

Early Days of the Australian National University. The Easter Conference, 1948: background, participants, discussions, and significance

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Synopsis

The Easter Conference of 1948 has been described as one that determined the policy and shape of the new Australian National University (ANU) created two years earlier by a federal Act of Parliament. This description is too generous because, after years of intense discussion, both the overall policy and general shape had already been decided in order for the Act to be passed: the ANU was to be a research-only university, markedly different from the concentration on undergraduate teaching that characterised other Australian universities.

The Conference was an exercise in confirmation, rather than one of initiation. Even so, it was an important milestone in the development of the ANU, hastening the appointment of the first Vice-Chancellor Professor Douglas Copland, and improving Canberra's status as the national capital at a time when Australia was emerging from the rigours of World War II.

The presence of four outstanding academics in Canberra, scientist Sir Howard Florey, physicist Professor Mark Oliphant, historian Professor Keith Hancock, and anthropologist Professor Raymond Firth, give the Easter Conference a memorable place in the history of the ANU.

To have attracted the interest of all four was a coup. They were doubly qualified. Not only were they at the top of their fields in prestigious English institutions, but they were also expatriates with demonstrable interests in developments in the southern hemisphere, Florey, Oliphant and Hancock having been born in Australia and Firth in New Zealand.

In August 1947, following earlier discussions, the Interim Council of the ANU invited them to form the Academic Advisory Committee. In the same year, they submitted detailed proposals on the four Research Schools of Medicine, Physics, Social Sciences and Pacific Studies. While they offered helpful advice through meetings, correspondence and visits, it was clear that by 1948, to better inform themselves, they needed to spend time in Canberra, conferring with colleagues on the spot.

Prominent academics and researchers were invited to submit papers in advance of the Conference but all attendees and participants (as they were called, rather than delegates) had an opportunity to comment on areas their areas of interest. Differences of opinion arose on the relative merits of teaching and 'vocational education' versus research, Sir Frederic Eggleston voicing especially strident views on Pacific Studies and Social Sciences. Florey, Hancock, and Firth chaired the Easter Conference sessions, while Oliphant focused on the funding of Physics.

The Easter Conference was an important exercise in public relations, aimed at reassuring State universities and other research bodies that the national university would not rob them of staff or money, but instead would elevate them by providing opportunities for staff exchanges and co-operative ventures. It also gave the Interim Council the necessary go-ahead to embark on the building program and to appoint staff.

By bringing together representatives from all over Australia in the aftermath of World War II, the Easter Conference was cog in the wheel of what H.C. Coombs described as 'this great new university ... the powerhouse of ... social reconstruction'.

Supplementing the on-line 'Easter Conference' exhibition, this essay is intended primarily as a quarry of information and references, especially for those who are interested in exploring the resources of the ANU Archives, not only for the history of the ANU but also for the histories of other universities, institutions, staff and students. What follows is no more than an indication of the pathways that might be taken.

Envisaging a new Australian research university of exceptional interest

A unique Australian institution

During the Easter break of 1948, four notable academics from England arrived in the national capital Canberra to meet with academics, researchers, and bureaucrats from all over Australia. Their brief was to discuss plans for the emerging Australian National University (ANU). As the site was still to be developed, they gathered in a nearby building, the imposing Australian Institute of Anatomy. There in the foyer they lingered under a decorative skylight depicting a platypus, a serendipitously appropriate symbol.

Both the platypus and the ANU were rare beings. Like the egg-laying, duck-billed mammalian platypus, the new university was an unusual creature of exceptional interest. Four different Schools of Advanced Research led by distinguished academics, together with carefully selected postgraduate students, were to make up a distinctive institution.

Photographs of influential participants

The on-line Easter Conference Exhibition is based on photographs from the ANU Archives, the spotlight falling on four notable academics who were especially active in the foundation of the university: Nobel prize-winner and medical scientist Sir Howard Florey, physicist Professor Marcus 'Mark' Oliphant, historian Professor Keith Hancock (all of whom were born in Australia) and New Zealand-born anthropologist Professor Raymond Firth. While holding prestigious posts in England, they maintained their interest in developments in the southern hemisphere.

Each carried with him the experience of some 50 years: Hancock and Florey were born in 1898 when Australia was still made up of six colonies, and Oliphant and Firth were born in 1901, the year of Federation. Photographs show them to be a distinctive-looking group: solidly-built Oliphant, at 46 the youngest of the four but already having a shock of white hair; Florey, 49, tall, square of face, rarely smiling; Hancock, the shortest and at nearly 50 the oldest, with a sweep of fair but greying hair; and Firth, 47, with a moustache, his dark hair neatly brushed back. They were all smokers, rarely without a pipe or cigarette in their mouth or hands, an aid, so it was thought in those days, to concentration and reflection.

The first Registrar, bespectacled Roy Osborne, and the first Vice-Chancellor, Professor Douglas Copland, were dressed, as were the others, in double-breasted suits, the fashion of the day. The University's consulting architect, Brian Lewis, appeared with rolls of maps and plans under his arm. During breaks, they gathered for limited refreshment of tea and biscuits (rationing was still a feature of post-World War II life) in the courtyard of the Institute of Anatomy where from the colonnades carved heads of wombats looked down on the assembled company. These photographs ensured that the Easter Conference would live long in the memory of the ANU, and, it is hoped, in the memory of other institutions, too.

