

**THE ANU EMERITUS FACULTY  
CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE 2023 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

In 2023, we enjoyed a year full of activities. For most of the year, we held our collegiate lunchtime lectures each month and, in some months, managed two such lectures; we also had our Projects Symposium, our Annual Dinner and our Annual Emeritus Faculty Lecture and published eleven issues of *Emeritus*.

Unfortunately, however, the Emeritus Faculty suffered a serious 'beheading'. On or about the 30<sup>th</sup> of November, the bronze head of our founder, John Molony – a bust created by the sculptor, Ante Dabro, and donated to the Emeritus Faculty – was removed from its plinth outside the Emeritus Faculty Building.

ANU Security referred the matter to ACT Policing, which has been given a full description of the artwork, photographs, its history and estimated value, and a timeline covering the period when this theft may have occurred.

Ante Dabro is an internationally recognized sculptor and has recently returned from Europe where his work is highly valued. John was present at the installation of the bust and his photograph is featured on our website.

At this stage, there is little more to report other than what has already appeared in the November issue of *Emeritus*.

### **Collegiate Lunchtime Lectures**

Ian Keen was responsible for organizing a wide-ranging series of lunchtime lectures. This year for the first time since Covid, we were able to hold a full program of lectures for most of the year.

These lunchtime lectures were the following:

1 March

Dr. Jill Waterhouse

"The Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of the Australian National University."

15 March

Patrick De Deckker

"Voyage of extraordinary discoveries: the Baudin expedition (1800-1804)."

5 April

Amin Saikal

"Stability and threat in the Middle East."

19 April

Adrian Gibbs

"How did SARS-Cov-2 get from bats to humans?"

3 May  
Ian Chubb  
“Clinical trials: good for patients, too.”

7 June  
Aedeen Cremin  
“What’s happening with archaeology at Angkor?”

5 July  
Gerlese Åkerlind  
“A comparison of ANU academics’ experiences of research in the 1990s vs the 2010s.”

2 August  
Dorothy Horsfield  
“Hybrid Warfare, Private Armies and the Outsourcing of the Russia-Ukraine Conflict.”

9 August  
John Blaxland  
“Revealing Secrets, AUKUS, and the future of US-Australia research collaboration.”

6 September  
James Blackwell and Kim Rubenstein  
“The referendum on the proposed Indigenous Voice to Parliament.”

4 October  
Ian McAlister  
“Party explanations for the 2022 election result.”

1 November  
Julie Hotchin  
“Black Mountain: An Oral History.”

15 November  
Fyfe Bygrave  
“A Review of 2023 Nobel Prizes.”

6 December  
Peter Bellwood  
“What do we think we know about the deeper layers of the human past, and how do we know it?”

Seen together, this year’s lectures were diverse and engaging. They represent the breadth of interests among our members. They were generally well attended, with an average of about twenty attendees. Attendance was helped by the availability of temporary parking at the Vice Chancellor’s official residence when the lectures were held.

### **Projects Symposium**

The Emeritus Faculty Projects Symposium is a day-long event in which members present accounts of recent research and other activities. Again, Ian Keen was responsible for organizing

this year's Symposium, which took place in the Molony Room from 9:30am to 4:30pm on Wednesday, 12 July 2023. As in the past, the Symposium offered a varied and interesting program with lively discussion.

The program was as follows:

Adrian Gibbs, Mark Gibbs and Mohammad Hajizadeh:  
*From where did the 'swine flu' pandemic emerge in 2009?*

Kevin Windle and Elena Govor:  
*Voices in the Wilderness: A Digest of the Russian-Language Press in Australia 1912-1919.*

Craig Reynolds:  
*A Thai Buddha Image in the Cold War.*

Daniel Martín:  
*Using equations as literary devices in 'Iridio Ennui vs the Boltzmann Brains'.*

James J. Fox:  
*A tale retold for one thousand two hundred years.*

Michael Walsh and Kathryn Wells:  
*Transferring Indigenous history and culture from garages to public archives for land claim claimants.*

Aedeen Cremin:  
*Mannar and Mantai.*

Coyote Catering provided excellent cut-lunches and desserts.

### **East Coast Project**

Monthly meetings were held throughout the year, chaired by Brad Pillans. Project members include Brian Lees, Verna Rosling, Nikolaus Fominas, Andrew Eliason, Marjorie Sullivan and Philip Hughes. The focus was K'gari (formerly known as Fraser Island), where a lead fishing sinker of possible Portuguese origin was discovered in 1976. In August 2023, Brad Pillans visited the Anthropology Museum at the University of Queensland to view the sinker, which is curated there. He also visited the find site on K'gari to assess the logistics of undertaking fieldwork to recover sediment cores for characterisation and dating of the find site. A permit to undertake the necessary fieldwork is being prepared and will require approval by the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation representing the Traditional Owners of K'gari.

