

EMERITUS

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ARC legislation will limit scope for political interference

The Australian Government has curtailed the ability of federal ministers to use the Australian Research Council (ARC) ‘as a political plaything’, following the passage of the *Australian Research Council Amendment (Review Response) Bill 2023* through Parliament on 21 March.

The bill’s passage has been welcomed by the research community, with the Group of Eight saying the legislation would strengthen Australia’s research capability and help to ensure the sustainability of the nation’s world class research.

It is the result of recommendations by the independent review of the ARC led by Professor Margaret Sheil AO, Professor Susan Dodds and Professor Mark Hutchinson.

Commenting on the passage of the legislation, the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, said that over the past decade, the ARC had been ‘bedevilled by political interference and ministerial delays’.

‘That has made it harder for universities to recruit and retain staff, and it has damaged our international reputation,’ he said.

‘That’s not good for our universities. It’s not good for businesses, either, who work with our universities.

‘I promised to end the days of ministers using the ARC as a political plaything and today, that’s what we’re doing.’

The Chief Executive of the Group of Eight, Vicki Thomson said the organisation had driven the substantial governance reform of the ARC, in particular the establishment of an independent ARC board to approve research grants within the National Competitive Grants Program.

‘The importance of an independent Board cannot be overstated,’ she said. ‘Depoliticising ARC funding through an independent board strengthens the integrity of decision-making processes and minimises political interference, which has impacted the capacity of our universities to attract and retain world leading researchers.’

‘It brings the ARC into alignment with best practice in research funding around the world and with other Australian government research funders, such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

‘Critically, it ensures that the highest-quality research will be funded within the strategic imperatives set by Australian government to maximise the return to the public.’

She said the review of the role and function of the ARC was ‘essential to the nation’s long-term interests’. The reforms would modernise the ARC to better deliver basic and applied research that would underpin Australia’s social, economic and environmental future. It would also help to drive research and innovation more broadly.

Mr Clare said the independent ARC board, rather than the minister, would be responsible for approving research grants within the National Competitive Grants Program.

The minister would be responsible for approving the funding guidelines, which will be subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

‘This means any future minister who tries to politicise the ARC will be subject to the scrutiny of the Parliament,’ Mr Clare said.

‘The Board will also be responsible for appointing the CEO and members to the ARC’s trusted College of Experts.’

However, the responsible minister would retain the power to approve nationally-significant investments, including projects that could drive research, infrastructure, training and collaboration.

The minister will also have the power to direct the board not to approve a grant, or to terminate funding to research grants, based on national security concerns. The minister will have to notify Parliament of such decisions.

‘Year of opposites’ sees nation’s environmental conditions decline

Compared with 2022, environmental conditions in the past year declined in all Australian states and territories except the Northern Territory, according to *Australia’s Environment Report 2023*, issued this month.

The report, produced annually by the Australian National University and the Terrestrial Ecosystem Research Network (TERN), brings together substantial amounts of satellite station and field measurements, combining the data into an overall environmental condition score for the country, as well as for each state and territory.

For Australia, 2023 was ‘a climate rollercoaster’, according to the report’s lead author, Professor Albert Van Dijk, head of the Centre for Water and Landscape Dynamics at the ANU’s Fenner School of Environment and Society.

The report characterised 2023 as a ‘year of opposites’, with environmental conditions in Australia ‘swinging from wet to dry and back’. Despite

fluctuations, however, overall conditions remained stable after a bumper year in 2022.

Though, globally, 2023 was the hottest year on record, Australia ‘bucked the trend’, recording its eighth hottest year. Worldwide, 77 countries broke temperature records.

In 2022 the country’s environment was given a score of 8.7 out of 10, the highest score since 2011. In 2023 Australia scored 7.5. The score combines data on the climate, water availability and vegetation growth.

The Northern Territory had the highest score of any state or territory, with 8.8 out of 10 after enjoying its best rainfall and growth conditions in several years. In contrast, Western Australia’s environment scored only 5.5, the worst in the country, with signs of drought appearing in parts of the state.

The year started wet and relatively cool, Professor Van Dijk said, but May 2023 brought a change to dry and unseasonably warm weather, with an El Niño system developing. Despite this, environmental conditions nationwide mostly remained good.

Dry, warm weather led to the fire season starting early, with several bushfires across Queensland and northern New South Wales between August and October. However, fears of a severe fire season in Australia did not eventuate because rainfall returned in November and El Niño’s influence waned in summer. This, with relatively high temperatures, made for a hot and humid summer.

Record number of species added to threatened list

‘Unusually warm seas east of Australia contributed to Tropical Cyclone Jasper and several storms and floods in Queensland and Victoria, which caused significant damage to properties and livelihoods,’ Professor Van Dijk said.

‘Although the condition of the Great Barrier Reef remained stable in the first half of 2023, the impact of the high ocean temperatures, Cyclone Jasper, and river-borne sediments on the reef remains to be seen.’

Australia’s biodiversity took a significant hit in 2023, he said, with a record 130 species being added to the Threatened Species List in 2023 — a big jump on the average 29 species added annually over previous years. The researchers say this is mostly a delayed effect of the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires.

‘This brings the total number of threatened species in Australia to 2,098, a 47 per cent increase since 2000,’ said report co-author Tayla Lawrie, from TERN.

‘Climate change was the major driver of new listings, threatening 87 per cent of newly listed and uplisted species. For the remaining 13 per cent of species, extinction risk factors included cane toad poisoning, habitat loss due to clearing and mining, myrtle rust and water extraction,’ she said.

A major update for threatened birds in 2023 revealed continuous and compounding declines across Australia, the report says. Among species included in the Threatened Species Index, abundance in 2020 was 55 per cent lower on average than in 2000, with an average annual rate of decline of 2.8 per cent. Terrestrial birds showed the greatest declines since 2000 (62 per cent), followed by migratory shorebirds (47 per cent) and marine birds (24 per cent).

Meanwhile, 2023 saw the Earth record its highest temperatures ever seen in the atmosphere and the oceans, the least sea ice ever observed, and a rapid increase in sea level.

Greenhouse gas emissions in Australia increased for the first time in five years, mostly due to air travel resurging since COVID-19. Australia's emissions per person are the 10th highest in the world and are more than three times those of the average global citizen.