While the individuals highlighted in the Archives exhibition were especially influential, a host of others contributed to the university's foundation, as is evident from the following pages. It should be noted, though, that in one important respect the archival documentary evidence falls short. In 1948 only summaries of the Easter Conference were kept for the future ANU Archives. Nevertheless, even the lists of names (lists that have been expanded with brief comments in this essay) are worth repeating because they provide an excellent overview of researchers and administrators working in Australian universities, institutes, and government departments in the late 1940s.¹

Background to the Easter Conference: exhaustive consultation, a distinctive feature of the creation of the Australian National University

Gathering pace from the 1920s, proposals to form a national university generated an impressive number of committee meetings, fact-finding missions, and personal representations in both Australia and overseas. Thousands of academics, bureaucrats and others were asked for their views, especially in Commonwealth countries and in the United States of America. This vast formal and informal consultative process was rarely (perhaps never?) matched by any other single institution in Australia in this period.²

The long gestation of the Australian National University lies outside the Easter Conference but it can be investigated by following two main trails: local community pressure, illustrated by the Canberra University Association formed in 1929³, and the groups and individuals connected with established universities, institutions, and government departments, only relatively few of whom attended the Conference. Years of complex interaction among the people mentioned here and their

¹ As an example of records relevant to the history of other universities and institutions, see 'Information Relating to Australian Post-Graduate Courses', Australian National University Archives ANUA 18-104/1/14. This file contains details of funded research in Australia in the 1940s.

² As one among many countless examples see R.D. Wright, Report on American Visit', 8 April 1947, in Academic Advisory Committee, Professor W.K. Hancock, Part 1, ANUA 18-104/1/18.

³ *Canberra Times*, 'Canberra University association', a survey article, 12 March 1938, p.10.

membership of a multitude of committees has been described elsewhere.⁴ Even so, the curious may want to know why, for example, such a strong advocate for the university as Alfred Austin 'Alf' Conlon, was not invited to attend the Conference and barely rates a mention in this account. Suffice it to say that by 1948, the reliability of Conlon's judgment was increasingly questioned. It is, though difficult to leave the days before the Easter Conference without quoting a conversation between Alf Conlon and Roy Wright. It illustrates the point that, formal meetings and stresses and strains aside, much of the inspiration for the ANU was accompanied by the convivial clinking of glasses: Wright remembers one drinking session in the middle of 1944 when he and Alf were speculating about what might happen after the war if the northern hemisphere was really wrecked. 'Why shouldn't Australia be ready to be the new Constantinople?' they asked themselves. Unhappy with the lack of vision in Australian universities – they'd start squabbling over sixpence instead of asking for six million – they devised a plan to 'put up a new university and put it in the front garden of the Commonwealth government and try and staff it with people of such eminence that when they asked for six million the government would have to take it seriously'. Next morning the proposal was with General Blamey who then took it to the Prime Minister John Curtin, who in turn invited Florey to visit Australia. Florey arrived in 1944, and after having publicly commented on the poor state of medical research in Australia, Curtin invited him to come up with a solution.

Spurs to action: scientific advances and World War II, 1939–1945

After many decades of discussion and a multitude of proposals, Sir Robert Garran, a long-time advocate of the importance of establishing a national university, described in simplistic but enthusiastic terms the spurs to action, both of which came in the 1940s:

'Suddenly and dramatically came the new impulse. There were two great scientific discoveries – the fission of the atom, opening up vast possibilities of new sources of energy; and the magical properties of penicillin, opening up a vast new field of medical research; and coupled with these discoveries, the names of two distinguished scientists, Professor Marcus Oliphant and Sir Howard Florey ... Promptly, it was decided that the time was now ripe.'⁵

The impact of World War II was fundamental to the decision to convert proposals into reality. The wartime experiences of Oliphant and Florey and other participants in the Easter Conference formed the backdrop to the discussions. Anyone who had been on active service; had seen the devastating effects of injuries and disease; had been involved with the development of the atomic bomb; was aware of the restlessness of former colonies and the significant changes in international relations, was bound to look to sustained research as a means of improvement. Australia's welfare and its standing in the world were largely dependent on the expansion of its investigative horizons.

Federated Australia was less than 50 years old and former colonial rivalries still rumbled. Bishop Burgmann (after whom an ANU residential College was later to be named) was among those who hoped that a new research university would help unite Australia as a nation. He argued that such a university would add significantly to embryonic Canberra's cultural life, earlier disrupted by two World Wars and the 1930s Depression. A research university located in Canberra would have the all-important effect of enhancing its status as Australia's federal capital.

The creation of a national university was not, however, a foregone conclusion. One argument in particular carried considerable weight: Australia's small population of just under 8 million in 1948 did not warrant a new university - the nation wanted better universities not more of them.

