

EMERITUS

The Australian National University Emeritus Faculty e-magazine

New V-C excited to build on legacy, advance ANU mission

The Australian National University's newly appointed Vice-Chancellor and President, Distinguished Professor Genevieve Bell AO, has declared that she is excited 'to work alongside talented, committed colleagues, in all parts of the University, to build on our legacy and advance our important national and international mission'.

Professor Bell's appointment was announced on 26 September by the Chancellor, Julie Bishop, who said the University Council had been delighted to appoint Professor Bell, head of the ANU's School of Cybernetics, as the 13th Vice-Chancellor. She is the first woman to hold the Vice-Chancellorship.

She will succeed the current office-holder, Professor Brian Schmidt, on 1 January 2024. Professor Schmidt has been Vice-Chancellor since 2016 and will return to an academic role as a Distinguished Professor in the ANU College of Science.

In announcing the appointment, Ms Bishop described Professor Bell as 'a compelling and passionate leader, with a deep understanding of the University's distinctive mission, remarkable legacy, vibrant culture and tremendous assets'.

She said Professor Bell was a public intellectual of global standing, working at the intersection of technology innovation and cultural practice. Her significant domestic and international senior leadership experience spanned the private and public sectors, and research and teaching at ANU and other institutions.

'With an extensive and distinguished track record, Genevieve offers great leadership and strategic capabilities, which will be critical as the University addresses its distinctive opportunities and responsibilities as Australia's national university,' Ms Bishop said.

'Since joining ANU, Genevieve has led the design and establishment of the School of Cybernetics which launched successfully in 2021, during the disruption of COVID. Already, it is having meaningful impact, creating new kinds of educational experiences and benefiting from strong linkages and partnerships with public and private sector organisations.'

Distinguished Professor Bell trained as a cultural anthropologist, gaining a PhD from Stanford University. She joined Intel Corporation in 1998, where she held

several key leadership roles, was promoted to Vice President in 2014, and recognised as Senior Fellow in 2015.

She returned to Australia in 2017, joining the ANU College of Engineering, Computing and Cybernetics (CECC) to establish ANU's first innovation institute, the Autonomy, Agency and Assurance Institute (3Ai).

In 2021 Professor Bell founded the School of Cybernetics within CECC, positioning cybernetics as a vital tool to help navigate major societal transformations. She served as a non-executive director of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia from 2019, but relinquished that role following her appointment.

The Australian Government has welcomed Professor Bell's appointment, with the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, describing her as "an eminent Australian" who would lead the ANU with distinction. On behalf of the government, he thanked Professor Brian Schmidt for his leadership and significant contribution to Australian education over a long period.

On his part, Professor Schmidt welcomed the appointment of a colleague who, at his request in 2022, served as interim Dean of the CECC. "It is with great pleasure that I am able to hand over the leadership of ANU to Genevieve Bell. She is someone who is both a leading intellectual and deeply committed to the values of the University, and I know she will do a superb job as Vice-Chancellor," he said.

Rankings slip, but Clare says Australia's universities still 'punch above their weight'

The fact that Australia had six universities in the top 100 tertiary institutions placed in the *Times Higher Education* World University Rankings 2024 was evidence that the nation had 'great universities', the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, said on 28 September.

The comments came after the THE rankings showed that Australia's top universities had slipped down the academic league table, with every institution in the top 200 recording a lower rank than 12 months previously.

'We punch above our weight,' Mr Clare said in response to media questions. 'Those rankings today show the link between rankings and international student numbers.'

'That doesn't surprise me because international student numbers plummeted during the pandemic. Students were basically told to go home and now students are back. We've got now, as of today, roughly the same number of international students at our unis that we had back in 2019.'

His comments were echoed by the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, which noted that its members had 'once again been confirmed as Australia's leading universities'.

Six of Australia's research-intensive Go8 universities were ranked in the top 100, with all being ranked in the top 150 globally. This gave an overview of

quality in teaching, research, reputation, research impact and industry engagement, the Go8 said.

Among the top Australian institutions, the University of Melbourne received the highest ranking (37), followed by Monash University (54), the University of Sydney (60), the Australian National University (67), the University of Queensland (70), the University of NSW, Sydney (84), the University of Adelaide (111), University of Western Australia (143) and University of Technology, Sydney (148).

