

# EMERITUS

*The Australian National University Emeritus Faculty e-magazine*

## ANU will kill the Australian National Dictionary

**By: Howard Manns, Senior Lecturer in Linguistics, Monash University; and Kate Burrige Professor of Linguistics, Monash University Research**

Bonzer. Dinkum. Troppo. We love our distinctive words and phrases.

We revel in the confusion they cause outsiders. We celebrate the stories behind them. We even make up a few furphies about them.

What many Australians might not know, however, is that for nearly 40 years a dedicated team at the Australian National University (ANU) has been hard at work digging up these past stories — real and furphy — and keeping a close eye on the new ones.

You'd be hard-pressed to find a more committed group of lexical patriots. Most everything you know, want to know, or have heard about Australian words comes from the Australian National Dictionary Centre (ANDC). From media, to academics, to everyday Aussies, we all rely on these quiet patriots — even if we don't always know it.

But despite this work, and the central (and government-funded) role the ANU is meant to play in Australian history and identity, the ANU leadership is killing off the ANDC. The university has stated that the decision is a necessary part of reducing operating costs. **Read more at [theconversation.edu.au](https://theconversation.edu.au).**

Diary dates

## **ANU Meet the Author events**

**ANU/Canberra Times Meet the Author events are held in association with Harry Hartog Bookshop. Unless otherwise stated all events are free and at 6pm in the Lowitja O'Donoghue Cultural Centre, formerly known as the Kambri Cultural Centre. 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/meet-the-author-series](http://anu.edu.au/events/meet-the-author-series). In line with ANU's COVID policy, masks are no longer required. Enquiries to the convenor, Colin Steele, at [colin.steele@anu.edu.au](mailto:colin.steele@anu.edu.au). Bookings: [anu.edu.au/meet-the-author-series](http://anu.edu.au/meet-the-author-series). The Symposium by University House wine bar (Shop 13, 152 University Avenue, Acton, next to the cultural centre) will be open for dining after the events. No bookings necessary. Food and wine details at <https://unihouse.anu.edu.au/eat/symposium/>.**

**September 2:** Michael Brissenden will be in conversation on his new crime novel *Dust* with Chris Hammer. Vote of thanks by Karen Viggers.

**September 11:** Marian Wilkinson will be in conversation on her new quarterly essay *Profit v planet* with David Pocock. Vote of thanks by Mark Howden.

**September 15:** Tracey Lee Holmes will be in conversation on her new book *The Eye of the Dragonfly: A Life Seeing the World Through Sport* with Phil Coorey. Vote of thanks by Michelle Ryan.

**September 17:** Paula Gerber will be in conversation on her new book *Sex, Gender and Identity: Trans Rights in Australia?* with Kim Rubenstein. Vote of thanks by Fiona Jenkins.

**September 23:** Sulari Gentill will be in conversation on her new novel *Five Found Dead* with Chris Hammer. Vote of thanks by Anna Creer.

**September 30:** Virginia Haussegger will be in conversation on her new book *Unfinished Revolution: the feminist fightback* with Frank Bongiorno. Vote of thanks by Michelle Ryan.

**October 2:** Omar Musa will be in conversation on his new novel *Fierceland* with Beejay Silcox. Vote of thanks by Karen Viggers.

**October 8:** Bri Lee will be in conversation on her new novel *Seed Vote* with Richard Morecroft. Vote of thanks by Karen Viggers.

**October 13:** Chris Hammer will be in conversation on his new novel *Legacy* with Michael Brissenden. Vote of thanks by Anna Creer.

**October 15:** Kate Reid will be in conversation on her memoir *Destination Moon* with Alex Sloan.

**November 3:** Hugh Mackay will be in conversation on his new book *Just Saying* with Alex Sloan. Vote of thanks by Frank Bongiorno.

**November 6:** Sofie Laguna will be in conversation on her new novel *The Underworld* with Karen Viggers. Vote of thanks by Sally Pryor.

**November 12:** Robert Wellington will be in conversation on his new book *Versailles Mirrored. The Power of Luxury, Louis XIV to Donald Trump* with Matthew Trinca. Vote of thanks by Helen Musa.

**November 17:** Ita Buttrose will be in conversation on her new book *Unapologetically Ita*.

**November 21:** Bryan Brown will be in conversation on his new novel *The Hidden* with Alex Sloan.

**November 25:** Sean Kelly will be in conversation on the 100th *Quarterly Essay: On belief in politics*.

**November 27:** Greg Haddrick will be in conversation on his new book *The Mushroom Murders*.

**December 2:** At 6.15pm, Niki Savva will be in conversation on her new book *Earthquake: Signposts to the election that shook Australia* with Kerry-Anne Walsh. Vote of thanks by Virginia Haussegger.