Shortcomings in the existing State universities

Australia's existing system needed urgent improvement because it lacked the facilities and funding to lead key advances in knowledge. The six State universities founded in Sydney (1850), Melbourne (1853), Adelaide (1874), Hobart (1890), Brisbane (1909), and Perth (1911) and the two Colleges, Canberra University College, an offshoot of the University of Melbourne (1929), and New England University College at Armidale, an offshoot of the University of Sydney (1938), all concentrated on undergraduate education. Their staff squeezed in research, often effectively, but almost always under the heavy pressure imposed by teaching. The exceptions were few and far between. The Physics Department of Melbourne University produced notable research and productive pockets

⁴ Stephen Foster and Margaret Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University*, ANU E Press 2009; Cassandra Prybus, *The Devil and James McAulay*, University of Queensland Press, 1999; Geoffrey Gray, Doug Monroe, Christine Winter, eds, *Scholars at War: Australasian Social Scientists, 1939-1945*, ANU, E Press, 2012.

⁵ Sir Robert Garran, Canberra University College, *Gazette*, April 1952, No.2.

existed elsewhere but, overall, opportunities in State universities for sustained advanced studies were rare.

After the end of World War II, an injection of Commonwealth money into the universities, primarily designed to assist those returning from the armed forces, increased student numbers. Yet this sudden increase became part of the problem. Suffering from added pressure, the universities remained chronically underfunded, understaffed, and unable to attract distinguished research workers from overseas.

Canberra University College (CUC), formed in December 1929, was among the institutions lacking a clear sense of direction. The CUC was intended mainly for part-time undergraduate students, in particular for public servants and those preparing for diplomatic service. Its supporters, who included Sir Robert Garran and **Professor** Douglas Copland, hoped that eventually it would grow into a national university, but as yet there was no indication as to how and when this might be achieved.⁶

Research institutions accepting postgraduate (but not undergraduate) students existed elsewhere in the world – All Souls College, Oxford, and Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, were two prominent examples – but in Australia, proposals for postgraduate education were only gradually being implemented. At the University of Melbourne, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), after having been discussed for some time, was introduced for men and women in 1946; at the University of Sydney, a PhD in Science was offered from 1947, but there was not yet one in Arts.⁷ Many scholars left Australia, taking up posts overseas, especially in the UK and the USA, never to return. The first ANU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Douglas Copland protested, 'No country can afford to export its talent in this way.'⁸

The Australian National University was to offer something very different from the usual pattern: it was to have a dual nature in the form of a research-only institution led by distinguished academics, together with a few carefully chosen, advanced students who would undertake research for postgraduate degrees.

Discussions straddle both the northern and southern hemispheres

Especially from the mid-1940s, Australian bureaucrats, academics, and politicians drew on the expertise of Florey, Oliphant, Hancock, and Firth who maintained contact with developments in the southern hemisphere: Florey, for example, spent six months in Australia in 1944 visiting all the major research centres.

They were not the only ones consulted. For more than two years before the Easter Conference, government-appointed groups conferred regularly, gathering wherever convenient: in the 1927 Parliament House; in the Attorney-General's room in West Block, Canberra; in the home of Sir George Knowles, a one-time Solicitor-General and a supporter of Canberra University College who lived in the Canberra suburb of Forrest; and in offices in Melbourne.⁹

One of the most important of these groups was the Interdepartmental Committee on Education with its four Advisory Committees (not to be confused with the Academic Advisory Committee) on Medicine, Physics, Social Sciences, and Pacific Studies. The Interdepartmental Committee met under the general chairmanship of Professor Richard Mills whose association with the ANU was to continue for many years and who illustrates the point that the Easter Conference, although important, was only one of an extensive network of meetings.

Labor Prime Minister John Curtin took an active interest in the University died just before the end of World War II. From July 1945 his successor Ben Chifley, promoted opportunities for advanced research, especially as war-time tax measures increased the source of money available to the

⁶ *Canberra Times*, 13 April 1935, p.1.

⁷ Terry Evans and Karen Tregenza, 'Some characteristics of early Australian PhD theses', www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/2004/eva04911.pdf Accessed 14 November 2014.

⁸ Sir Douglas Copland, 'University Development in Australia', Luncheon Address to the Millions Club, Sydney, 13 May 1952, in Sir Douglas Copland Papers, MSS 3800, National Library of Australia.

⁹ 'Minutes and Correspondence relating to the Interdepartmental Committee on Education and the four advisory committees, Australian National University', A1945/1316, Part 1, National Archives of Australia.

federal government.¹⁰ After the war, the further development of the existing Council for Scientific and Industrial Research and the creation of a national research university were among the government's top priorities.

As early as May 1946, newspapers informed their readers that 'The John Curtin School of Medical Research' was to be named after the former Prime Minister.¹¹ The public also understood that the government intended to have several university buildings completed by 1951. A building [later known as University House] combining a faculty club with hall of residence was central to the plan. This feature of the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge encouraged interdisciplinary discussions, and was especially important because, as one correspondent put it, the war had shown that it was vital to teach 'the art of human beings living together'.¹²

Act of Parliament 1 August 1946 sets out the name and form of The Australian National University

The ANU was the first university established by the Commonwealth parliament (also referred to as the federal parliament) as distinct from being initiated by the former colonial or the more recent State legislatures. Drafting an Act of Parliament necessitated making several firm decisions. The name of the university, having previously been referred to as the University of Canberra, was resolved as 'The Australian National University'. Advanced research was to be located in four Schools: Medical Research, Physical Sciences, Social Sciences, and Pacific Studies. It was to be a secular institution and no religious tests were to be applied.

