra, Fellow of the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, Senior Associate at the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, and a Member of the OECD High-Level External Advisory Panel on Building Climate and Economic Resilience in the Transition to a Low-Carbon Economy.

There was no period in Will’s professional life when reading the list of his active roles would not amaze and even exhaust those who read it! In all these roles, the hallmarks of his professional life were teamwork, enthusiastic collegiality, original thought, and a deep commitment to connecting scholarship and policy debate to improve the human condition and the sustainability of the global environment. He and colleagues—there were always colleagues—have profoundly influenced our understanding of the Earth and humanity’s role in and responsibility for its future.

Will Steffen was born in Norfolk, Nebraska, the first child of Lee and Dorothy Steffen. Will was joined by brothers Rick, Paul and Mark, with the family settling in Spencer, Iowa, in 1956, where Will graduated as Valedictorian from Spencer High School in 1965. He then studied chemical engineering at the University of Missouri at Rolla. Ironically for someone to become a global voice on climate change and decarbonisation, he was supported by a Universal Oil Products Scholarship. The program of study for engineers included elements of a liberal education, and Will credits studying history and social science subjects as prompting his interests across disciplines, an interest that was to define his

future career and drive his great contributions to interdisciplinary research and the synthesis of knowledge.

After graduating in 1970, Will headed to the University of Florida to pursue a Master of Science in Teaching, presaging his future achievements as a communicator. It was in Florida that he discovered the ocean and surfing and met his future wife, Carrie, in the summer of 1969. Will and Carrie were married in September of 1971, and following graduation they served in Fiji with the US Peace Corps.

When he returned to the US, Will rejoined the Department of Chemistry at the University of Florida, graduating with a PhD in 1975 and accepting a post-doctoral fellowship at Cornell University. As he had done in other places he had lived, his scholarly work was well balanced by a life-long love of outdoor activities: various sports, bushwalking, climbing, tobogganing and more.

Will and Carrie moved to Australia in 1977, when he accepted a Research Fellowship with the ANU Research School of Chemistry specialising in X-ray crystallography. It seems that chemical research may have been a secondary motivation for the move, behind their excitement at moving to another country and exploring new natural environments! Will and Carrie certainly made the most of that opportunity, travelling in Australia and New Zealand extensively, with a record of their adventures published in several travel and adventure magazines. A decade later, his experience of a climbing expedition to Nepal prompted the research and writing of the definitive *Himalayan Dreaming: Australian Mountaineering in the Great Ranges of Asia 1922-1990*.

When the position wound up in 1980, and after six months travelling in Southeast Asia and Nepal, they had to choose between Will taking a position in the USA or staying on in Australia. The latter option won, and Will joined CSIRO's Division of Environmental Mechanics as editor and information officer. The period at the 'Pye Lab' at CSIRO introduced Will to the world of rock climbing and saw the birth of their daughter Sonja. Importantly, this position proved pivotal to shaping Will's future career, exposing him to a wide range of scientific disciplines and an increasing interest in cross-disciplinary work, and sharpening his skills in science communication. That laid the groundwork for his next career move, one that propelled him into the emerging world of global science synthesis, the nascent field of earth system science, and the great challenges of global climate and environmental change.

Will was appointed in 1990 as Executive Officer of the Global Change and Terrestrial Ecosystems (GCTE) Core Project run by the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme, or IGBP. He had joined a rapidly expanding network of leading-edge researchers exploring the implications of global change. Elevation to Executive Director of the IGBP in 1998 (and later Chief Scientist) saw Will truly emerge as an international leader in this field, enthusing and shepherding researchers from across the world and multiple disciplines. Based in Stockholm, he swiftly mastered the Swedish language. Always an original and independent thinker himself, he was nonetheless firmly convinced in the greater power of collaboration, interdisciplinary research and the synthesis and communication of knowledge. Global change entailed physical, environmental, social and economic forces and so it was obvious to Will that to meet the challenges of global change the world needed a holistic

understanding of the whole earth system. To this end, Will was instrumental in forging collaborations across the physical and life sciences, but also well into the realms of the social sciences and humanities.