## 2026

**February 26:** Andrew Leigh will be in conversation on his new book *The Shortest History of Innovation*.

**March 16:** Peter Hartcher will be in conversation on his new book *The Age of Carnivores*.

**April 21:** Susan Lever will be in conversation on her new biography of A. D. Hope.

## Obituaries

**Rikki Kersten**

## **August 8, 1960- December 21, 2023.**

Professor Rikki Kersten, a distinguished scholar of modern Japanese history and politics, passed away in Canberra after a courageous battle with cancer.

A trailblazer in Japanese studies, her intellectual achievements reshaped understandings of Japan's post-war democracy, war responsibility, and security policy. Her contributions to public debate enriched discussions on Japan-Australia relations and global historical consciousness.

As an Honorary Fellow at the Australian National University's Australia-Japan Research Centre, former Dean at ANU and Murdoch University, and Professor at Leiden University, Rikki's legacy spans continents, disciplines, and generations.

Born in 1960 to Dutch immigrant parents in Wollongong, Australia, Rikki grew up in Adelaide, where her early fascination with Japan was sparked by a year-long scholarship to a high school in Gifu prefecture. This formative experience ignited a lifelong passion for Japanese language, culture, and intellectual history.

She pursued a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) at the University of Adelaide, writing an honours dissertation on Japanese intellectual thought.

She proceeded on a Shell Scholarship to Oxford University, where she earned a DPhil under Professor Arthur Stockwin, focusing on the political thinker Maruyama Masao. Her doctoral research, involving interviews with Maruyama and archival work as a visiting fellow at the University of Tokyo, culminated in her landmark book, *Democracy in Post-War Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy* (Routledge, 1996). This work remains a cornerstone in English-language scholarship on Japanese political thought, exploring how Maruyama's ideas shaped Japan's democratic identity amid the shadow of its imperial past.

Rikki's intellectual achievements were defined by her rigorous interrogation of Japan's historical and political consciousness. Her research delved into democracy, fascism, historical revisionism, and Japan's debates over wartime apologies, offering nuanced insights into how nations grapple with their past. Her focus on Maruyama Masao illuminated the tensions between individual autonomy and collective responsibility in post-war Japan, challenging simplistic narratives of democratisation.

Her secondary specialisation in Japanese security policy, including Australia-Japan security relations and the U.S.-Japan alliance, positioned her as a leading voice in international relations discourse on East Asia. Her publications, including articles in *Pacific Affairs* and *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, blended historical depth with contemporary relevance, making her work accessible to both scholars and policymakers.

As Professor of Modern Japanese Studies and Head of Japanese Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands, she co-founded the Modern East Asia Research Centre (now Leiden Asia Centre) with Professor Axel Schneider in 2005,

securing a Vici research grant from the Dutch government to explore “Historical Consciousness and the Future in China and Japan.”

This project exemplified her commitment to comparative, interdisciplinary research, examining how historical narratives shape modern identities in East Asia. As editor of the Routledge/Leiden Series in Modern East Asian Politics and History, she fostered scholarship that bridged Western and Asian perspectives, amplifying underrepresented voices in global academia.

Rikki’s contributions to public debate were equally important. A frequent commentator in Australian and international media, she provided authoritative insights on Japanese politics, security, and foreign policy. Her ability to distil complex historical and political issues into

accessible commentary made her a trusted voice during pivotal moments, such as Japan’s response to Emperor Hirohito’s death in 1989, about which she reported as a diplomat in the Australian embassy in Tokyo.

Her diplomatic work, including facilitating a new flight path between Australia and Fukuoka, strengthened bilateral ties, reflecting her practical commitment to fostering cross-cultural understanding.

Later, as a public intellectual, she engaged audiences on issues including Japan’s war responsibility and the evolving Australia-Japan relationship, advocating for truth-telling as a foundation for national maturity.

Rikki made major contributions in the field of academic leadership. At the University of Sydney, she directed the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, shaping regional studies.

At ANU, she served as Dean of the Faculty of Asian Studies, fostering interdisciplinary research and mentoring emerging scholars. Her seven-year tenure at Murdoch University as Dean of Arts and Director of the Asia Research Centre further solidified her reputation as a visionary leader.

Even after retiring to Canberra in 2020, she remained active, planning a major project on Japan-Australia relations funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Her establishment of the Australia-Netherlands Research Collaboration in 2006, promoting Southeast Asian studies, underscored her global outlook and dedication to academic networks.