The rankings cover 1,904 universities across 108 countries and regions, and were based on a new methodology which included 18 calibrated performance indicators that measured institutional performance in teaching, the research environment, research quality, industry, and international outlook.

The University of Oxford topped the ranking for the eighth consecutive year, but there was movement among the other top five, with Stanford University ranking second. the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) third, Harvard University fourth and the University of Cambridge fifth place, down from equal joint third last year.

Asian institutions lead first-time rankings

Most of the institutions being ranked for the first time this year are in Asia. While the United States is the most-represented country overall, with 169 institutions, and also the most-represented in the top 200 (56), India is now the fourth most-often represented nation, with 91 institutions, overtaking China (86).

Looking at Australia's experience, the Go8 Chief Executive, Vicki Thomson, said that across all major ranking systems, with their differing and evolving methodologies, the one constant was that Go8 universities were consistently the highest-ranked.

'In their 2024 rankings edition, THE have nuanced their industry engagement metrics to account for patents connected to university research, which has seen a significant improvement in the industry engagement scores for Australian universities,' she said.

'This is particularly heartland territory for Go8 members who lead the sector in research commercialisation income and where one Go8 member, the University of Queensland, reported more research commercialisation income than CSIRO.

'However, THE analysis of the ranking performance of Australian universities did contain warning notes for the sector that mean the nation cannot take this strong and consistent performance for granted.

'In particular, despite historically very high levels of research quality, the rankings show a relative under-investment in research. THE also noted that the COVID pandemic has put pressure on the ability of Australian universities to undertake international engagement.'

Merger prompts call for transparency, focus on educational excellence

The proposed merger of the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia ‘demonstrates two measures that can and should be taken immediately to encourage transparency in governance and a renewed focus on education over profit’, according to a discussion paper issued earlier this month by the Australia Institute.

Those steps would require university councils to publish the minutes of their meetings, and would reform the composition of university councils ‘to ensure that they represent the interests of the staff that comprise universities, and that their primary focus remains educational excellence’.

The discussion paper was prompted by the plan to merge the two South Australian institutions, a plan that the paper’s authors concede might be ‘a great decision’ that is ‘in the best interest of all involved’.

However, as the university councils involved are under no obligation to release the reasons behind their decisions, ‘all anyone can do is guess as to what those reasons might be’, the authors write.

‘The air of secrecy with which the merger discussions have been conducted exemplifies fundamental problems with the way in which Australia’s universities are run. These problems have their genesis in the Howard government’s insistence on universities being seen as—and being run as—businesses. In 2023, Australia’s universities are more business-focused than ever.’

The authors say the university culture fomented by changes introduced under Prime Minister John Howard have become entrenched over two decades, and are unlikely to change without government intervention.

The Howard-era reforms, which included the 2004 *National Governance Protocols*, ‘altered the composition and function of the councils entrusted with governing Australia’s public universities, and introduced a requirement that a minority of council members have financial and commercial expertise’, according to the paper, *University Councils, Transparency and the Adelaide University merger: Accountability at Australia’s Public Universities*.

‘Councils were also made responsible for undertaking revenue raising and pursuing commercial activity,’ the paper says. ‘This raises fundamental questions about the purpose of Australia’s public universities. These are public interest issues because councils make decisions about public money that is intended for public education.’

The most effective way to reverse this situation was to amend the Acts of state parliaments that create and regulate universities. The Commonwealth Government’s current Australian Universities Accord process offered another opportunity for change, although ‘to be meaningful’, the Accords needed to be clear that the purpose of universities was education and research.

Michelle Simmons awarded PM's prize for pioneering quantum work

Quantum scientist Professor Michelle Simmons AO has been awarded the \$250,000 Prime Minister's Prize for Science for 2023 for her pioneering developments in quantum computing.

The awards, announced on 16 October, have celebrated Australian quantum science, biotechnology and outstanding teaching.

Professor Simmons is a Scientia Professor of Quantum Physics in the Faculty of Science at the University of New South Wales Sydney, and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. She has twice been an Australian Research Council Federation Fellow and is an Australian Research Council Laureate Fellow. She was Australian of the Year in 2018.