Will became one of the world's leading communicators on global environmental change and climate change, always remaining true to the science while translating complex ideas into clear messages for policy makers and the public. He was also prominent among a handful of thinkers in developing fields of study, concepts and propositions that have literally changed the way the world thinks about itself. Four of these stand out. The first is the idea of 'tipping points' and associated feedback effects in global environmental systems, where quick, major and deleterious changes can occur even when the human pressure on these systems seems slow and incremental. The second is the influential mapping of 'planetary boundaries' and thus a 'safe operating space' for humanity, across critical ecological life support systems including climate, biodiversity loss and pollution. The third is the identification of the 'Great Acceleration', being the massive increase from the mid-20th century in multiple measures across energy, forest loss, population, chemical use and more. The fourth and perhaps most profound follows this: the proposition, currently being debated and decided through formal scientific processes, that we have left the Holocene and entered the Anthropocene geological epoch, where humans are the major influence shaping the planet. The implications of this proposition are profound, along with the responsibilities that follow: humans are the masters of not only their own destiny but of the destiny of the entire planet.

Will returned to Australia in 2004 and began a seven-year part-time role as advisor on climate change to the Australian Government. He took up the Directorship of ANU's Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies (CRES) in 2005. This was a vibrant time and one of impending change at the ANU, and for Will things moved quickly even while he maintained his substantial international connections and activities. After just a year at CRES, Will moved to the role of Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research), but quickly returned in 2007 as Director of the new Fenner School of Environment and Society. Under the move to the college system at ANU, CRES had merged with School of Resources, Environment and Society. This was one of the first and one must say easiest and most instantly successful of the institute-faculty mergers around that time, a success very much shaped by Will's strategic vision, collegiality and positive outlook.

However, things did not stay stable for Will, who in 2008 became Executive Director of the newly established ANU Climate Change Institute, as the university moved firmly into this increasingly important space. Will led the CCI until his 'retirement' in 2012. From 2011 to 2013 he was a member of the Australian Government's Climate Commission, and from 2011 to 2019 a member of the ACT Government's Climate Change Council. When a change in government saw the national commission abolished, Will was central to the swift recreation of its role as the independent and influential Climate Council of Australia, and a key author of many of its reports. And, all the while, Will remained an active participant and leader of global research and communication efforts.

Will Steffen was a master and role model in the art of science communication. Along with the rising influence of his and colleagues' work in earth system science and the synthesis of knowledge, he tirelessly worked to translate and communicate our evolving understanding of the planet and climate to decision makers and the wider public. Already active through his IGBP days, this communication intensified in his time at ANU and continued right through to close to the time of his passing. It was not unknown for Will to do several media interviews in a day, dozens in a week, hundreds in a given year. He would calmly enter the lion's den of conservative media interviews, matching their sceptical and even aggressive interrogations with measured and always fact-based responses. When asked by a young researcher for tips on communicating research in the media, a senior academic simply responded 'Just watch Will Steffen do it'. Will was equally comfortable and superbly capable whether the audience was a major international scientific conference, a briefing with senior politicians, an industry forum, a commercial media interview, or a community forum.

Will was awarded honorary doctorates from Stockholm University in 2010 and from the University of Canberra in 2015.

News of Will's passing spread swiftly around the world and Australia, prompting numerous commentaries by colleagues and friends remembering and praising his significant contributions to knowledge and informed public debate, and his personal qualities of collegiality, principle and friendship. A celebration of Will's life was held in Canberra on 28 March 2023, with family, friends and colleagues sharing their fond memories and great respect. Will is survived by wife Carrie, daughter Sonja, mother Dorothy, and his three brothers.

Stephen Dovers
with the assistance of
Brian Walker, John Finnigan
and **Carrie Steffen**

Diary dates

Chubb extols value of clinical trials

Emeritus Professor Ian Chubb will argue for the greater use of clinical trials when he delivers the Emeritus Faculty Lunchtime Lecture in the Molony Room at noon on Wednesday, 3 May. In an address titled 'Clinical Trials: Good for Patients Too', Professor Chubb will tell his audience that clinical trials offer treatment options based on some of the best and most interesting medical science and technology. Professor Chubb, a neuroscientist and Policy Secretary of the Australian Academy of Science, is a long-standing advocate for government and industry support of innovation and research in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. He is a former Chief Scientist of Australia and former Vice-Chancellor of the ANU. Those wishing to attend lunchtime lectures should be aware that they will be allowed to park at the Vice-Chancellor's residence on lecture days, from 11.45am till 3.30pm.