On 1 August 1946, after much detailed and lengthy preparation, the Labor Government of Ben Chifley gained assent for 'An Act to establish and incorporate a University in the Australian Capital Territory', to be known by a shortened form as 'The Australian National University Act, 1946'. This Act was slightly amended in 1947. Responsibility for the implementation of the Act rested largely with the Interim Council who, seeking expert advice, appointed the four Academic Advisers.

Introducing talented advisers, Florey, Oliphant, Hancock and Florey and Prime Ministerial support

Members of the Interim Council of the ANU

Following the Australian National University Act, an Interim Council was inaugurated (unofficially, as it turned out) on Wednesday 7 August 1946, holding its first meeting on Saturday 14 September 1946.¹³ Meetings were generally held in the old wooden buildings of a former hospital in Acton (still standing in 2017) occupied at that time by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction, a title that stood for so many hopes and plans.¹⁴ The buildings were modest but at least they were on the site that Walter Burley Griffin, the winner of the design competition for the national capital, had earmarked for the new university.

The Interim Council was as influential a group as Australia could muster for the creation of a new university. All eleven members listed below had strong academic qualifications and had been involved in the administration of significant organisations. Of the eleven, three (Bailey; Rivett;

¹⁰ For a list of Commonwealth Government Grants in the early 1950s, see H.L. White, 'A Centre of Learning' in H.L. White, ed., *Canberra, A Nation's Capital*, Angus and Robertson, 1954, pp.84-86; *West Australian*, 2 May 1946, p.6.

¹¹ 'Reports of the Interim Council for the Period 1st August 1946 to 31 December 1949'. These annual reports are held in various files but the master set is held at ANUA 101-1 and is also available on-line, ANU, Open Research Library, <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/14439>; *West Australia* (Perth), 2 May 1946, p.6. This section of the 1948 Easter Conference was often referred to as the Conference on the John Curtin School of Medical Research.

¹² A.C. Fox, Professor of Philosophy, University of Western Australia, to J.J. Dedman, 30 July 1945, Australian National University, A1945/1316, Part 1, National Archives of Australia, digital copy, p.324.

¹³ These dates come from official documents, but the information must be double-checked as these two cases show: 'The Australian National University Act', assented to on 1 August 1946, was purported to be effective from 7 August 1946. This starting date was later deemed to be ineffective and the Act legally commenced on 7 February 1947. Through misinterpretation of the above, the Interim Council performed its functions from 7 August 1946 but was not legally established until 12 February 1947. The Interim Council then had to backtrack and confirm all the measures since 1946. Australian National University, 'Report of the Interim Council for the period August 1946 to 31 December 1949', p.1. The Australian National University Act of 1946 was amended in 1947.

¹⁴ 'Land of Opportunity: Australia's post-war reconstruction', Research Guides, National Archives of Australia.

Medley) had postgraduate degrees from the University of Oxford; three (Mills; Coombs; Ashby) had studied at the University of London; three (Wright; Eggleston; Daley) had graduated from the University of Melbourne; Garran was a graduate of the University of Sydney; and the Treasury representative, Goodes, gained his degree from the University of Western Australia. Professor R. C. Mills who chaired the Council, economist H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs, and scientist Professor R.D. Wright were among those who had already been involved in extensive discussions about the formation of university. Accepting membership of the Interim Council was a natural transition of their interests.

Members were already well known to one another with links far beyond the Interim Council. Through other committees and personal contact, they influenced proceedings even if they were unable to attend all the meetings. Nugget Coombs, at age 42 the youngest member, was away at the time of the Easter Conference, but had already played a key role in negotiations both in London and Australia. Like all the others juggling university responsibilities with other heavy commitments, he made notes on Interim Council meetings on the back of the *Hansard* reports of his Commonwealth Bank work. The two oldest members – 71 year-old Sir Frederic Eggleston and 79 year-old Sir Robert Garran – were especially familiar faces. Although both were disabled (Eggleston was losing his sight and suffered from severe arthritis and Garran was very deaf), they were passionate advocates of the new university, even if they were more in favour of a vocational and undergraduate component than were many of their colleagues.

No tape recordings were made of the meetings. It is only in our mind's ear — or in the case of some members, in oral history recordings made at a later date — that we can hear R. D. Wright's gravelly voice, Kenneth Bailey's measured and mellow language, David Rivett's grave tones, and Charles Daley's rapid utterances.¹⁵ Differences of opinion existed among Interim Council members. It was said that the Deputy Chairman, Professor J.D.G. 'Jack' Medley, was initially uncertain about the entire ANU venture, but once decisions had been made, the Council members generally acted as one.