The announcement of her award notes that Professor Simmons has championed breakthrough advancements to electronic parts for quantum computing, including components as small as one atom. She founded Australia's first quantum computing company, Silicon Quantum Computing, and alongside her team pioneered a new precise style of manufacturing that forms the basis for a new approach to quantum computing.

Professor Simmons' work can potentially be applied across several other fields, including therapeutic drug design, reducing the cost of airline fuel, and creating better fertilisers for agriculture.

The Academy of Science says that Professor Simmons' efforts have brought the world closer to powerful computers that can solve, in minutes, complex problems that would have otherwise taken thousands of years.

'Twenty years ago, the ability to manipulate individual atoms and put them where we want in a device architecture was unimaginable,' Professor Simmons has said.

'We can now not only put atoms in place but can connect complete circuitry with atomic precision—a capability that was developed entirely in Australia.'

Professor Simmons pioneered the field of atomic electronics in the early 2000s, with research showing that quantum computers might be possible. She and her team have since made several breakthroughs, creating the world's first single atom transistor in 2012 and the first quantum processor in silicon in 2022.

'Taken as a whole, this has made for an extraordinary journey, and it is the journey that I am proud of more than any specific result,' she said.

She paid tribute to former students and postdoctoral colleagues, and to her team at Silicon Quantum Computing. 'To develop a pioneering technology takes pioneering people,' she said. 'My team mean the world to me.'

A 'strong believer in diversity of thought', Professor Simmons is passionate about encouraging the young, especially young women and girls, to pursue careers in physics and computing.

In other Prime Minister's awards, Professor Glenn King (University of Queensland) received the 2023 prize for Innovation for his discovery that the venom of the funnel-web spider can be used to make pharmaceuticals to treat chronic pain, epilepsy and stroke; Judith Stutchbury received the prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools; and Donna Buckley received the prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Secondary Schools.

Giving Black Mountain a place in oral history

A project to record an oral history of Black Mountain will be the subject of the Emeritus Faculty Lunchtime Talk by Julie Hotchin, Honorary Lecturer in the School of History in the Research School of Social Science, on Wednesday, 1 November.

The project was conducted by the Friends of Black Mountain with oral historian Mary Hutchison. The Black Mountain nature reserve occupies around 430 hectares in central Canberra and has long been a site of special significance—for the Ngunnawal people, early European settlers and more recently for Canberra residents as the city developed.

In her talk, Julie Hotchin will touch on the history of the nature reserve, and the background and aims of the oral history project. She will reflect on the themes emerging from the oral history interviews. She says the project highlights the value of oral history as a method for environmental history and towards the understanding of a history of place.

The talk will be given in the Molony Room, noon for 12.30.

Diary dates

Tate Director to deliver NGA's Churcher lecture

The Director of Tate, Maria Balshaw CBE, will deliver the 2023 Betty Churcher AO Memorial Oration in the James Fairfax Theatre at the National Gallery of Australia on Wednesday, 29 November. Balshaw has been Director of Tate — the grouping of four British galleries in London, Liverpool and Cornwall — since June 2017. The first female Director of Tate, she is responsible for Tate's strategic direction and daily operations. She has worked to reframe the context and perspective of the institution to attract a wider audience. The lecture will focus on inclusivity and equity in the arts and how this has shaped Maria's leadership. The lecture is named for Betty Churcher AO, Director of the National Gallery of Australia 1990-97.

The Archibald: a century of Australian faces

Portraits of renowned and lesser-known Australians make up the Art Gallery of NSW's touring exhibition, 'Archie 100: A Century of the Archibald Prize', which opened on 20 October at the National Portrait Gallery. The exhibition

celebrates 100 years of Australia's oldest and most prestigious award for portraiture. Arranged thematically, 'Archie 100' delves into the triumphs and controversies that have accompanied the prize, and honours the artists who have made it the most sought-after accolade in Australian art. Until 28 January next.

Golden sporting moments remembered

The National Library's exhibition 'Grit & Gold: Tales from a Sporting Nation', uses books, magazines, paintings, drawings, photographs and memorabilia to recall the events that have brought Australians the pleasure of winning and pain of losing in sporting contests from the Olympics to tournaments and test series. Entry is free, and booking is not required. Until 28 January.