Don't disparage science, CSIRO chief tells nation's politicians

Maintaining the community's trust in science required the country's political leaders 'to resist the temptation to disparage science', the Chief Executive of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Dr Douglas Hilton, said in a statement on 15 March.

'No matter the challenge we are tackling, CSIRO's scientists and engineers can be relied on by the community to work creatively, assiduously and with integrity,' Dr Hilton said.

His statement came in response to criticism by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Peter Dutton, of the CSIRO's annual Gencost report. The report included cost estimates for building small modular nuclear reactors, which are not yet commercially available. He said the report was 'discredited' because it 'doesn't take into account some of the transmission costs, the costs around subsidies for the renewables'.

'The GenCost report is updated each year and provides the very best estimates for the cost of future new-build electricity generation in Australia,' Dr Hilton said. 'The report is carefully produced, its methodology is clearly articulated, our scientists are open and responsive to feedback and, as is the case for all creditable science, the report is updated regularly as new data comes to hand.'

'The GenCost report can be trusted by all our elected representatives, irrespective of whether they are advocating for electricity generation by renewables, coal, gas or nuclear energy,' he said.

'For science to be useful and for challenges to be overcome it requires the trust of the community,' he added. 'Maintaining trust requires scientists to act with integrity. Maintaining trust also requires our political leaders to resist the temptation to disparage science.'

'As Chief Executive of CSIRO, I will staunchly defend our scientists and our organisation against unfounded criticism.'

Student ombudsman role created

The Australian Government will prepare legislation to create an independent National Student Ombudsman, who will be empowered to investigate student complaints and resolve disputes with universities.

The new position is part of the action plan to address gender-based violence in higher education, to which education ministers agreed on 23 February. The action plan was developed in response to the Universities Accord Interim Report.

‘Universities aren’t just places where people work and study, they are also places where people live, and we need to ensure they are safe,’ the Minister for Education, Jason Clare, said.

‘Not enough has been done to tackle sexual violence in our universities and for too long students haven’t been heard. That now changes,’ he said.

The minister said the ombudsman would be independent and be able to investigate complaints and resolve disputes with universities.

The ombudsman’s functions would include considering whether decisions and actions taken by providers were unreasonable, unjust, oppressive, discriminatory or otherwise wrong; responding to a complaint if there are unreasonable delays, or if the provider is acting unreasonably; recommending specific steps to resolve a complaint; and offering a restorative engagement process between the student and the provider.

The government will also establish a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence.

Urgently addressing sexual assault in universities was one of five priority actions from the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report.

Liftoff for CSIRO’s flexible solar cells

Australian-developed flexible solar cells that could transform the power systems of spacecraft were launched into space aboard a private satellite on 5 March.

The state-of-the-art printed flexible solar cell technology has been developed by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). It was launched aboard Australia’s largest private satellite, Optimus-1, on Space X’s Transporter-10 mission.

CSIRO’s Renewable Energy Systems Group Leader, Dr Anthony Chesman, said eight mini-modules of the Australian-made printed flexible solar cells were attached to the surface of the satellite.

‘CSIRO researchers have been working for many years to improve our solar cell performance using perovskite, an advanced material that is highly efficient in converting sunlight into energy,’ he said.

He said *in situ* testing would secure information on the performance of the perovskite cells as they orbited the planet. ‘We will get information on how the

panels are holding up under the extreme conditions in space and data on the efficiency they achieve,' he said.

Dr Chesman said the team had already undertaken pioneering research on the likely performance of the cells in a space environment, and research indicated that they would withstand the effects of cosmic electron and gamma radiation, which can compromise the performance and integrity of traditional solar cells.

'We are also confident these cells will outperform traditional cells in cases where sunlight hits them at non-optimal angles. The feedback we receive from the satellite will provide valuable insights into the practical application of our technology and inform future technology development.'

CSIRO is exploring the potential of printed flexible solar cells as a reliable energy source for future space endeavours, in collaboration with the Australian space transportation provider Space Machines Company.

Rajat Kulshrestha, Space Machines Company's CEO, said the completion of Optimus marked a major milestone for the company.

'Through perseverance and teamwork, our engineers and scientists, alongside partners like CSIRO, have created something truly ground-breaking,' he said.

'We're thrilled to integrate this ground-breaking technology into Optimus. This is just the beginning, and I'm excited to see what the future holds as we continue to innovate.'

Obituaries

Petr Herel

19 May 1943 – 2 April 2022

Petr Herel was born 1943 in Horice, Czechoslovakia, and trained at the Prague College of Visual Arts from 1964 to 1969, absorbing the cultural heritage of the Bohemian graphic tradition. He followed this with graduate study at the Prague Academy of Applied Arts in graphics and book arts.

Upon graduating, Petr was awarded the Czechoslovakian Book of the Year prize and a scholarship to work and study at the Atelier Nourison in Paris, where he met Dorothy Davies. They married in 1972 and had two daughters, Sophie and Emilie. Dorothy would become a driving force in Petr's life. Following time in Paris and Rome, the family arrived in Melbourne in 1975. There, Petr was appointed lecturer in drawing and printmaking at the Caulfield Institute of Technology, which was incorporated into Monash University in 1990.

In 1979 Petr was among the first of the prominent established artists to be appointed as senior lecturers and heads of workshops at the Canberra School of Art by the School's first Director, artist/educator Udo Sellbach. Petr became the foundation Head of the new Graphic Investigation Workshop (GIW). It was originally proposed that it focus on the potential of the graphic arts.

Petr developed a new course of study that offered students opportunities to work in a range of interdisciplinary artistic areas, including drawing, printmaking and painting, 3D-work, illustration, paper-making and artist book-making. He encouraged students to express their personalities in their artwork

as well as mastering various technical processes. Petr's interest in all the arts and literature guided his initiative to establish an Artist Book Studio using typography and offset printing to create artists' books as part of study in the workshop. It was a unique development in Australian art schools and attracted national interest and attention.

As Head of the GIW, Petr made space available to painters, sculptors and printmakers and encouraged them to collaborate with other visual artists, writers and poets.