The purpose of the following is to add a few more details to the names listed in the records. The range of academic, bureaucratic, legal, and financial experience was impressive.¹⁶ The qualifications of the Interim Council's initial members explain why the government (through the Governor-General) selected these particular individuals to advise on the creation of the university and why they were likely to have considerable clout with other distinguished academics:

* Professor Richard Charles Mills chaired the Interim Council. An economist from the University of Sydney, he was Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education and Chairman of the Universities Commission created in 1942 to help regulate universities. From 1944, he was influential in implementing the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for ex-service men and women. Firm friends with Prime Minister Ben Chifley, he was a strong influence behind the federal Cabinet's decision to create the Australian National University,

* Mr John Dudley Gibbs 'Jack' Medley, soon to be knighted in July 1948, was the Deputy Chairman of the Interim Council. Vice Chancellor of the University of Melbourne (the University of Melbourne granted the degrees for Canberra University College graduates), he was also chairman of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and a member of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

* Professor Kenneth Hamilton Bailey, former Professor of Law at the University of Sydney, was the Commonwealth Solicitor-General and Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department. He represented the Commonwealth at many international conferences.

* Dr Herbert Cole 'Nugget' Coombs was Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction (working to the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, Mr John Dedman) and a member of the Commonwealth Bank Advisory Committee. Committed to the idea of a national university, he recommended the setting up of committees in Australia and travelled to England to meet with distinguished expatriates. A friend of Prime Minister Chifley, Coombs' dedication and reputation as a knowledgeable economist helped to win confidence in the new university's viability.

¹⁵ R.D. Wright, Kenneth Bailey, and H.C. Coombs are among those who were interviewed in later life by the National Library of Australia. <https://www.nla.gov.au/what-we-collect/oral-history-and-folklore> Accessed 11 July 2016.

¹⁶ The titles relevant to 1948 are used here, although several members later received knighthoods and other changes in title, as in Baron Florey of Adelaide and Marston.

* Mr Herbert John Goodes, Assistant Secretary, Social Services Branch, represented the Commonwealth Treasury. Transferred to Canberra in 1942, he had previously been the Government Statistician in Western Australia and had been a member of the Interdepartmental Committee on Education.

* Sir Robert Garran, a former Solicitor-General, had the reputation of having been one of Australia's most distinguished and popular public servants. He was currently Chancellor of the Diocese of Goulburn and, most relevant of all, was chair of the Council of Canberra University College.

* Mr Charles Studly Daley was Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior, and a dedicated member of the Council of Canberra University College. Both Daley and Garran had come to Canberra in the 1920s and since then, with considerable community backing, had exerted constant pressure for a national university. In 1944, Daley was a member of the Walker Committee that had specified areas for research including Pacific Studies and Australian History.

* Sir Albert Cherbury David 'David' Rivett was the newly appointed chairman of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The success of the CSIR increased the Labor Government's confidence in the value of investing in science.

* Professor Eric Ashby was Professor of Botany and Chairman of the Professorial Board at the University of Sydney. He had conducted an enquiry into university scientists' contribution to the war. He was soon to leave for the University of Manchester, UK.

* Sir Frederic William Eggleston was employed part-time as official advisor to the Department of External Affairs and taught diplomatic cadets. Having served as the first Australian Minister to China, he had also represented Australia in the USA. He was especially interested in Australia's place in the Pacific region. Interested in the financing of universities, he served as the first Chairman of the Commonwealth Grants Commission until 1941 and in the same year published and of *Search for a Social Philosophy* (1941) in which he argued against specialisation in social disciplines

* Professor Roy Douglas 'Douglas' or 'Pansy' Wright (having once acted in a play as a policeman 'Pansy Norris') was Professor of Physiology at the University of Melbourne and carried heavy administrative responsibilities. He knew Canberra well. Closely associated with the many scientific and medical committees directly concerned with the prosecution of World War II, he had lived in the city for three years when serving in the Army's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs headed by another supporter of a national university, army officer and medical practitioner, Alfred Austin Joseph 'Alf' Alf Conlon. Wright served as a Council member of the ANU from 1946 to 1976.¹⁷

Members of the Academic Advisory Committee

In April 1947, a few months after its first meeting, the Interim Council invited Sir Howard Florey and Professors Oliphant, Hancock and Firth to form an Academic Advisory Committee. Oliphant later described the Committee as 'the professorial board of the embryo university'.¹⁸ Advice from these four was considered to be the best informed and most objective, coming as it did from those who were at the top of their fields with a personal interest in Australia but who did not represent any State university or Institute. The selection was also a reverential nod to English universities as centres of excellence. Even with their eminent backgrounds, the four recognised that to give the most relevant advice, they needed to meet with colleagues in Australia.

With broader responsibilities than the name of the committee suggests, the Academic Advisers were to assist the Interim Council with academic policy, estimates for staffing, buildings, equipment, library holdings, the award of scholarships – almost everything from degrees to dining rights.

Adding discussions on the ANU to their existing heavy work commitments, the members of the Academic Advisory Committee generally met at weekends in Oxford and occasionally in London. They respected one another, Florey and Oliphant being especially close as they had met as undergraduates at the University of Adelaide. Oliphant and Hancock also had a common link through the University of Birmingham.