## **Annual Emeritus Dinner**

Since University House, our usual venue, has remained closed, we again held our Annual Emeritus Dinner in a private dining room at the Commonwealth Club. Our dinner was on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September this year. Our guest speaker was Peter Kanowski, Master of University House who gave an engaging after-dinner talk on the trials and tribulations encountered in the restoration of University House. Peter presented a week of events that he had to deal with just prior to our dinner.

## **Continuing Efforts to Document ANU's History**

We have continued to advance our documentation of ANU's history from a personal perspective. The Executive Committee has provided a subvention to support Jill Waterhouse's research for her book on *The Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of the Australian National University*. This will be a major volume covering all of the ANU's Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors, which the Emeritus Faculty is hoping to publish.

## **Other Emeritus Faculty Support and Subventions**

The Emeritus Faculty provided a small subvention to ABC Reporter, Craig Allen, toward the cost of digitising film footage taken by Stephen and Helen Wurm and held in the University Archives. With this material, Craig Allen produced an article and a short ABC documentary on the early historical research of Stephen and Helen Wurm featuring the footage taken among the Lardil populations on Mornington Island.

The Emeritus Faculty also provided a subvention to Kevin Windle toward the cost of publishing *Voices in the Wilderness: A Digest of the Russian Language Press in Australia, 1912-1919*.

The Emeritus Faculty also offered a token subvention to Amin Saikal to sponsor the 2023 Annual Conference of the Australian Association of Islamic and Muslim Studies.

## **Annual Emeritus Lecture**

Professor Andrew Podger AO delivered this year's Annual Emeritus lecture on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November at 5:30pm in the China in the World Lecture Hall. His lecture was entitled:

‘A Post-Neoliberal Public Sector’

Andrew Podger AO has been with the ANU now for 18 years. He is Honorary Professor of Public Policy in the RSSH. His background is in the Australian Public Service where he worked in many agencies, starting in the Australian Bureau of Statistics and ending as Public Service Commissioner after being the Secretary of the Department of Health and Aged Care amongst other senior appointments. He has published extensively on public service matters as well as on social policies. Earlier this year he provided a report to the Royal Commission on Robodebt

to which the Commissioner refers extensively in her report. Two books he co-edited have been published by ANU Press this year, one on the Intergenerational Report (More than Fiscal) and one on public administration in China and Australia (Dilemmas in Public Management in Greater China and Australia). He is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and a Fellow of the (US) National Academy on Public Administration.

Professor Podger was able to draw from his considerable past experience as well as from the present to offer a possible vision for the future. The lecture was videoed and a link to the lecture is available on the ANU Emeritus Faculty website under 'Events'.

The abstract of the lecture is as follows:

#### Abstract

The term, 'neoliberal' has too often been used as a pejorative label without definition. Moreover, many measures that might justifiably be described as neoliberal have served Australia well. But there is increasing evidence both in Australia and overseas of overreach, expecting too much of markets, expecting too much of public servants in drawing on markets to deliver public services, applying private business practices to public sector organisations, and undervaluing the public interest motivations driving many who work in the public sector.

This lecture will explore the term, neoliberal, and its antecedents of nineteenth century liberalism. It will review the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s that might warrant being described as neoliberal including both the benefits achieved as well as the failures to deliver what was intended. It will also discuss more recent developments highlighting the real dangers of overreach and the need for more fundamental reappraisal.

A more fundamental reappraisal should not involve throwing the baby out with the bathwater, but lead to a rebalancing, recognising the importance of the role of government in a thriving liberal democracy, the unique attributes involved in its management, the case for reinvestment in its capability and the importance of checks and balances including the need for a degree of professional independence in public sector organisations to promote both good performance in service delivery and proper accountability.

#### **The John Molony History Prize**

The John Molony History Prize was established in perpetuity through a donation to the ANU by the Emeritus Faculty. The prize is awarded annually to a student enrolled in the postdoctoral degree program who, in the previous year, has submitted the best thesis in history.

During the Covid period, the award of the Molony Prize was delayed. This year two prizes have been awarded to bring the award up to date. The first of these was given to Daniel May for his thesis entitled:

‘Taking Fire: The Historical and Contemporary Politics of Indigenous Burning in Australia and the Western United States’.

#### Abstract

Large bushfires in recent years around the world have sparked debate and interest in fire management; a world warming through industrial combustion is a world turning to Indigenous fire practices for solutions. Yet even as Indigenous Australians increasingly assert pyro-identities, non-Indigenous Australians have struggled to understand Indigenous burning practices and the nature of antipodean fire. This thesis examines the historical and contemporary politics of fire and how they relate to changing understandings of Indigenous burning in Australia and the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries. It examines public and institutional debates after large bushfires, discussions about management of public lands and shifting representations of Indigenous burning through analysis of royal commission transcripts, newspaper articles and other public discourse, policy submissions, institutional archives and academic published material. The thesis explores the relationship of environmentalism to fire and Indigenous burning, the contradictions of 'wilderness' and the politics of race and identity. It charts the development of competing understandings of fire and Indigenous burning in academic disciplines as well as the entanglement of Indigenous burning with the politics of land management and institutional rivalries. Through a comparison of the mutual entanglements and divergences of Australian and American fire management and conceptualisations of Indigenous burning, the thesis demonstrates the historical and transnational context of Australian fire. It argues for localised understandings of fire and fire management, perspectives that are attentive to cultural and ecological specificities. Perceptions of Indigenous burning have inspired policy-making and they have also been appropriated for legitimisation, with profound consequences for cultural politics and ecological communities. Finally, the thesis charts how Indigenous burning has been transformed in the imagination and discourses of non-Indigenous Australia: from academic curiosity to political incendiary - and, increasingly, to a lived reality.