In 1994 Petr developed the Artist Book Studio with dedicated space and specialised equipment. The studio's diverse activities included printmaking techniques and photocopying, often using handmade papers, typography and letter press. Petr pioneered this approach and used his extensive European network by inviting artists to be 'artists-in-residence' at the studio. Working with invited artists from Australia, the visitors were a regular feature in the workshop and the book studio. They worked with students and staff on specialised publications to create limited editions of artists' books, often using sound, video and installation.

One visiting artist was the Frenchman Thierry Bouchard, a regular visitor at the School of Art who worked in the Artist Book Studio. He was central to Petr's life and interests. Workshop alumnus Paul Uhlman, currently a lecturer in visual arts at Edith Cowan University, observed that 'With his energy, lively imagination and overseas contacts, Petr was dedicated, inspiring and a legendary much loved teacher.'

In 1996 Petr was joined by experienced printmaker Diane Fogwell as lecturer-in-charge of the renamed program the Edition and Artist Book Studio (E+AB Studio) with an expanded role to include research applications in this speculative art-making area.

To mark the ANU's 60th anniversary and the School's 30th anniversary in 2006, a collaboration between the School's Printmedia and Graphic Investigation Workshops, the E+ABS and Canberra's Studio One print facility produced a successful portfolio, *Twelve*, involving all 12 School of Art workshop artist heads. Petr was central to this initiative. This folio, together with books created in the GIW and the E+ABS, formed the basis of an exhibition funded nationally by Visions Australia that successfully toured NSW and Victorian regional galleries. These limited-edition publications have been collected by the National Library of Australia and state libraries, and have been exhibited in international book fairs.

The collection and exhibition of these books from Petr's Graphic Investigation Workshop, Artist Book Studio and E+ABS are a record of the unique visual arts/teaching program at the Canberra School of Art, now the ANU School of Art & Design. In 1998 a collection of 246 of the GIW limited-edition artist book collaborations with ANU creative arts fellows, visiting artists, writers and poets was given to the Menzies Library Special Book Collection.

Speaking at Petr's funeral, Melbourne academic Elizabeth Cross commented that, 'Petr Herel's art stems from the literary traditions of Bohemia and later from France, where he lived speaking four languages aged in his mid-twenties

... all are sources of his art and ideas and the product of his cultural inheritance.’

Examples of Petr’s idiosyncratic, abstract, figurative and haunted imaginative images were regularly exhibited nationally and internationally. They are the product of his intellect, rigour and artistic imagination and are held in many major European art museum collections, the National Gallery and National Library, state and regional art galleries, and the ANU Art Collection.

Petr Herel was a talented, imaginative artist bookmaker, printer and graphic artist who retired in 1998. Without his inspiration, the Graphic Investigation Workshop closed. Petr died in Melbourne, April 2022. He left an impressive body of work, prints and drawings, artist books and a teaching legacy remembered fondly by his many students. He will be missed by artist colleagues, his daughters Sophie and Emilie, and his grandchildren. Vale Petr Herel.

— David Williams



Niel Gunson

12 October 1930 – 10 April 2023

Walter Niel Gunson was born on 12 October 1930 to Florence Mabel Gunson (née Wright) and John Livingstone Gunson at Leongatha in South Gippsland Victoria — a jinker or buggy ride from his parents’ property, Hythe, in Lang Lang. He remained an only child. Niel died on 10 April 2023 after a long illness, at home in Hackett, ACT. Niel’s father, after retiring from farming and selling the farm, came to live with Niel in Canberra. One of the rooms at Hackett was dedicated to the memory of Niel’s mother.

Niel will be remembered as a scholar, gentleman, collector — a man of intellect and humanity, ‘mild mannered and gentle’ — and as a representative of an earlier era. Some will cherish him for his ‘quirky’ sense of humour. Among other contributions, he made a great gift to the Australian National University, where I knew him in various capacities: as a staff member of the Department of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (as it was known in the 1990s), a pro forma member of my panel, a distinguished Pacific historian, and later as an influential board member and section editor of *The Journal of Pacific History*.

He was a family historian par excellence. It was fitting that Scott Coleman, a fellow genealogist, who first met Niel at Hackett, gave the eulogy for his friend at the Celebration of Niel’s life. Heraldry and genealogy were abiding concerns for Niel, but others will know him for his other work. Like many, I was touched by Niel but unable to grasp all his interests. They were too wide.

Niel’s resting place is in Lang Lang Cemetery, where he joined in death many of his forebears. His early life was spent at the farm in Lang Lang, now just southeast of Melbourne but then, psychologically, well away from the metropolis. He often told me the story of riding to school and back on his pony. Niel was an expert horseman. But I sympathise with the members of the ANU

department, to which Niel belonged virtually all his working life, who allegedly wondered if he would manage when they organised some horse-riding: Niel always looked unathletic and for most of his adult years, until his terminal illness, middle-aged. But aside from personal experience, Niel came from a line of horsemen: his paternal grandfather was a revered horseman and his father, known to his family as Jack, served during World War I in the 8th Light Horse. Niel more than managed the department's horse-riding!

Young Niel spent his childhood at Lang Lang with cousins. That may have been the beginnings of his interest in place, Indigenous and family histories. The local people, who preceded and survived colonisation, were much on his mind and in his heart, while cousins of any degree mattered to Niel. They were a source of love and intimacy. He used the phone book to look up Lesley Gunson (that dates Lesley and Niel) because he was struck by the shared surname. Lesley and her husband Keith Mitchell came to play an important part in Niel's life.

Religion also mattered to Niel from the start. His mother instilled a faith that sustained Niel till his departure for his 'long home'. His cousin Gaye Headberry remembers that he was called 'Niel' after his paternal grandfather, the Reverend Daniel Gunson, a Congregational minister, who fathered two Congregational ministers. His grandson, John, was also a Congregational minister. Thus Niel inherited Christianity from both parents. The Reverend John Gunson spoke at Niel's funeral and recalled an excursion with Niel: the two boys wanted to 'escape' the property owing to an 'injustice' but they were thwarted, and returned only to learn that their absence had not been noticed. Niel was expected to run the farm but he hearkened to other callings!

Niel's mother died of breast cancer when he was 15, leaving him with a huge hole in his life but, among other things, a great sense of the importance of education. He won a scholarship to Brighton Grammar and then went to Melbourne University.