Sir (later Baron) Howard Florey

Florey was awarded the Noble Prize (jointly) in 1945 for his work on the use of penicillin. After Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928, Florey was a key figure in developing its use to

¹⁷ In addition to the files in the ANU Archives, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and the National Library of Australia's 'Trove' on-line site are useful resources for biographical details.

¹⁸ M. Oliphant to D. Copland, 17 January 1949, ANUA 18-104/1/22.

treat people with severe infectious diseases. Florey was based at the Sir William Dunn School of Pathology at Oxford but by the time of the Easter Conference he already had an extensive network in Australia. He was on close terms with Professor R.D. Wright and other members of the Interim Council and also with many of those who were to attend the Easter Conference. These included Dr Bill Keogh from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories who as early as 1943 had convinced the War Cabinet that Australia needed to be self-sufficient in penicillin.

Before the Easter Conference, Florey was aware that the Interim Council was planning to offer him the Directorship of the John Curtin School of Medical Research. Both the university and the public viewed the anticipated appointment of a Nobel Prize laureate as one of the most important feathers in the new institution's cap. Firmly supporting the idea of a research university, Florey considered taking his Oxford staff with him to Canberra. Meanwhile, he stressed two vital prerequisites: the project had to be well funded and free from government intervention.

As a personality, Florey was not given to flights of fancy and he dismissed exaggerated claims for novelty of the new venture: 'The University was founded by an Act of Parliament ... I do not know who framed the Act, but whoever it was will probably admit that it was an attempt from the armchair to devise a government for an institution unknown to Australia and indeed, as far as I am aware, without a direct parallel elsewhere. To call its establishment "a great intellectual adventure" is too grandiloquent. It was an exercise in organisation.'¹⁹

Professor (later Sir) Mark Oliphant

Oliphant, a world authority on atomic energy, was, like Florey, an Adelaide-born scientist working in England. Having as an undergraduate failed Physics in 1920 and again in 1921, he graduated in 1923 with a first class Honours degree in Physics. In the late 1920s, he left Australia to work in England. With an outstanding record at the Cavendish laboratories in Cambridge, he was a Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor of Physics at the University of Birmingham. During the World War II, he travelled between Britain and the USA, leading a team of British scientists collaborating with American scientists on the development of the atomic bomb. While the aura of the Manhattan Project stayed with Oliphant, he was not involved in dropping the atomic bombs on Japan, and remained disturbed by this action even though it brought World War II to an end.²⁰

Oliphant's first serious encounter with the proposal for a new university took place in London in 1946 when he met with the Australian Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, who was attending the post-war Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference. Chifley was anxious to hear about the amazing yet terrifying atomic bomb. He sought Oliphant's advice on the pressing need to improve scientific research and tertiary education in Australia. After Oliphant had spoken enthusiastically about the use of nuclear power, not for war but for peaceful purposes, Chifley and his advisers were convinced that it was vital to secure him for the new research university that they already had in mind. Oliphant was interested in this proposal but needed to know more about the practicalities. He had no time for 'too much high falutin' talk of 'discipline' and arty-crafty "isms" '.

Well before the Easter Conference, Oliphant worked on detailed plans for his own special interest, a School of Physical Sciences. He took into account research into Nuclear Physics, Geophysics, Astronomy, and Mathematics, estimating the costs of staffing, equipment and running expenses. He had already warned that 'academic achievement can become noticeable only after 5-10 years. No rapid results are to be expected.'²¹ By the Easter Conference he knew that he would be invited to be the Director of the School of Physical Sciences but declared that he would not be prepared to join the new university unless Howard Florey also came.²²

Professor (later Sir) Keith Hancock

Melbourne-born Hancock was, in 1923, the first Australian to gain a prestigious Fellowship of All Souls College of the Faithful Departed, Oxford, an achievement that not only coloured his own life but was also to have bearing on the new university. All Souls, founded in 1483 by King Henry IV

¹⁹ Sir Howard Florey, 'Report to Council expressing wish to resign duties', 2 January 1956, ANUA 84-27.

²⁰ 'Marcus Lawrence Oliphant, 1901-2000', Biographical Memoirs, Australian Academy of Science, sciencearchive.org.au Accessed 8 November 2015.

²¹ 'Professor Oliphant's Memorandum of 8 February 1947' [Comments on the foundation of a National University in Canberra with particular reference to the proposed School of Physical Sciences], ANUA 18-104/2/19.

²² *Canberra Times*, 20 March 1948, p.4.

and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Chichele, was a research-only College (it did not admit undergraduates) with a magnificent library specialising in the Humanities and Law.

Notwithstanding that in the post-war years All Souls suffered from poor quality food and limited heating, Hancock considered it to be one of the most desirable environments in the world for historical research. At the time of the Easter Conference, he was the Chichele Professor of Economic History (named after the founder), and a friend of Professor Richard Mills, chair of the Interim Council. Especially after publishing *Australia* (1930), a provocative and well-regarded book, Hancock was held in high esteem as an historian who had a demonstrable interest in Australia.