The second award was made to Thomas Joseph Lalevé for his PhD thesis entitled:

‘From Perfectibility to Progress: The Search for a Science of Society in France, 1750-1850’

#### Abstract

The early nineteenth century was a defining moment in the emergence of new, future-oriented visions of human progress. This thesis analyses this development of modern thought through a particular case study: the search for a science of society in France in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Through a contextual study of ideas and knowledge production, the chapters examine the successive models of reform and regeneration that defined this search, tracking a shift in the way these models were conceptualised. This shift involved a transition from individual to collective models of improvement, or, more discursively, from perfectibility to progress. This thesis documents this shift by tracing the origins and development of early French social science in the works of Sieyès, Condorcet and the Idéologues, before turning to the reconfiguration of this science effected by Saint-Simon and his followers in the nineteenth

century. In doing so, this study provides new insights into the search for a science of society during and after the French Revolution, a revised interpretation of the history of the concept of perfectibility and a fresh perspective on the ongoing contest between science, religion and politics in this period of intense upheaval. It also advances scholarly understanding of the range of moral, philosophical and natural scientific ideas behind early French positivism and socialism. The nineteenth-century fascination, if not obsession, with progress is shown, in this thesis, to have been shaped by the works of theorists with visionary and idiosyncratic imaginations.

### ***Emeritus***

This year Peter Fuller has taken over the position of editor of *Emeritus* and has done a stunning job in producing an attractive and informative monthly newsletter. Assisted by Kevin Windle, Peter has kept us all informed of matters relevant to the Emeritus Faculty in a timely fashion. All of the ANU obituaries prepared by the Emeritus Faculty are published, as a formal record, in *Emeritus*.

Dorothy Horsfield has agreed to become the new editor of *Emeritus*. Dorothy is someone with considerable editorial experience and with an excellent knowledge of the Emeritus Faculty.

### **Obituaries**

The following seventeen obituaries of ANU members were published by *Emeritus* during the year:

Colin Barlow  
Tom Dutton  
R. Gerald Ward  
Steward Turner  
Will Steffen  
Gavin Jones  
Hans Kuhn  
Andrew Papworth  
Bob Miller  
Gordon Briscoe  
Adam Kendon  
Robert O'Neil  
Peter McCawley  
Harold Crouch  
Max Corden  
Vic Elliott  
Raghav Jha

Sadly, more than a dozen obituaries are currently in preparation.

All of these obituaries have been added to an archive. We expect to publish a follow-up to our previous *Life-Celebrations* in the course of the ANU's 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

## **New Members for 2023**

Our membership for 2023 was 267. Our new members are:

Douglas Craig  
Paul Dibb  
Andrew Eliason  
Terence Maloon  
Daniel Martin  
David Nash  
Jane Simpson

## **Special Thanks**

As Chair of the Emeritus Faculty, I want to extend special thanks to Professor Sally Wheeler who took on the position of Mentor to the Emeritus Faculty. She managed to solve some of the lingering problems we have faced, providing a solution to our parking problems on the Wednesdays when we hold our lunchtime lectures. She also dealt with several of our problems relating to computing and finance.

I also want to thank all the members of our Executive Committee who have worked diligently through this year with me. My thanks go to: Brad Pillans, Robert Burne, Prame Chopra, Patrick De Deckker, Ian Keen, Brian Lees, Jan O'Connor, Kathryn Robinson, Larry Saha, Peter Scardoni, Ailsa Solley and David Williams and to Verna Rosling whom we co-opted to join us on the Executive Committee. Particular thanks to Ian Keen for his excellent organization of our lunchtime lectures and our Projects Symposium. Special thanks, also, to Patrick De Dekker who will be leaving the Committee at the end of this year.

I also want to extend a special thanks to Nikolaus Fominas for his invaluable assistance with our computer systems, website maintenance and other internet activities without which it would be impossible to reach our membership. We all acknowledge our debt to Peter Fuller for his efforts in putting together our monthly *Emeritus* and to Kevin Windle for his assistance in this important undertaking. Peter has done an exceptional job over the past two years and since he is now leaving this position, we wish him well in his future endeavours. I extend my thanks to all of our members with best wishes for the coming year.

James J. Fox  
Chair, ANU Emeritus Faculty  
6 December 2023  
Updated: 15 January 2024