Transport on the move at CMAG

Transport of all kinds is featured in *On the Move*, a hands-on exhibition created by the Museums of History NSW in collaboration with illustrator James Gulliver Hancock. Designed for children and families, *On the Move* offers ways to discover incredible journeys, unique inventions, amazing vehicles and intrepid explorers as it takes visitors on a journey around Australia. Visitors can discover how transportation works in busy cities and how fuel choices can have a positive impact on the environment. Entry is \$7 (adults), \$5 for children, but 3 and under are admitted free. A family entry (two adults, up to three children) is \$22.

Meet the Author events

November 2, 6pm: Richard Flanagan will discuss his new book, *Question 7*, a blend of fiction and non-fiction, with Virginia Haussegger. Vote of thanks by Karen Viggers. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

November 7, 6pm: Bryan Brown will talk with Alex Sloan about his new novel, *The Drowning*. Brett Yeats will give the vote of thanks. Cinema. Kambri Cultural Centre.

November 8, 6pm: Christos Tsiolkas will discuss his new novel, *In-between*, with Nigel Featherstone. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

November 14, 6pm: Wendy Harmer will talk about her memoir, *Lies my Mirror Told Me*, with Alex Sloan. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

November 20, 6pm: Kate Ceberano will talk about her memoir, *Unsung*, with Karen Hardy. Vote of thanks by Frank Millward. Kambri Cultural Centre.

November 22, 6pm: Clementine Ford will talk about her new book, *I Don't*, with Amy Remeikis. Virginia Haussegger will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

4 December, 6pm: Liz Hayes will discuss *I'm Liz Hayes: A Memoir*. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

6 February 2024, 6pm: Lisa Miller will talk about her new book, *Muster Dogs 2*. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

22 February, 6pm: Karen Viggers will talk about her new novel, *Sidelines*, with Alex Sloan. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

27 February, 6pm: Andrew Leigh will talk about his new book, *The Shortest History of Economics*. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

25 March, 6pm: Julia Baird will talk about her new book, *Bright Shining: How Grace Changes Everything*. Manning Clark Hall, 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.

The Symposium by University House wine bar (Shop 13, 152 University Avenue, Acton, next to the Kambri cultural centre) will be open for dining after Meet the Author events. No bookings necessary. Food and wine details at <https://unihouse.anu.edu.au/eat/symposium/>.

Items of note

Australia, UK sign research collaboration agreement

The leading Australian and British research universities have signed a formal agreement to increase two-way research collaboration, boost commercialisation activity and build trusted partnerships in areas of sensitive research.

The signing of the Australia-UK Strategic Alliance on Research and Innovation, announced on 27 September, follows a series of discussions between the Group of Eight (Go8) and the UK's Russell Group, the most recent of which was held in Sydney in late September, aimed at benefitting from the Australia-UK Free Trade Agreement and advancing research engagement around AUKUS Pillar II priorities.

According to the Go8, increasing two-way research collaboration is not only key to boosting trade and investment to support the economic growth of both nations, but is also critical to delivering the advanced capabilities identified under Pillar II of AUKUS, including artificial intelligence, undersea capabilities and quantum technologies.

Vicki Treadell CMG, Britain's High Commissioner to Australia, said the agreement was 'another important step forward in fostering global academic collaboration and innovation, the best of our best working together'.

'It symbolises our nations' shared vision and commitment, as evidenced by the Free Trade Agreement and AUKUS, for ever deeper and broader partnership. It promises for our two countries a brighter shared future filled with ground-breaking discoveries and economic growth.'

Professor Mark Scott AO, deputy chair of the Go8, said ‘Collaboration is the kindling that ignites innovation, it is when we work together that we can achieve the breakthroughs and progress the world needs.’

‘We all share the same challenges — fast-paced changes in technology, climate, geopolitics, and more — and it is more crucial than ever for us to work together to be at the forefront of knowledge creation, enabled by a strong research strategy.’

‘This agreement means we can expand and accelerate the sharing of important information, deepen our two-way research links, build research capacity and partner on commercialisation and sustainable research,’ he said.

Universities Australia backs national skills pact

Universities Australia has given its support to the Federal Government’s commitment to the National Skills Agreement with the states and territories to address the nation’s critical skills needs.