Canberra festival will mark Ligeti centenary

The Canberra International Music Festival will commemorate the centenary of Austrian composer György Ligeti with a public lecture and concert, under the rubric Ligeti 100, at the ANU School of Music from noon on Monday, 1 May. Ligeti is regarded as one of the most influential progressive modern composers. He was born in Romania and lived in Hungary until 1956, when he left for Austria, where he later took citizenship. In 1973 he became professor of composition at the Hamburg Hochschule für Musik und Theater, and worked there until retiring in 1989. He died in Vienna in 2006. Noted composer and presenter Andrew Ford will deliver the lecture at noon on 1 May. The concert will begin at 2pm, with performers Edward Neeman (piano), Fletcher Cox (trumpet), Donald Nicolson (harpsichord), the Alma Moodie Quartet, Miroslav Bukovsky, John Mackey and Aron Ottignon taking part. The concert will include Ligeti's *Continuum* (1968), three studies from the *Études pour piano*, Book 1, and the *String Quartet No. 2*. The festival begins on 27 April and continues till Sunday, 7 May, in venues across Canberra. Presentations include Indigenous works, jazz, hip-hop, and classical compositions. The festival also features three performances by the renowned Brodsky Quartet, which is celebrating a half-century of music-making. More information can be found at cimf.org.au.

Meet the Author events

May 3, 6pm: Award-winning French journalist and documentary-maker Guillaume Pitron will talk with Ebony Bennett about his new book *The Dark Cloud: How the Digital World is Costing the Earth*, his investigation into the impact of digital technology and its carbon footprint. The result of a two-year investigation on four continents, *The Dark Cloud* argues that virtual technology is 'virtual' only in name. While seeming to limit human impact on the planet, digital technology is emerging as one of the major environmental challenges of the 21st century. Pitron reckons that the 'dematerialised' digital world, essential for communicating, working, and consuming, absorbs 10 per cent of the world's electricity and accounts for nearly 4 per cent of the planet's carbon dioxide emissions. Pitron's body of work focuses on commodities and on the economic, political, and environmental issues associated with their use. His first book, *The Rare Metals War*, has been translated into ten languages. *The Dark Cloud* was translated by Bianca Jacobsohn. Ebony Bennett is deputy director of the Australia Institute and host of its Follow the Money podcast and popular webinar series. She is a regular commentator on ABC and Sky News and has a fortnightly column in *The Canberra Times*. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 4, 6pm: Tracey Spicer will discuss her new book, *Man-Made: How the Bias of the Past is Being Built into the Future*, with Michelle Ryan. Virginia Haussegger will give the vote of thanks. T2, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 8, 6pm: Actress Heather Mitchell will discuss her memoir *Everything and Nothing* with Bronwyn Parry. This event will be held in collaboration with the National Film and Sound Archive. NFSA Auditorium

May 10, 6pm: Robyn Cadwallader will be in conversation with Nigel Featherstone about her new novel, *The Fire and the Rose*, a story set in medieval Lincoln. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. T2, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 17, 6pm: John Blaxland and Clare Birgin will talk with Sue Williams about their book *Revealing Secrets: An Unofficial History of Australian Signals Intelligence and the Advent of Cyber*. Steve Meekin will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 23, 6pm: Journalist Stan Grant will discuss his new book *The Queen is Dead*, with Mark Kenny. *The Queen is Dead* looks at the legacy of colonialism for indigenous people and calls for an end to monarchy in Australia, the need for a republic, and what needs to be done—through the Voice to Parliament and beyond—to deal with the past. Manning Clark Theatre, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 31, 6pm: Professor Marcia Langton and Professor Aaron Corn will discuss their new book, *Law: Way of the Ancestors*, with Anthony Connolly. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

June 6, 6pm: Gideon Haigh will discuss his new book, *On the Ashes*, with Tim Gavel. From over three decades of covering The Ashes, Haigh has brought together a comprehensive account of the great cricketing contest between Australia and England—the world’s oldest sporting rivalry—from the colonial era to the present day. Frank Bongiorno will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