ANU the 'number-one place' for Pacific History

At Melbourne he lived with his aunt, Joan Wright, and at Melbourne University studied history. In his final undergraduate year he took Dorothy Munro's ground-breaking Honours class in Pacific History. As Dorothy Shineberg, she supervised Niel's MA thesis (1955) titled *The Missionary Vocation as conceived by the early missionaries of the London Missionary Society in the South Seas, and the extent to which this conception was modified by their experience in Polynesia, 1797-1839*. That was a foretaste of what was to come. Dorothy and Niel would later be colleagues at the ANU and Niel often spoke fondly of 'Dotty'.

From Melbourne he went to Canberra and the ANU, which in Niel's early career was the number-one place internationally to do Pacific History, because the charismatic James W. (Jim) Davidson was in command as the world's first professor in this field. At the ANU Niel completed a doctorate in Pacific history (1960) that was to become his celebrated work, *Messengers of Grace: Evangelical Missionaries in South Seas 1797-1860* (1978). It remains a must-read book, demonstrating Niel's apprehension of cultural depth, exchange and rich personal and historical contexts.

Niel subsequently went to the University of Queensland for a stint of lecturing and teaching, returning in 1962 to the ANU's then Department of Pacific History in the Research School of Pacific Studies. That and its many successors were to host Niel's career thenceforth.

He had many stories of the ANU in the late '50s and '60s, which indicate realities far different from those in which ANU academics — and academics generally — labour today. For instance, according to Niel, a researcher could use the library at any time of day or night. Aside from the shift to digital, many considerations would make that use of the library implausible! Niel told tales of his place at University House, then the abode of Bob Hawke, later to become Prime Minister. Niel often attended the parties of Francis West, a member of Niel's department and an historian of Papua New Guinea.

Niel made significant contributions to Pacific history. I often wonder if Niel's knowledge of genealogy made him specially suited to study the people and pasts of the Pacific, where genealogical expertise is respected. Aside from the exalted *Messengers of Grace*, Niel was a life-member of the Pacific History Association (PHA). He chaired the Management Committee of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PAMBU) from 1986 to 1993, following the retirement of his friend and PAMBU Executive Officer, Bob Langdon. Niel and Gillian Scott, who was the new Executive Officer of PAMBU, saw the bureau through some difficult times. He was also a mover in 'the journal' (*The Journal of Pacific History – JPH*), in which Niel published many classic articles, such as 'Sacred Women Chiefs and Female "Headmen" in Polynesian History'.

While well-versed in everything, Niel was a preeminent scholar of Polynesia, Pacific religion (non-Christian and Christian) and a friend of Samoa and of Tonga. The Tongan History Association (now the Tongan Research Association) was inaugurated in 1989 after a conference Niel held at the ANU in 1987, and Tongan royalty graced his doorstep.

Niel saw missionaries in the round and wore his faith lightly but was always ready to argue a theological point, as many a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon discovered when they came knocking. He was expert in the way that Islanders made Christianity their own, yet he remained an authority on traditional Pacific religion and had a long-term interest in Oceanic shamanism, one of his many specialities.

Niel was a founder of *The Journal of Pacific History*, along with Davidson and Harry Maude, in whose honour he produced an edited collection. Niel also penned *JPH's* constitution. He remained an editor of N&D section (originally Notes and Documents), towards the end sharing decision-making with a committee and editing with archivist and ex-PAMBU Executive Officer Ewan Maidment. The last *JPH* publication in which Niel was involved was the Cook Islands special issue, published in late 2022, months before his death, to honour 200 years of the Takamoa Theological College, which had been founded by Congregational minister Aaron Buzacott. Niel's article on Protestant martyrs in Melanesia for that collection was to be the last of his numerous pieces proudly published by *JPH*.

Niel was also a great supervisor. A former student recalls how he would provide meals and accommodation to off-scholarship students in exchange for them handing in their PhD theses. A PHA prize was inaugurated in 2012 in honour of

his mentoring so many, including the notable Islanders Sione Lātūkefu, Kambati Uriam, Ato’ese Morgan Tuimaleali’ifano, Saleimona Va’ai, ‘Ōkusitino Māhina and Featuna’i Ben Liua’ana.

Hūfanga-He-Ako-Moe-Lotu ‘Ōkusitino Māhina, wrote ‘we say from the height of our minds and depth of our hearts with sincere appreciation and deep admiration that this most fitting Tongan *lea heliaki* metaphor that says *taau ē lei moe tofua’a* or, conversely, *taau ē tofua’a moe lei* —approximately translated into English as “the lei tooth befits the whale” or, conversely, “the whale befits the lei tooth” — is most befitting of Niel’. In 2005 some of Niel’s students contributed to and lovingly put together a festschrift, *Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion: Essays in Honour of Niel Gunson*, edited by Phyllis Herda, Michael Reilly and David Hilliard.

Niel contributed to Aboriginal history in many ways. In the mid-1970s he published an account of the Reverend Lancelot Edward Threlkeld, who worked among the Akwabal speakers in Lake Macquarie, near the current city of Newcastle. A reviewer remarked that Niel’s two-volume work marked the entry of the press of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies into serious scholarship. Threlkeld had originally wanted to be an actor and came into difficulty with the local Anglican hierarchy, but Niel considered Threlkeld’s writings offered rare insights into the Aboriginal world. Some of Threlkeld’s insights derived from his own experience, but mostly he relied on the one informant, Biraban.

Honoured for meritorious service to family history

Niel founded (against opposition) the *Journal of Aboriginal History*, becoming its first chairperson. He often recalled how that journal was run from his office in the beginning and was proud to attend its 40th anniversary in 2017. The constitution of *JPH* was based on that of the *Journal of Aboriginal History*.

Of course there were local and family histories too. Niel became a fellow of the Genealogical Society of Victoria in 1962. Many of the stories told to Niel by old-timers in Gippsland were published beside his research into settlers and the dispossessed in *The Good Country: Cranbourne Shire* (1968). His booklet *Reverend Daniel Gunson: Gippsland’s Pioneer Congregational Minister 1847-1915*, was published in 1983. Several publications followed in the 1990s, including *Reminiscences of the Wright and Woollard Families in England and Geelong* (1990), *Reminiscences of the Gunson Family and Descendants in Australia and New Zealand* (1996), *Reminiscences of the Loud Family in England and Australia* (1997), and *Reminiscences of the Eastes Family in Kent and Australia* (1998).