Rikki’s intellectual generosity was legendary. Colleagues and students remember her as an inspiring mentor who nurtured careers with warmth and rigor. In the Australian Institute of International Affairs, she encouraged young scholars to engage in public discourse. Her ability to connect personal experiences - her parents’ wartime stories, her own cross-cultural journey - with broader historical questions enriched her scholarship and teaching.

Grounded in meticulous research, Rikki’s also challenged Japan’s historical revisionism and advocating for accountability in national narratives. Her scholarship avoided dogmatic stances, instead fostering dialogue that encouraged

critical reflection on how history informs the present. Her passing leaves a void in Japanese studies, but her ideas continue to inspire scholars, policymakers, and the public to engage with history as a tool for understanding and reconciliation.

Rikki is survived by her brother, Tim Kersten, and a global community of friends, colleagues, and students.

**Robert Cribb**

**Anthony Reid**

**June 19, 1939 -June 8, 2025**

Anthony Reid FAHA was one of the foremost historians of Southeast Asia of his time. Born in New Zealand in 1939, and always proud of his Kiwi heritage, Tony studied history at the Victoria University of Wellington before obtaining a scholarship to complete his PhD at Cambridge on the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century diplomatic and military struggle over northern Sumatra involving Britain, the Netherlands and the local sultanate of Aceh.

While in Cambridge, he married a fellow New Zealander, Helen, who was a tower of support to him throughout his career.

Tony's first academic appointment, in 1965, was at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, where he began teaching Southeast Asian history at a time when much of the region was in political turmoil.

In this environment, if not earlier, he became critically aware of both the importance of history for understanding the region's unfolding developments and of the power of historical understandings to shape what Southeast Asians believed might be possible and impossible for their countries' futures.

He first addressed these issues in studies of Indonesia's revolution against the Dutch (1945-1949). In two books, *The Indonesian National Revolution* (1974) and *The Blood of the People: Revolution and the End of Traditional Rule in Northern Sumatra* (1979), he presented a sensitive analysis of the tension between the noble aspirations that underpinned the Indonesian national project and the reality of sometimes intense violence.

Increasingly sensing that a view of Southeast Asian history that put colonialism and its antagonists at the centre set destructive national agendas, Tony turned his attention to the period immediately preceding the imposition of colonialism. In an early address at Flinders University, he posed the question of how Southeast Asians themselves had understood the causes of the sudden transformation of their social and political order brought about by colonialism. In *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450-1680* (two volumes, 1988, 1993), he answered this question by bringing to life an era when Southeast Asia had been vibrant, diverse, powerful and cosmopolitan.

The book was not just an analysis of the pre-colonial political order, but also a Braudelian exploration of the region's varied material cultures. His vision, delivered through close and source-critical reading of an enormous range of Southeast Asian and outsider texts from the period, was to demonstrate to Southeast Asians that their region had produced great things in the past and to imply that they could do it again. The great things he emphasised were not the powerful rulers who sometime inspired modern-day authoritarians but instead the middle and ordinary people of the region. The arguments and evidence presented in *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce* were bolstered by a remarkable number of journal articles and books chapters focusing on specific issues, such as the deliberate choice between Islam and Christianity made by rulers in southern Sulawesi on the cusp of the colonial era.

A prolific organiser – and, with institutional support, a funder – of small, focused conferences and workshops, Tony had a knack for identifying imaginative and important topics that could only be investigated by groups of scholars. His edited books arising from these conferences covered topics ranging from Southeast Asian perceptions of the past, the last stand of autonomous states in Southeast Asia before colonialism, the similarities and differences between Jews in Europe and Chinese in Southeast Asia, slavery, freedom and surnames.

In 1979, he edited (with his colleague David Marr) *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, a ground-breaking collection examining the ways in which Southeast Asians had engaged with historical consciousness. *Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia* (1983, edited with Jennifer Brewster) explored the complex forms of bonded labour in Southeast Asia that confounded what was then the conventional distinction between slavery and free labour.

In 2002, he edited (with Henri Chambert-Loir) *The Potent Dead: Ancestors, Saints and Heroes in Contemporary Indonesia*, a powerful exploration of how memory of figures in the past shaped Indonesian consciousness of the present.

Later in his career, Tony returned his focus to violence-wracked northern Sumatra, writing *Verandah of Violence: the Background to the Aceh Problem* (2006). The title was an allusion to the common Indonesian description of the strongly Muslim region as the “verandah of Mecca”.

In addition, he entered the crowded field of synthesising analyses of Southeast Asian history with three major works, *Imperial Alchemy: Nationalism and Political Identity in Southeast Asia* (2010), *To Nation by Revolution: Indonesia in the 20th century* (2011), and *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (2015).