June 7, 6pm: Karen Middleton will talk with Christine Helliwell and Mark Willacy about their books *Semut* and *Rogue Forces*, winners of the 2022 Prime Minister’s Awards for Australian History and Non-Fiction, respectively. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

June 13, 6pm: Former Chief Scientist Alan Finkel will discuss his new book, *Powering Up: Unleashing the Clean Energy Supply Chain*, with Professor Ken Baldwin. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

June 28, 6pm: Bruce Wolpe, Senior Fellow (non-resident) at the United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, will be in conversation with Mark Kenny on his new book, *Trump's Australia*. Bruce is a regular contributor on US politics across media platforms in Australia. Allan Behm will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

August 2, 6pm: Anna Funder will talk about her new book, *Wifedom. Mrs. Orwell's Invisible Life*, with Virginia Haussegger. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

August 8, 6pm: Paul Ferrell will talk with Amy Remeikis about his new book, *Gladys. A Leader's Undoing*. John Warhurst will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

August 14, 6pm: Albanian author and academic Lea Ypi will be in conversation with Allan Behm on her memoir, *Free. Coming-of-Age at the End of History*. Lea Ypi, a professor of political theory at the London School of Economics, was recently named as one of the world’s top ten thinkers by the British magazine *Prospect*, and by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* as one of the most important

cultural personalities of 2022. The vote of thanks will be given by Kim Rubinstein.

September 13, 6pm: Leigh Sales will talk with Brian Schmidt about her book *Storytellers: Questions, Answers and the Craft of Journalism*. Sales takes her readers on a tour of the profession, letting some of Australia's best-known journalists talk about their work and their approach to the craft. Virginia Haussegger will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

ANU/*Canberra Times* Meet the Author events are held in association with Harry Hartog Bookshop. Books are available for purchase before and after each event. Pre-event book signings will be available from 5.30pm and again after the event. Registration is required and can be made at Registrations at anu.edu.au/events. In line with ANU's Covid policy, masks are no longer required. Enquiries to the convenor, Colin Steele, at colin.steele@anu.edu.au.

Ambitious personal approaches to portraiture

New work from 23 artists and collectives who take ambitious approaches to examine who they are and what it means to represent themselves, their communities, their histories and contemporary society make up *Portrait 23: Identity*, an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. The artists use street art, textiles, performance, photography, ceramics, painting, drawing, soft sculpture and bronze works to push against the boundaries of portraiture. The exhibition will run till August.

Female power through the millennia

Exhibits drawn from six continents and spanning 5,000 years of history, from 2800 BCE to the present, are featured in *Feared and Revered: Feminine Power through the Ages*, the major exhibition at the National Museum of Australia. More than 160 objects exhibited, drawn from the collections of the British Museum to explore the power and diversity of female spiritual beings in cultural traditions and beliefs around the world. It shows how goddesses, demons, witches, spirits and saints have shaped understanding in a variety of cultures. The exhibition closes in August.

Items of note

Big increase in international student numbers

More than 142,500 international students arrived in Australia in February, an increase of 93,270 compared with the corresponding month in 2022, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported this month

Of the total, the bureau recorded that 110,360 arrivals were in higher education, 3,450 were in postgraduate research, 13,120 in vocational education and training, and 6,270 were in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (Elicos). 'Other' totalled 7,380, and schools accounted for almost 2,000.

The number of student arrivals in February across all categories was 22.5 per cent lower than the pre-COVID levels in February 2019.

Provisional estimates indicated that a further 54,350 students had entered Australia in March, according to Universities Australia, whose acting Chief Executive, Peter Chesworth, declared it to be ‘good news for our universities and the nation’.

‘We are steadily working back to the position of strength we held prior to the pandemic,’ he said.

‘The return of international students boosts campus life and generates significant economic activity, benefitting not only universities but local businesses and communities.

‘Australia’s offer of education to international students is also a powerful tool for building cultural understanding and longstanding relationships.’

ANU scholars receive Westpac awards

Five students and one staff member of the Australian National University have been named as 2023 Westpac Scholars. The awards have been conferred in three categories: Westpac Research Fellowships, Future Leaders and Asian Exchange Scholarships.