He began his association with the ANU in high spirits. In letters to a colleague he enthused about employment in the new university, 'The authorities are offering directorships to bright boys who have left home, namely to Oliphant, Florey and myself. There are to be slap-up arrangements for equipment, salaries, leave, travel, visiting savants, research fellowships and God knows what else.'²³

Although he participated in the Academic Advisory Committee discussions, Hancock privately limited his involvement, being especially busy with supervising, contributing to, and editing a multi-volume history of the Second World War. His wife recorded that 'he refused the fee paid for these Canberra consultations here [at Oxford] – they take up a whole Sunday each time – on the grounds that he couldn't work for them [the ANU]'.²⁴ A colleague observed that the Academic Advisers were paid \$500 a year and were given other allowances. Hancock refused to touch a penny. The reward for this scrupulousness was not a heightened prestige in the eyes of the Interim Council, but an indifference to, if not suspiciousness of, such eccentricity.²⁵ Later on, Hancock weakened, accepting at least some payment for his advice.

Reading through the contributions of the Academic Advisers, it is clear that all four modified or expanded their views from time to time, and exhibited varying degrees of irritation and impatience, but Hancock was the most querulous of all. In essence, his requests were not so very different from those of his colleagues but many on the Interim Council, including Vice-Chancellor Copland, found his long-winded letters to be exceptionally wearing, although it should be borne in mind that Hancock was worried about his wife Theaden's health and the impact that any change might have on her.

Something of Hancock's vacillation as he prepared for the Easter Conference is revealed in letters he and Theaden wrote to their friend Walter 'Rusty' Crocker. They explained: 'The first reaction of a good man to the idea that he might possibly transport himself to Canberra seems to me rather like that of a musician invited to play the piano with one finger. It is essential to convince him that he will be able to use all his fingers if he goes to Canberra i.e. he need have no fear of being condemned to work below his best form.'²⁶

Despite his doubts, Hancock wrote to Professor Mills well before the Easter Conference outlining his thoughts on the School of Social Sciences and the most appropriate fields for research: History, Philosophy, Economics, Statistics, Population and Health, Law, and Political Science. Psychology might be included later. Social Anthropology, he considered, was more suitable for the School of Pacific Studies.

At heart, Hancock was very much more interested in research than he was in administration. Concerning the 1948 meetings, he was 'not in the frame of mind to deal with pompous agendas'.²⁷

Professor (later Sir) Raymond William Firth

²³ W.K. Hancock to Professor G.C. Allen, Commerce, University of Liverpool, 11 November 1946, ANUA 77-8.

²⁴ Theaden Hancock to W. R. Crocker, 14 December 1946, in Sir Walter Crocker, Papers, MSS 327 C938p, University of Adelaide Archives; W.K. Hancock to D. Copland, 7 September 1948, Prof. W. Hancock, Part 2, Academic Advisory Committee, ANUA 18-104/1/9. In 1949, Crocker was appointed Professor of International Relations at the ANU.

²⁵ W. Crocker, 'The ANU –Ten Years On' (typescript), p.8, in Crocker, Papers, MSS 327 C938p, University of Adelaide Archives.

²⁶ W.K. Hancock to R.C. Mills, 16 July 1947, ANUA 18-104/1/12 Attachments.

²⁷ 'Re W.K. Hancock', J. F. Forster to R.G. Osborne, 4 March 1948, 'Conference with Academic Advisory Committee, Easter 1948', ANUA 18-104/3/1.

Born in Auckland, Firth had an outstanding career as a social anthropologist, a remarkable achievement considering that in his formative years, anthropology was not offered as a field of academic study in New Zealand. It was only as a result of a chance meeting at the London School of Economics and Politics (LSE) that he entered this relatively new field, combining his interests in economics with anthropology. Returning to the Antipodes, he lectured at the University of Sydney and conducted fieldwork in the Pacific. His study of kinship and livelihood among 1,200 people on a remote Polynesian atoll was published in 1936 as *We, the Tikopia*, an innovative study in the relatively new field of social anthropology. This research, an impressive addition to his work on the New Zealand Maories, was highly regarded as a model for building theory from the details of everyday life. Having returned to the LSE in 1933, by the time of the Easter Conference he had spent over a decade nurturing the LSE's Department of Anthropology encouraging research in the Pacific, East Africa, South America, Southern Europe, Malaya, Japan, China – an ever-expanding field of interest.

Firth's administrative experience included being the Acting Director of the Committee of Anthropological Research of the Australian National Research Council, a body established in 1919 to represent Australia on the International Research Council. In many ways the Australian Research Council was a forerunner of the Australian Academy of Science established in Canberra in 1954. He was also influential in establishing the British Colonial Research Council set up in 1944.

More members of the Interim Council and of the Easter Conference had studied at the LSE than at either Oxford or Cambridge and so while Professor Raymond Firth's name was generally placed last in the list of the 'Big Four', he was as well known, if not quite as famous, as the other three.