In 1992 he became a Fellow of the Heraldry and Genealogical Society in Canberra (subsequently known by its business name Family History ACT) and in 2015, at Parliament House, was honoured for meritorious service by the Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations.

He was a lover of books, porcelain, art, music (like his uncle, the Reverend William Norman Gunson, 1883-1942)). A lover too of and fine wine: Gillian Scott left a bottle of merlot in his coffin — fittingly, she said, to share with Bob Langdon.

Niel's death notice described him, inter alia, as a bibliophile. His library at Hackett remains legendary, a 'hallowed repository', in the words of Scott Coleman. Despite compact shelving, there was not enough room! Amongst his home's bric-a-brac (all meaningful) were items of outstanding value.

And Niel shared. He gave esteemed collections to the National Library of Australia and contributions to the National Gallery of Australia, among other institutions; saved and returned the original Tongan constitution to Nuku'alofa, the capital of Tonga; let his paintings hang at the ANU; and supported the publication of worthy work, assiduously assisting the efforts of junior or amateur scholars to get into print. Niel scrupulously recalled the bequests left by colleagues.

I will always honour Niel for three qualities, the first of which was his having a refined sense of justice. I wondered whether that quality was evidence of his star sign, symbolised by the scales of justice, but the Rev. John Gunson declared it was due to his Christian upbringing.

Second, he wanted students to find their own voice, telling me that this was the most important task of a supervisor. One of Niel's ex-students echoed numerous others in saying, 'I learned a lot from him about how to write' (Niel was a superb writer). Another spoke of Niel's 'constant emphasis on consistency, clarity, and logical[,] evidence[-] based arguments'. But within those general principles, Niel gave students room to move.

Third, Niel was very open-minded. He took human vagaries as evidence of one's being human. Niel took an interest in gender before it became fashionable. He also took a passing interest, courtesy of his work on Tahiti, in what could be called underage sex in ancient Polynesia.

Niel preserved his independence and never joined any bandwagon. At a time when Australian Pacific historians were fiercely secular, Niel's best-known work in Pacific studies involved missionaries. At a time when Australian Pacific historians were focussed on ordinary people and the 'grassroots', Niel was interested in chiefly genealogy. At a time when his colleagues in Pacific history were mainly 'Melanesianists' (a controversial term), Niel was a 'Polynesianist'. But Niel saw some of his concerns, particularly his interests in religion and in gender, come back into academic fashion. Niel lived a long and good life, working to the end. He remained true to his origins, family, colleagues, friends, and the world which had formed him. Jenny Terrell, the inaugural and long-time executive editor of *JPH*, recalled with laughter Niel's counter to bushfires: beat out the flames with a (handy) tweed jacket!

Niel bequeathed many physical legacies, including the writings mentioned above, the Gunson crest and other items honoured by Family History ACT; the contents of his house and library; and the many tangible gifts showered in his lifetime. But they are all less important, in my view, than the many intangible legacies, including the memories some of us are lucky to have of his unassuming self. Neil fulfilled his family motto (chosen and rendered as such by George Gunson, Niel's uncle), 'Toil and have confidence'. Niel toiled and never faltered.

I join in the accolades bestowed on his carers, Mamita and colleagues, who tended to Niel in the twilight of his years and who meant so much to him. Vale Niel Gunson!

— Vicki Luker



Cedric Arthur Chetwyn Mims

9 December 1924 – 14 January 2024

Cedric Arthur Chetwyn Mims was born on 9 December 1924 and died on 4 January 2024, just one month into his 100th year. He was a medical scientist, teacher, writer and artist, a warm, compassionate and friendly man. ChatGPT's summary states that, 'His research focused on understanding the mechanisms of infectious diseases and host immune responses, with the aim of developing better strategies for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment,' and that 'this was the basis of his teaching and writing'.

He was born in London to a devout family, a tax collector/lay preacher father and homekeeping mother, but when he was seven years old both died of infections, and he and his sister and three brothers were reared by relatives. His secondary schooling was at the prestigious Mill Hill School. Perhaps, because of the loss of his parents, Cedric's first choice of a career was medicine, but his guardian grandfather, a businessman, did not approve of this plan and arranged for him to work in a bank. Eventually he was allowed to enrol in chemistry at University College, London University, to which Cedric quietly added some zoology units. He graduated with 1st Class Honours, having been taught by, among others, G. P. Wells, son of H. G. Wells, the writer, and J.B.S. Haldane, one of the founders of population genetics, and a communist, atheist and writer of popular science books. Now aged 21, and free to make his own decisions, Cedric enrolled at the Middlesex Hospital School of Medicine and graduated in 1952. It was there too that he met and married Vicky (Valerie Iolanthe Vickery), the love of his life.

Cedric started research working for the Colonial Medical Service in Uganda on tropical fevers. He suffered a severe bout of Rift Valley Fever, a viral disease of domesticated ungulates and camels, but studied its causal virus in mice and published his first research papers on the disease in the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology* in 1956. In 1956 he joined the Microbiology Department of the John Curtin School of Medical Research at the recently established Australian National University. It was a stimulating environment with Professor Frank Fenner, ensuring there were large numbers of short- and long-term visiting scientists from all over the world.

Cedric's major project was to use the newly invented technique of fluorescent antibody staining to study infections of mice with several different viruses, especially mousepox (ectromelia) and influenza virus. He discovered and described the infection pathways in different tissues and organs, especially lymphoid tissues and macrophages (e.g. Mims, CA.1964. 'Aspects of the Pathogenesis of Viral diseases.' *Bact. Rev.* 28, 30-71). This was exciting frontier research, and opened up a major area of science that is still advancing with an

understanding of the shapes and interactions of the molecules involved, and their distribution throughout the body. Most recently such studies of the SARS-2 virus explain its distribution in the body and how it causes a loss of the sense of smell and 'long COVID' (e.g. Hamming et al., *J. Path.*203: 631-7, 2004; Davies et al., *Mol. Med. Rep.* 22: 4221-6, 2020). In 1972 Cedric was appointed Professor of Microbiology in Guys Hospital Medical School in London, where he established a strong program of research, teaching and writing of textbooks. He retired from Guy's at 65 in 1990.