The Westpac Scholars Trust has awarded a research fellowship to Dr Kai Xun Chan, a biology lecturer at the Research School of Biology, whose research seeks to solve how plants sense and respond to challenging environments to improve crop yields in the face of climate change.

The fellowship, the trust's highest-value program, awards a minimum of \$400,000 in flexible funding and supports crucial sustainability research.

‘According to the CSIRO, we need to produce more food in the next 30 years than in the entire history of human civilisation,’ Dr Chan says. ‘This is a huge challenge in itself but in Australia we also have to contend with drought and heat stress which decreases agricultural productivity by up to 80 per cent and costs the economy \$1.1 billion annually.’

He aims to identify novel genetic resources and natural products in understudied plant species that may provide accelerated solutions to find transformative solutions to improve crop resilience.

A Westpac Future Leaders Scholarship has been awarded to ANU PhD candidate Indigo Strudwicke, who is examining decision-making processes and how they can drive innovation in science and technology to help Australians reach sustainability goals.

Asian Exchange Scholarships, which offer up to two semesters in Asia, have been awarded to Milie Maccallum, an International Relations and Art History/Curatorship student, to study in Japan; to computer science and economics student Finn Maguire, to study in Taipei; to Dhiiren Moganaraju, a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and a Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics student, who will study in Singapore; and to Helen Tong, a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) and a Bachelor of Arts student, who will study law and jurisprudence from an Asian perspective at the University of Hong Kong.

Research points to lower world population peak

New analysis by researchers at the Earth4All initiative suggests the world's population could peak just below nine billion people in 2050 then start falling.

The new projection, issued late in March, is significantly lower than other prominent population estimates, including those of the United Nations. However, the researchers say that if the world moves away from a 'business as usual' approach and takes a 'giant leap' in investment in economic development, education and health, the global population could peak at 8.5 billion people by the middle of the century.

The analysis by researchers from the Earth4All initiative for the Global Challenges Foundation is published as a working paper *People and Planet, 21st Century Sustainable Population Scenarios and Possible Living Standards Within Planetary Boundaries*.

The research team used a new system-dynamics model to explore two scenarios this century. In the first, dubbed Too Little Too Late, the world continues to develop economically in a similar way to the last 50 years, allowing many very poor countries break free from extreme poverty. In this scenario the researchers estimate global population could peak at 8.6 billion in 2050 before declining to 7 billion in 2100.

In the second scenario, called the Giant Leap, researchers estimate that population peaks at 8.5 billion people by around 2040 and declines to around 6 billion people by the end of the century. This is achieved through unprecedented investment in alleviating poverty—particularly through investment in education and health—along with extraordinary policy turnarounds on food and energy security, inequality and gender equity. In this scenario extreme poverty would be eliminated by 2060, with a marked impact on global population trends.

The authors argue that other prominent population projections often underplay the importance of rapid economic development.

'We know rapid economic development in low-income countries has a huge impact on fertility rates. Fertility rates fall as girls get access to education and women are economically empowered and have access to better healthcare,' said Per Espen Stoknes, Earth4All project lead and director of the Centre for Sustainability at Norwegian Business School.

The report can be found at <https://earth4all.life/news/press-release-global-population-could-peak-below-9-billion-in-2050s/>.

ARC launches specialist waste recycling hub

The Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Research Council, Ms Judi Zielke, launched the ARC Research Hub for Microrecycling of Battery and Consumer Wastes in Sydney on 5 April.

The hub is part of the University of New South Wales' Centre for Sustainable Materials Research and Technology (SMaRT).

Through research and industry collaboration, the hub aims to develop new approaches in microrecycling science to transform waste and resource recovery. Its work will concentrate on recovering valuable materials from depleted batteries and other wastes to manufacture innovative materials while also increasing efforts to reduce emissions and increase decarbonisation.

Ms Zielke said that more than a quarter of the 76 million tonnes of the solid waste that Australia generates each year goes to landfill. The hub was critical in identifying new ways to recycle waste and move Australia towards a circular economy.