Tony's career was also marked by his deep commitment and contribution to the community of scholars working on Southeast Asian history. He believed in scholarly debate, and he sought to include in that scholarly debate not just the big names – and not even just those with the potential to be big – but also all those smaller voices that had something to say, whether it was a novel insight, an unexpected rebuttal of current wisdom, or even a curmudgeonly obsession.

He was especially committed to promoting the voices of scholars from Southeast Asia itself. He was firmly convinced that the domination of Southeast Asian history by Western scholars was, and should be, a temporary phenomenon, a means to help Southeast Asia out of the intellectual depression of the colonial era, not a means of preserving outside influence.

Tony occupied academic positions that were, by today's standards, immensely privileged. He held a position in the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, followed by the post of founding director of the Southeast Asia Center and program at the University of California, Los Angeles and was the founding director of the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore.

In all these positions, he reached out to offer to more junior scholars opportunities that others in comparable positions sometimes kept to their own small circles.

His role as an editor of scholarly collections was especially important in bringing emerging scholars together under the discipline of an imaginative theme and giving them academic profile. He was a generous supervisor of PhD students and he offered intellectual and career advice to a much wider range of younger scholars. He was a stalwart of the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA).

Recognising the importance of public recognition for the scholarly careers of coming generations, he endowed the biennial Reid Prize, administered by the ASAA for the most significant book contributing to the understanding of Asia.

In 2002, he was awarded the Fukuoka Prize, an academic recognition awarded each year to a scholar who has made an outstanding contribution to Asian Studies. Previous recipients had been Joseph Needham, Clifford Geertz, and Tony's close friend and colleague Wang Gungwu.

The Prize citation commended him for creating "a landmark in Southeast Asian historical research and [opening] a new field in this area by studying the everyday existence of the people from many different perspectives, based on their daily lives filled with energy and vitality".

Tony Reid's final innovation – inspired by the catastrophic 2004 tsunami in Aceh – was to use the historical record to begin exploring the history of earthquakes and tsunamis in Indonesia and its consequences for Indonesian society.

His identification of a massive earthquake which devastated the Dutch East India Company capital, Batavia (today's Jakarta), in 1699 – and the consequent conclusion that Indonesia's capital may be vulnerable to a repeat event – appears to have contributed to the decision by Indonesia's past president Joko Widodo to move the country's capital to a new site, called Nusantara, in geologically stable Kalimantan.

The move has been attended by corruption and uncertainty, but Tony himself would have been the first to concede that not all those who draw lessons from history do so effectively.

### **Robert Cribb**

An earlier, shorter version of this obituary appeared in the June 2025 issue of the Australian Academy of the Humanities Newsletter.

## **Items of interest**

### **A cornucopia of tiny, bizarre whales used to live in Australian waters – here's one of them**

**By: Erich Fitzgerald, Senior Curator, Vertebrate Palaeontology, Museums Victoria Research Institute; and Ruairidh Duncan, PhD Candidate, Palaeontology, Monash University.**

Australia is home to a unique bunch of native land mammals, such as koalas, wombats and wallabies. These furballs evolved in isolation on this island continent and have become Australian symbols.

But between 27 and 23 million years ago, the coastal seas of Australia were also home to sea mammals found almost nowhere else: whales.

But not just any old whales. These creatures were among the strangest of all whales, called mammalodontids. If alive today, mammalodontids would be as iconically Australian as kangaroos.

Recent fossil discoveries from coastal Victoria reveal that not just one or two species, but a cornucopia of these wonderfully weird whales once called Australia home.

Read more at [theconversation.edu.au](https://theconversation.edu.au).

### **56 million years ago, Earth underwent rapid global warming. Here's what it did to pollinators**

**By: Vera Korasidis, Lecturer in Environmental Geoscience, The University of Melbourne; and Scott L. Wing, Curator of Fossil Plants, Department of Paleobiology, Smithsonian Institution.**

Pollinators play a vital role in fertilising flowers, which grow into seeds and fruits and underpin our agriculture. But climate change can cause a mismatch between plants and their pollinators, affecting where they live and what time of year they're active. This has happened before.

When Earth went through rapid global warming 56 million years ago, plants from dry tropical areas expanded to new areas – and so did their animal pollinators. Our new study shows this major change happened in a remarkably short timespan of just thousands of years.

Can we turn to the past to learn more about how interactions between plants and pollinators changed during climate change?

Read more at [theconversation.edu.au](http://theconversation.edu.au).

## Bookshelf

ANU Press books are available to download free at [press.anu.edu.au/publications/books](http://press.anu.edu.au/publications/books).