Cedric and Vicky returned to Australia in 2002 to rejoin their children. Vicky died in 2006 and Cedric moved to live alone in a small retirement house, which he filled with classical music — especially guitar — art, mementoes and scholarship. He was helped especially by his daughter Penelope.

If one can measure the success of a person's life by the genes and memes (i.e. ideas) that they pass on to the next generation, then Cedric's life was remarkably fruitful. He bequeathed his genes to four children (Penelope, Simon, Nicholas and Sarah), 12 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. He authored over 100 research papers and reviews, and several highly regarded multi-authored textbooks of microbiology and immunology, including *Pathogenesis of Infectious Disease* (1976), now in its sixth edition, and *Mims. Medical Microbiology and Immunology* (1997), now in its seventh edition. These textbooks are used by medical students and professionals around the world. One reviewer stated that they 'are renowned for their clarity, thoroughness, and accessibility, making complex topics in microbiology and immunology more understandable for students and professionals alike'.

After retirement Cedric continued his writing with the widely read *When We Die: What becomes of the Body after Death* (1998), which spares no grisly esoteric detail, and *The War Within Us: Everyman's Guide to Infection and Immunity* (2000), which was awarded first prize by the British Medical Association for the best popular medicine book of 2002. In his final years he lectured at the University of the Third Age and, despite increasingly severe macular degeneration, produced a wide-ranging series of surreal line drawings and wrote a series of 18 eclectic booklets on various aspects of human existence, including *Celebrating the Human Hand, Love and Old Age, Fouling the Nest – Human Filth and Pollution, Mightier than the Sword* (the penis), and *The Last Gasp*. He was working on *The Unmentionables* until stopped by his final short illness.

Cedric is survived by his brother Norman, still going strong at 97, but was predeceased by his sister Wendy (92) and brother Bill (99). He left his body to the ANU Body Donation Program. Farewell Cedric – may your genes and memes go well.

— Adrian Gibbs

Diary dates

Harrison's practice, from ideas to works of art

Works in ink, oil and bronze make up the Stephen Harrison installation 'The Sphinx Bureau', at the Canberra Museum and Gallery until 26 May. The exhibition is based on the artist's studio and four decades of art practice. A graduate of the Canberra School of Art, Harrison has exhibited widely, nationally and internationally. 'Virtually everything I do, art-wise, starts at my drawing desk,' he has said. 'It's here that ideas begin to take shape and grow metaphysical wings; becoming sculptures or oil paintings, or they remain ink drawings, which is just fine.' The works span the period from 1984 to 2024, from Canberra to Prague, and cover a lifetime of creation.

Kngwarray exhibition concluding at the NGA

About a month remains for visitors to see the exhibition of work by Emily Kam Kngwarray at the National Gallery of Australia. The exhibition offers an extensive survey of Kngwarray's work, bringing together the most important works of her oeuvre, from early vibrant batik textiles to later monumental paintings on canvas. The exhibition features an audiovisual collaboration with the artist's community. The exhibition closes on 28 April.

The NGA exhibition 'Jordan Wolfson: Body Sculpture' is a robotic work of art, combining sculpture and performance to generate emotional and physical responses. This is the first solo presentation of Wolfson's work in Australia. The world premiere of 'Body Sculpture', a major acquisition for the national collection, follows Wolfson's previous animatronic works *Female Figure*, 2014, and *Colored Sculpture*, 2016. 'Body Sculpture' can be viewed at set performance session times. It is free but ticketed. Sessions are daily except Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Viewers are advised that works depict mature themes. Children under 15 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Sound levels reach 100 decibels at times.

Portraits of the prominent and powerful

Portraits of Queen Mary of Denmark, King Charles III and Dame Judi Dench are among the studies of notable people on show in 'Ralph Heimans: Portraiture. Power. Influence' at the National Portrait Gallery until 27 May. This is the first major exhibition of the work of the internationally renowned Sydney-born portraitist in his home country. Heimans's meticulously realised paintings are regarded as having revitalised the tradition of portraiture, besides providing insights into the lives of prominent and powerful people. Admission is \$20 (adult), \$18 (concession), 16 (Circle of Friends). No charge for children under 18.

Ancient Egypt at the National Museum

Sculptures, coffins, jewellery and scrolls of the Book of the Dead are among the artefacts from the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden that make up the 'Discovering Ancient Egypt' exhibition at the National Museum of

Australia. The exhibition surveys the everyday lives of ancient Egyptians, including their social systems, religious beliefs, and the importance of the afterlife. The Dutch museum's extensive collection dates from the 1740s. The exhibition runs until 8 September. Visitors are advised to book in advance. Entry is: adults \$25, concessions \$20, children 5–16 years \$12.50, families (two adults and two children) \$62.50, Friends \$17.50.

Six decades of the nation's life in focus

The work of photographers who worked for Australian Government agencies over six decades is on show until 10 June at the National Archives' National Office in Kings Avenue. 'Focus: Australian Government Photographers', shows images taken by photographers, many of whom worked for the Australian News and Information Bureau and its successor bodies, to reflect the Australia way of life. The exhibition is open from 9am to 5pm Mondays to Friday, and from 10am till 4pm at weekends. Admission is free.

Meet the Author events

25 March, 6pm: Julia Baird will talk about her new book, *Bright Shining: How Grace Changes Everything*, with Virginia Haussegger. Hugh Mackay will give the vote of thanks. Manning Clark Hall, Kambri Cultural Centre.

March 27, 6pm: David Lindenmayer will talk with Alex Sloan about his new book, *The Forest Wars*. Vote of thanks by Asmi Wood. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

April 2, 6pm: Louise Milligan will be in conversation about her debut novel, *Pheasants Nest*, with Amy Remeikis. Vote of thanks by Sally Pryor. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

April 3, 6pm: Paul Tilley will be talking about his new book, *Mixed Fortunes: A History of Tax Reform in Australia*, with Ken Henry. Andrew Leigh will give the vote of thanks. Manning Clark Hall, Kambri Cultural Centre.