‘The hub’s vision of translating science into real-world environmental and economic benefits is at the heart of the ARC’s purpose to harness expertise to support the advancement of knowledge and innovation for the benefit of Australia,’ Ms Zielke said.

The Director of SMaRT, Professor Veena Sahajwalla, said the hub was designed to translate scientific innovations into practical outcomes for industry partners. ‘To me there is currently no more important area to research than battery and other complex or hard-to-recycle wastes, most of which contain valuable materials that are usually landfilled, stockpiled or exported,’ he said.

John Curtin team identifies bacteria defence

ANU scientists have found that a protein inside the immune system could be used against a common bacteria that in extreme cases causes deadly flesh-eating disease.

The protein helps to detect and warn the body against the potentially lethal bacteria *Clostridium perfringens*, which in its benign form is a common cause of food poisoning. In severe cases, however, it can cause deadly infections, including gangrene.

‘We found the bacteria produces two toxins that act in different ways and attack the body using a two-pronged approach,’ said Dr Anukriti Mathur, from the John Curtin School of Medical Research.

‘The first toxin punches holes into the cell surface, while the other enters the cell and damages the cell’s internal structures.’

The authors of the study describe the protein NLRP3’s ability to detect these toxins using the analogy of a home security system ‘that also doubles up as a fire detector’.

‘This fire detector, like NLRP3, is very versatile and can protect the house, or in this case, our body,’ said co-author Callum Kay, also from JCSMR.

Magnesium a friend to ageing brains

More magnesium in our daily diet leads to better brain health as we age, according to scientists from the ANU’s Neuroimaging and Brain Lab.

The researchers say an increased intake of magnesium-rich foods such as spinach and nuts could also help reduce the risk of dementia, which is the

second leading cause of death in Australia and the seventh biggest killer globally.

The study of more than 6,000 cognitively healthy participants in the United Kingdom, aged 40 to 73, found that people who consumed more than 550 milligrams of magnesium each day had a brain age about one year younger by the time they reached 55, compared with someone with a normal magnesium intake of about 350 milligrams a day.

‘Our study shows a 41 per cent increase in magnesium intake could lead to less age-related brain shrinkage, which is associated with better cognitive function and lower risk or delayed onset of dementia in later life,’ according to the lead author of the study, PhD researcher Khawlah Alateeq from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.

‘This research highlights the potential benefits of a diet high in magnesium and the role it plays in promoting good brain health.’

Bookshelf

Fijians in Transnational Pentecostal Networks

By Karen J. Brison

ISBN (print): 9781760465599

ISBN (online): 9781760465605

April 2023, ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/FTPN.2023>

Karen J. Brison examines the Harvest Ministry, an independent Fijian Pentecostal church that sends Fijian and Papua New Guinean missionaries to East Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe and elsewhere. After studying the ministry’s main church in Suva for several years, Brison visited its missionaries and their local partners in East Africa and Papua New Guinea. The result of those visits, this book provides an unusual insight into Pentecostal churches in the global south, arguing that they seldom produce novel visions of Christianity and world inequality. It also offers new perspectives by situating Pacific island churches within a global community and by examining social class formation, which is increasingly important in the Pacific.

Wehali: The Female Land Traditions of a Timorese Ritual Centre

By Tom Therik

ISBN (print): 9781760464844

ISBN (online): 9781760464851

March 2023, ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/WFL.2022>

Wehali defines itself as the ritual centre of the island of Timor. It continues to be the residence of a figure of traditional authority on whom, in the 18th century, the Dutch conferred the title of Kaiser (*Keizer*) and to whom the Portuguese gave the title of Emperor (*Imperador*). At one time Wehali was the centre of a network of tributary states, which both the Dutch and Portuguese regarded as paramount to the political organisation of the island. This book is a study of Wehali in its contemporary setting as it continues to maintain its rituals and traditions.

Significantly, Wehali is a 'female' centre and its 'great lord' is considered to be a 'female' lord. Whereas other Timorese societies are organised along male lines, in Wehali all land, all property, all houses belong to women. Men are exchanged as husbands in marriage. Wehali is thus considered to be the 'husband-giver' to the surrounding realms on the island that look to its inner power as their source of life.