The agreement was endorsed by Cabinet on 16 October and will come into effect on 1 January.

‘Australia is facing major productivity and economic challenges, and a lot of it comes down to not having the skilled workers we need,’ Universities Australia Chief Executive Catriona Jackson said.

‘All tertiary providers, and levels of government, need to be at the table to attack the skill shortages weighing on our economy and the nation’s growth.’

‘Focusing on skills development through vocational and university education is important.’

‘Jobs in health care, professional, scientific and technical services, and education — these are trusted professions you can’t enter without a degree, and they are among the fastest-growing.’

The agreement is a five-year joint agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories to strengthen the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

It is intended to deliver a national VET system that provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training, help people to obtain the skills and capabilities they need to obtain well-paid, secure jobs, and ensure that Australia has the skilled workforce it needs now and into the future, with TAFE at the heart of the VET sector.

The agreement provides states and territories with access to additional Commonwealth funds of up to \$3.7 billion over five years. This takes total Commonwealth investment in state and territory training systems to up to \$12.6 billion over 5 years.

The agreement also represents a change in the way that governments work together to address challenges and capitalise on shared opportunities in the VET system. A new stewardship model will help governments to work together on national priorities, while retaining the flexibility to align local skills supply with demand.

The agreed inaugural national priorities are gender equality, Closing the Gap, supporting the Net Zero transformation, sustaining essential care services, developing Australia's sovereign capability and food security, ensuring Australia's digital and technology capability, and delivering reforms to improve the regulation of VET qualifications and quality.

First research grants for Ukrainian scientists

The Australian Academy of Science has congratulated grant recipients from the first round of the Ukraine-Australia Research Fund, announced on 5 October.

The academy has joined with the Breakthrough Prize Foundation to deliver a program to support Ukrainian researchers who have been affected by the war with Russia. Just over A\$330,000 has been awarded from the fund to support two different activities, each offering practical support to enable research and technology activities by Ukrainian scientists to continue.

The first group of activities supports Ukrainian researchers on short-term visits to Australia to undertake project research at a host institution, or to participate in a conference and site visit program. A total of A\$210,000 has been allocated to support 14 Ukrainian visitors.

Under the second head, facility access, Ukrainian researchers will access leading infrastructure capabilities in Australia, such as supercomputing facilities, microscopy and microanalysis, and telescopes. They will be able to send samples to facilities for analysis, with the results returned to the Ukrainian research institute.

Funding covers the cost of sending samples between Ukraine and Australia, the cost of instrument access, and of testing and analysing samples. Thus Ukrainian researchers will be able to research and publish at their own institutes while also engaging in international collaborations. Nine applications have been approved, the total amount awarded being just over A\$120,000.

Jobs, skills report confirms tertiary role

The first Annual Jobs and Skills Report, released on 4 October by Jobs and Skills Australia, has confirmed the central role of Australia's universities in ensuring Australia's prosperity and economic growth, according to the Group of Eight (Go8).

The Go8 says the report is a significant milestone in securing Australia's future workforce through a National Roadmap.

'Australia's workforce crisis is building to catastrophic levels in some sectors and we need the advanced skills taught in our universities,' said Go8 Deputy Chief Executive Dr Matthew Brown. 'Rapid technological change across all sectors of the economy has resulted in unprecedented demand for a highly skilled workforce.'

'To unlock Australia's potential, we need to ensure Australians are equipped with the knowledge, skills and capabilities we need now and into the future. Our research-intensive universities will play a critical role in this mission. The report emphasises that "universities are the research and innovation backbone of Australia",' he said.

According to the 2023 Skills Priority List, Australia's skills shortage is getting worse, with 36 per cent of occupations assessed having shortages, including engineering, health and ICT, all areas on which the Go8 has reported. This was an increase from 31 per cent last year.

'It is an economic certainty that research and innovation will be at the heart of driving productivity gains and secure employment for the nation, as well as underpinning digital transformation and the transformation to a clean-energy future,' he said. 'It is essential that the national roadmap includes the integration of world-leading research capability and capacity into Australia's future workforce.'