April 18, 6pm: Lech Blaine will discuss his Quarterly Essay, *On Peter Dutton and the Forgotten People*, with Mark Kenny. John Warhurst will give the vote of thanks. T2, Kambri Cultural Centre.

April 30, 6pm: James Bradley will discuss his new non-fiction book, *Deep Water: The World in the Ocean*, with Beejay Silcox. The vote of thanks will be given by Tim Hollo. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 7, 6pm: Hugh Mackay will talk with Virginia Haussegger about his new book, *The Way We Are: Lessons from a Lifetime of Listening*. Frank Bongiorno will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 13, 6pm: Miles Franklin award winner Shankari Chandran will talk about her new novel, *Safe Haven*, with Karen Viggers. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 16, 6pm: Frank Bongiorno will discuss his new book, *A Little History of the Australian Labour Party*, with Jennifer Rayner. The vote of thanks will be given by Bob McMullan. T2, Kambri Cultural Centre.

May 22, 6pm: Bruce Pascoe will talk about his new book, *Black Duck. A Year at Yumburra*, with Bill Gammage. Cinema, Kambri Cultural Centre

June 13, 6pm: Jen Rayner will discuss her new book, *Climate Clangers: The Bad Ideas Blocking Real Action*, with John Uhr. The vote of thanks will be given by Adam Triggs. Harry Hartog bookshop, Kambri Cultural Centre.

June 18, 6pm: Nick Bryant will discuss his new book, *The Forever War*, with Mark Kenny. Allan Behm will give the vote of thanks. RSSL auditorium, ANU.

June 25, 6pm: Michael Brissenden will discuss his new novel, *Smoke*, with Mike Bowers. Sally Pryor will give the vote of thanks. Harry Hartog bookshop, Kambri Cultural Centre.

July 9, 6pm: Allan Behm will talk about his new book, *The Odd Couple: Re-Configuring the America-Australia Relationship*, with Mark Kenny. Coral Bell lecture theatre, ANU.

August 7, 6pm: Paul Ham will discuss his new book, *The Soul: The History of the Human Mind*, with Hugh Mackay. The vote of thanks will be given by Allan Behm. RSSL auditorium, ANU.

August 13, 6pm: Andrew Ford will discuss his new book, *The Shortest History of Music*, with Malcolm Gillies. Robyn Holmes will give the vote of thanks. Larry Sitsky Room, ANU School of Music.

August 16, 6pm: Norman Swan will be in conversation about his new book *So You Want to Know What's Good for Your Kids?* Llewellyn Hall, ANU School of Music.

October 29, 6pm: Joe Aston will be in conversation on his new book about Qantas, *The Chairman's Lounge*.

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

Campaign to promote role of universities

Universities Australia has launched a communications campaign to develop community understanding and support for the work that universities do and the contribution they make to Australia.

The campaign, launched in mid-March, comes as the Australian Government considers reforms to the university sector under the Accord, and in the lead-up to a federal election.

It is designed to ‘serve as a reminder to the voting public and our elected officials of why universities matter to us all,’ according to Universities Australia’s Chief Executive Officer, Luke Sheehy.

‘Our universities are at the heart of the nation’s economic, social and technological agenda, doing the teaching, research and community service that serves Australia and all Australians,’ he said.

‘There is not a city or a town, a person or a community that doesn’t benefit from what our universities do on behalf of the nation.

‘From scientists developing new cures and finding cheap, clean energy solutions, to teachers educating our children and nurses and doctors caring for our loved ones – what starts on campus reaches far into our communities and matters to all Australians.’

New director for disease preparedness centre

Dr Debbie Eagles has been appointed Director of the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP). Her appointment was announced by the Commonwealth Scientific and Research Organisation on 15 March.

Dr Eagles will lead CSIRO’s high-containment facility in Geelong, Victoria, which helps to protect Australia’s livestock and aquaculture industries and the community from emerging infectious disease threats.

She was previously ACDP’s Deputy Director and played a pivotal role in CSIRO’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Eagles is a veterinary epidemiologist with a background in vector-borne diseases. She has extensive experience in animal health and biosecurity preparedness in Australia and the Asia Pacific.

A mice distinction between native rodents

Researchers with the Australian National University and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation have added two new species of native rodent to the list of Australian animals.

The aptly named delicate mouse was previously thought to be a single species, inhabiting a stretch of the inland from the Pilbara in Western Australia, across parts of the Northern Territory and Queensland, to the New South Wales border.

But now researchers have used genetic technology to confirm that there are three species of delicate mouse — the mice will now go by common names that point to their location: the western delicate mouse or Pilbara delicate mouse, eastern delicate mouse and northern delicate mouse.

‘Identifying undescribed species and giving them official names goes a long way to making sure they’re properly looked after,’ said Dr Emily Roycroft, a postdoctoral fellow at the ANU’s Research School of Biology.

‘The two new species haven’t had any conservation or research attention, because we didn’t know they were there,’ she said.

Dr Roycroft said the delicate mouse differs in important ways from the mice you find around the home.

‘Delicate mice are part of a group of native rodents that have been evolving in Australia for the last five million years. They’re a crucial part of Australia’s natural environment and ecosystems,’ she said.

‘Delicate mice are our smallest Australian rodent. They can weigh as little as six grams, so they’re really tiny.’

The study also found delicate mice are excellent adaptors to their environment, whether that be arid desert or forest.

Focus on equity, justice at Nusa Tenggara dinner

Anthropologist Emeritus Professor Kathryn Robinson will be the guest speaker at the Nusa Tenggara Association’s (NTA) annual fundraising dinner on 13 April at the Southern Cross Club.

She will speak on meeting the challenges of gender equity and social justice in the face of climate change and increasing resource exploitation in East Nusa Tenggara province.

The NTA channels money to poor farming families on the islands of Timor, Semau and Flores. It has been an ANU-inspired NGO from its inception by the late Professor Colin Barlow. It is one of the longest-continuing aid organisations in eastern Indonesia and raises funds in Australia to combine with funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to support a variety of small-scale income-generating projects.

Those attending are promised an excellent Indonesian meal of Beef Rendang, Gulai Ayam, Coconut Rice and Gado gado, followed by sweets. The evening begins at 6.30. Tickets, at \$80 a head, will be on sale until 5 April from Trybooking (<https://www.trybooking.com/CPJXJ>). For more information people can contact enquiries@nta.org.au or call 0406-930.835.