Something's Gotta Change *Redefining Collaborative Linguistic Research*

By Lesley Woods

ISBN (print): 9781760465476

ISBN (online): 9781760465483

March 2023, ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/SGC.2022>

This book is an essential guide for non-Indigenous linguists wanting to engage more deeply with Indigenous communities and form genuinely collaborative research partnerships. It fleshes out and redefines ethical linguistic research and work with Indigenous people and communities, with application beyond linguistics.

It is a response to the movement taking place among many Indigenous communities across Australia that insists that Indigenous Australians have control over their languages and cultural knowledge, and for languages to be a part of their futures, not the past. They are reclaiming the right to determine how linguistic research takes place in communities and how Indigenous people want to engage with the academy. By reassessing, from an Indigenous point of view, what it means to 'save' an endangered language, *Something's Gotta Change* shows how linguistic research can play a positive role in keeping (maintaining) or putting (reclaiming) endangered languages on our tongues.

Administration

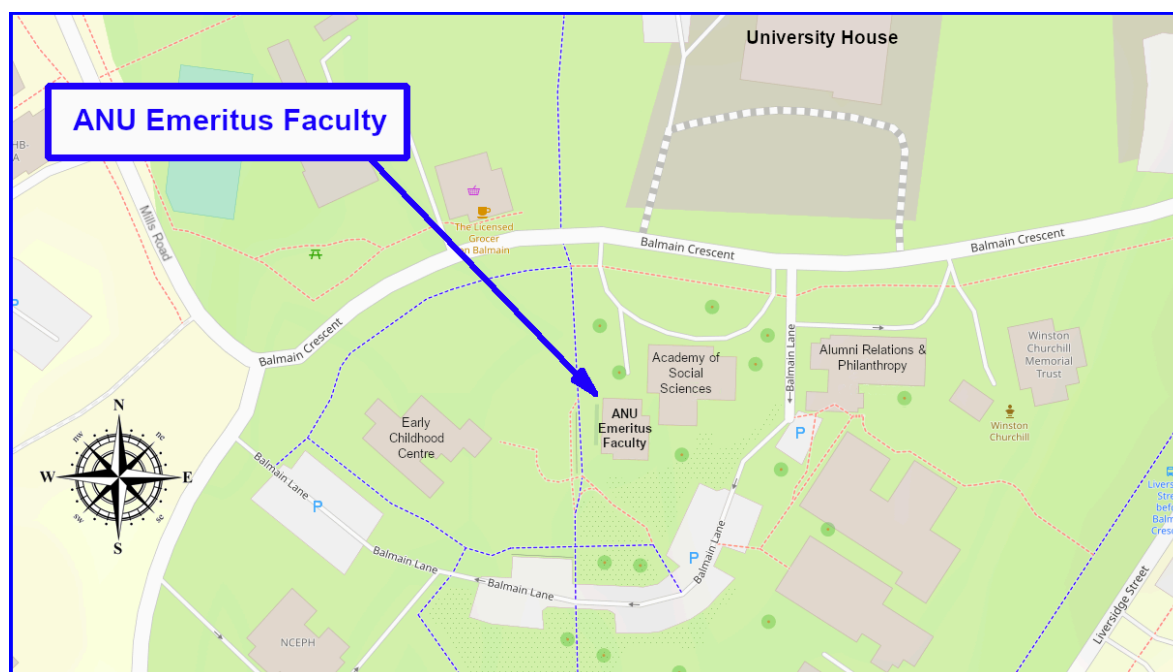
Arrangements for ANUEF room bookings

Requests to book the Molony Room should be addressed to the Secretary of the ANU Emeritus Faculty, Jan O'Connor, at jantanress@gmail.com or 6247 3341.

Finding the Molony Room

The Molony Room is at 24 Balmain Crescent, on the south side of Balmain Crescent almost opposite University House.

It is Building 1c on <https://tinyurl.com/yckuknbj>, set back between 22 Balmain Crescent (the Acton Early Childhood Centre) and 26 Balmain Crescent (the Academy of the Social Sciences). Four free car parking spaces reserved for ANUEF members visiting the Molony Room in the Balmain Lane Car Park immediately south of the Molony Room. The room is marked on: <https://tinyurl.com/y7gsyqgh>



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