'Pleasingly, the report also acknowledges the need to combine the work of the Universities Accord to produce a whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach to our future workforce.'

He said the Go8 would work with Jobs and Skills Australia, industry and business to help to develop a national roadmap to deliver the skilled workforce needed to boost productivity and prosperity.

Bookshelf

A Young Englishman in Victorian Hong Kong The Diaries of Chaloner Alabaster, 1855–1856

By Benjamin Penny

ISBN (print): 9781760465919

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ANU Press. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/YEVHK.2023>

In August 1855, 16-year-old Chaloner Alabaster left England for Hong Kong to take up a position as a student interpreter in the China Consular Service. He would stay for almost 40 years, climbing the rungs of the service and eventually becoming consul-general of Canton. When he retired he returned to England and received a knighthood. He died in 1898. Throughout his adult life, Alabaster kept diaries.

In the first four diary volumes, collected here by Benjamin Penny, Alabaster recorded his thoughts and observations, told himself anecdotes, and gave vent to anger and frustration. He was young and enthusiastic, and the everyday sights, sounds and smells of Hong Kong were novel to him. He describes how the Chinese people around him ironed clothes, dried flour and threshed rice; how they gambled, prepared their food and made bean curd; and what opera, new-year festivities and the birthday of the Heavenly Empress were like. Like many a young Victorian, he was also a keen observer of natural history.

Alabaster's diaries are a vibrant and riveting record of life in the young British colony on the cusp of the Second Opium War. With this volume, Benjamin Penny sheds new light on the history of the region.

Administration

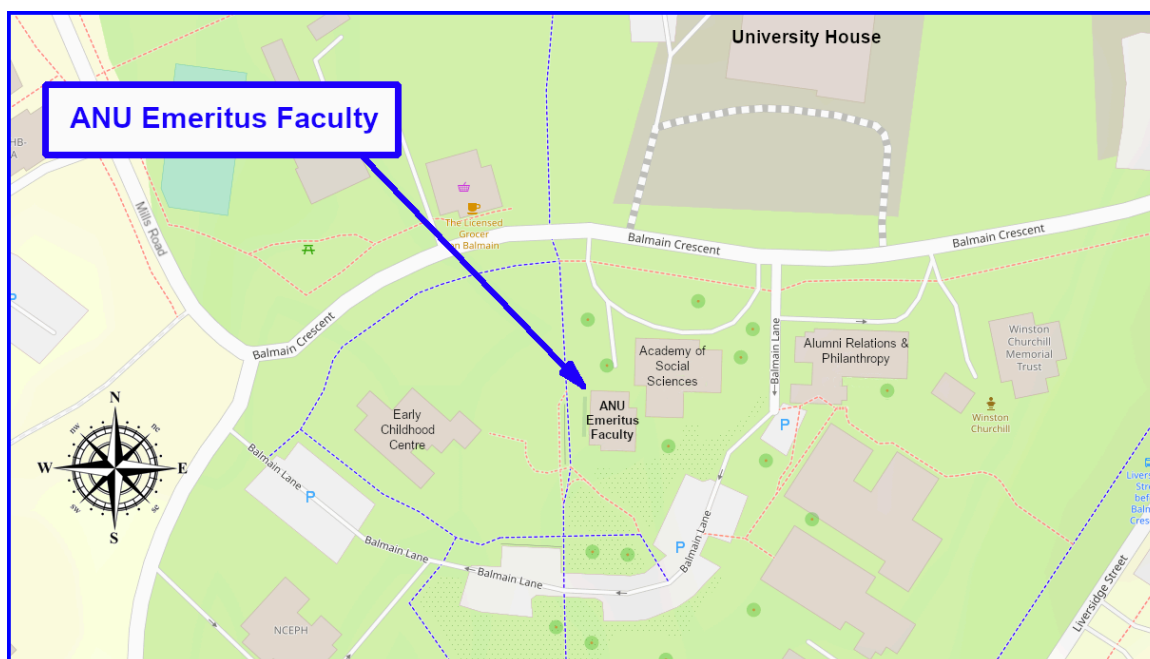
Arrangements for ANUEF room bookings

Requests to book the Molony Room should be addressed to the Secretary of the ANU Emeritus Faculty, Jan O'Connor, at jantancess@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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