Academy concerned at changes to maths requirements

The Australian Academy of Science has voiced its concern at the removal of advanced mathematics prerequisites for particular courses by the University of Sydney.

In a statement issued early this month, the Academy noted that mathematics is a foundational skill across the sciences. ‘Removing the prerequisite to have studied advanced mathematics for certain degrees will leave students underprepared and ill-equipped to complete their courses,’ the statement said.

‘The Academy acknowledges that there are systemic equity issues raised by the University of Sydney, with some Australian students not able to access advanced mathematics education at school. But we need both excellence and equity and students have the right to expect both.’

‘Removing the advanced mathematics prerequisite does nothing to address the decline in mathematics enrolments at schools and sends the wrong signal to

students. It is up to the Australian and state and territory governments to fix the systemic problems impacting mathematics education at schools,' it concluded.

Bookshelf

Australian Urban Policy

Prospects and Pathways

Edited by Robert Freestone, Bill Randolph and Wendy Steele

ISBN (print): 9781760466299

ISBN (online): 9781760466305

March 2024

ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/AUP.2024>

Many challenges confront urban Australia: climate change, housing, transport, green spaces, social inequality, and governance among them. While state and local governments wrestle with these issues, the challenges exist across the nation, and require national leadership, direction and participation. As a highly urbanised country without a national approach to urban policy, Australia is an outlier.

Contributors to *Australian Urban Policy* argue that this policy gap needs to be met. They ask how productive, sustainable and liveable cities have been enhanced; where have aspirations fallen short or produced unsatisfactory outcomes; and what approaches are emerging to devise new urban policy settings?

The need for policy to transform urban Australia is daunting. Complex problems call for innovative, ethical solutions. This book offers new ideas that challenge policy orthodoxy.

Yagara Dictionary and Salvage Grammar

By Karen Sullivan and Glenda Harward-Nalder

ISBN (print): 9781760466176

ISBN (online): 9781760466183

March 2024

ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/YDSG.2024>

Many English speakers in Australia know a few words of Yagara, the Pama-Nyungan language traditionally spoken in the area that now includes Brisbane and Ipswich. For example, Australian English *yakka* ('work') comes from the Yagara verb *yaga*, 'to work'. However, no fluent native speakers of Yagara remain. The current volume compares the written records of Yagara to facilitate revitalisation of the spoken language.

Its three parts comprise, first, a grammar that introduces the Yagara sources which are compared to extract a picture of Yagara's structure. The second part

contains the most complete Yagara-English dictionary to date, with over 2,200 entries, original source spellings for each word, standardised spellings, and anthropological notes. Entries include traditional place names, fun insults, and everyday expressions. Part three includes texts of full versions of all known texts in Yagara, including sentences, songs, and three Bible stories. Standardised versions are accompanied by English translations and the original unedited renditions.

Australian Journal of Biography and History
No.8, 2024

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ANU Press

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22459/AJBH.08.2024>

This issue of the *Australian Journal of Biography and History* applies biographical methodologies to enliven themes and episodes in Australian history. Among its studies, Martin Thomas relates how the novelist Patrick White demanded a ‘final pound of flesh from his biographer’ by making David Marr sit with him at the dining table while he read his play ‘The Season at Sarsaparilla’ in front of him ‘from beginning to end’. The result was a biography of ‘complete artistic freedom’, ‘unauthorised’ certainly, but ‘aided and abetted by its subject’.

Administration

Arrangements for ANUEF room bookings

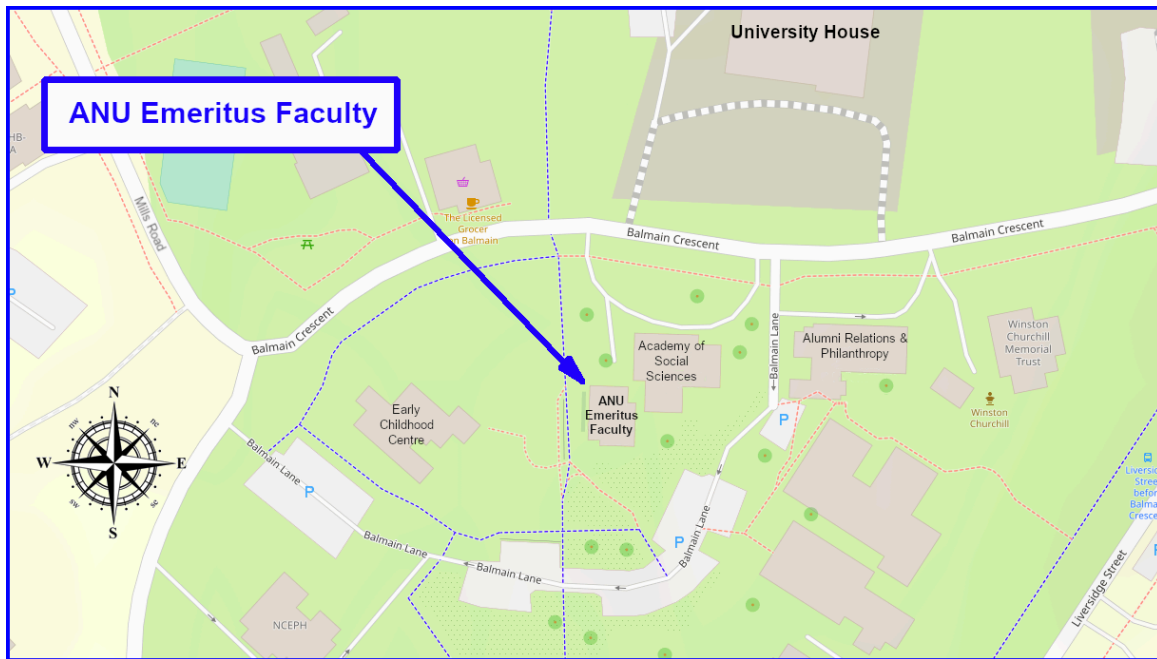
Requests to book the Molony Room should be addressed to the Secretary of the ANU Emeritus Faculty, Jan O’Connor, at jantancess@gmail.com or 6247 3341.

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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