***Ink and Land: Documenting Factionalism around a Prospective Mine in Papua New Guinea.***

**By: Willem Church.**

**Series: Asia-Pacific Environment Monographs. Print \$59.95, download free.**

This is an ethnographic account of political and legal struggles over land ownership in Papua New Guinea, in which competing factions seek recognition as customary landowners of Wafi-Golpu, a major prospective copper-gold mine.

Drawing on extensive archival research, oral histories, court documents and 15 months of fieldwork, the book examines how different groups attempt to harness resource extraction for their benefit and how, in doing so, they reshape their social worlds through the medium of affidavits, court declarations and incorporation certificates.

To analyse this process, the book advances the concept of antagonistic documentality—a form of conflict in which parties engage in conflicting world-building projects through and about documents and, in doing so, create an order of paper that outlasts the disputes themselves.

Through this detailed case study, *Ink and Land* reveals how legal and bureaucratic battles over resource extraction in Papua New Guinea formalise factionalism, consolidate elite control over new sources of wealth, and redefine the nature of groups and landownership.

By focusing on conflict over documents as a process of social transformation, the book offers fresh insights into the politics of land, law and resource extraction in the contemporary Pacific.

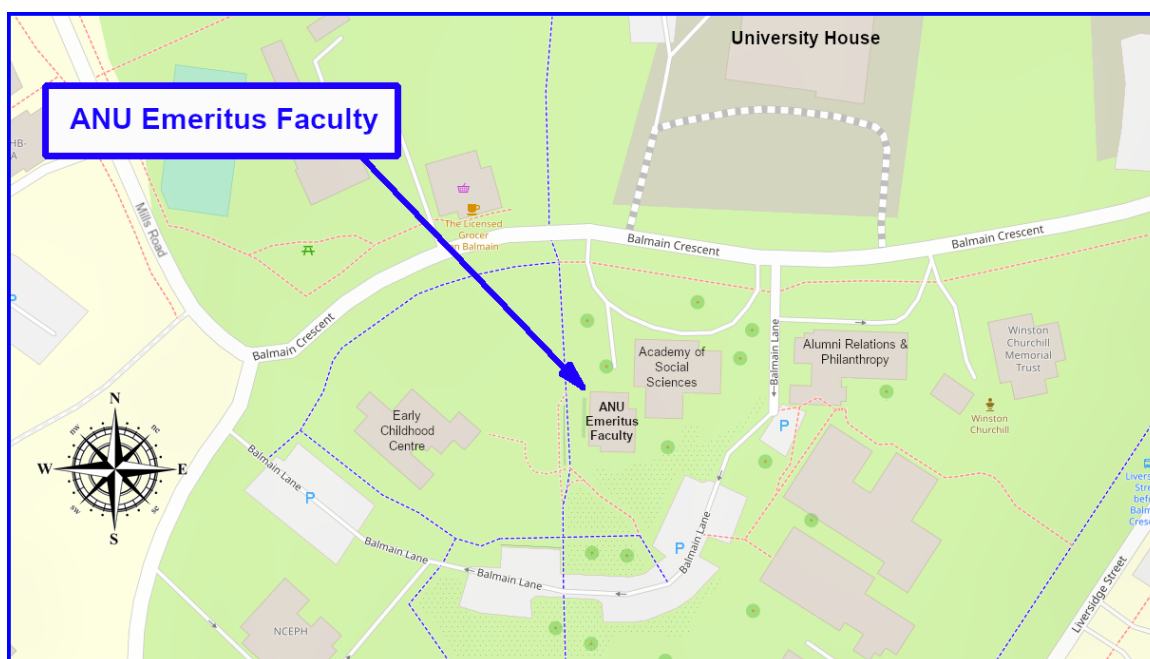
# Administration

## 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 [jantancress@gmail.com](mailto:jantancress@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>



## Editorial

**Editor:** Ron Cerabona

**Mobile:** 0418527239

**Email:** [ronaldcerabona39@gmail.com](mailto:ronaldcerabona39@gmail.com)

**Assistant Editor:** Kevin Windle

**Email:** [Kevin.Windle@anu.edu.au](mailto:Kevin.Windle@anu.edu.au)

**Postal Address:**

ANU Emeritus Faculty, PO Box 6050,

O'Connor ACT 2602

**Web:** [emeritus.anu.edu.au](http://emeritus.anu.edu.au)

**Meetings venue:** ANUEF Office,  
Molony Room, ANU,  
24 Balmain Crescent,  
Acton, ACT 2600

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*The next issue of the Emeritus Faculty newsletter will be published in September.*