When considering prospects for the new university, Firth stated that he admired the efforts of 'Nugget' Coombs. Indefatigable in encouraging the government to finance the new venture, Coombs argued that, instead of diverting resources from existing institutions, a well-funded national university would spearhead financial and other improvements in the State universities. Extremely articulate if somewhat self-deprecating, Firth offered carefully considered advice but never seriously considered joining the ANU: 'I myself did not feel completely at home with the task of shaping a new university and I'd done no university administration of a broad character.'²⁸

Prime Minister, Ben Chifley

Throughout the 1940s, the support of two Labor Prime Ministers – John Curtin (1941 to 1945) and Ben Chifley (1945 to 1949) – was essential to the successful foundation of the ANU, not least because it was the first university in Australia to be founded by an Act of Parliament. The Commonwealth government soon funded almost all the early work of planning the University, including the Easter Conference.

Although Ben Chifley was not a participant in the Easter Conference (this would have smacked of direct political interference), he was already on long-standing and familiar terms with the members of the Academic Advisory Committee. In spite of his intense dislike of cocktail parties, he attended a reception at the Hotel Canberra for the four Academic Advisers, attracted by the knowledge that Oliphant and Florey would be there.²⁹ Along with two federal colleagues, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction the Hon. John Dedman and the Minister for Works the Hon. Nelson Lemmon, he arranged meetings with the Advisers to coincide with the Easter Conference. Chifley was especially interested Oliphant's views on the scientific aspects of the defence program and the place of research in both defence and industry.

Chifley, like so many others, was concerned about managing the competition for grants among the universities. It was difficult to apportion money fairly among large and small States.³⁰ Those he met included Professor Harold Dew, the holder of the first full-time chair of Surgery in Australia, who had considerable financial experience in building up the University of Sydney's medical school.

Throughout Chifley's speeches on university education, one can hear the voices of academics and researchers who complemented his own views on the importance of education and research. His public speeches influenced the direction the new university might take. He argued that while the

²⁸ Sir Raymond Firth interviewed by Margaret Murphy, 1974, OH ORAL TRC 283, National Library of Australia.

²⁹ *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 21 March 1948, p.2.

³⁰ *Mail* (Adelaide), 3 April 1948, p.3; *West Australian*, 31 March 1948, p.5.

United States was dominant in the Pacific during the war, Australia now had a duty in the Pacific to assume a wider responsibility for itself and the British Empire. At the time of the Easter Conference, post-war problems still required resolution: the Peace Treaty arrangements with Japan (in particular, the confiscation of territories) were not yet finalised and the former colonial world picture was changing with increasing demands for self-determination.

Fortunately, so Chifley argued, Australia under the Labor government was going from strength to strength, just one example being the growth of the manufacturing industry that was now ready to develop an export market to potentially 'a thousand million, million people' in the countries north of Australia. The government's confidence was also boosted by the progress made by the Commonwealth government-funded Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

In 1948, change was beginning to appear not only desirable but also achievable. In Canberra, a false dawn broke when, at last, it seemed possible that enough bricks would be available to build the university.³¹

Organising the Easter Conference

April 1948: a distinctive occasion

The presence of all four Academic Advisers in Canberra at the same time made the Easter Conference a distinctive occasion. In addition to giving representatives from all over Australia the opportunity to make or renew personal contact with the Advisers, a great deal of kudos was to be had in bringing distinguished academics before the eyes of the government and the public, the *Courier Mail* (Brisbane) writing excitedly of 'Ace Scientists for Canberra'.³²

The Easter Conference (or 'Conferences' as each meeting was referred to as a Conference, except that Hancock preferred the term 'Seminar' for the meeting he chaired) took place from Thursday 1 April to Sunday 4 April 1948, Easter Sunday having fallen that year on 28 March.³³ Discussions between the Interim Council and the Academic Advisory Committee were held before and after the Conference on 19 and 20 March and 5 and 6 April.³⁴ During their time in Australia, the Academic Advisers also travelled to meet with others who had not attended the Conference, the numbers invited to Canberra being necessarily limited.

Purpose of the Easter Conference

The Easter Conference was primarily an exercise in public relations designed to reassure State universities in particular, but also other research institutions such as the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, that a new university would not duplicate what they were already doing and would not deprive them of funds or students. In addition, Prime Minister Ben Chifley and the Interim Council required detailed advice on what was going to be an expensive undertaking. As is clear from the agenda where the basic principles and structure were already set out, the Conference was one of confirmation, rather than one of initiation.³⁵

By 1948 the overall purpose and form of the ANU was in place. It was too late to go back. As soon as the Act of Parliament was passed in 1946, the university awarded post-graduate scholarships to Australians (both men and women) to study in universities overseas while awaiting the construction of buildings and other facilities in Canberra. Oliphant, Hancock, Florey and Firth had been engaged in serious discussions and had submitted detailed papers. For the most part, broader visions had already been whittled down to areas closer to their own interests and some basic principles had been agreed. They were adamant that they would not tolerate any but the most essential political interference from the government, the exceptions being for the misuse of public monies and culpable misbehaviour. A few suggestions for academic areas of interest had already been rejected:

³¹ Michael Howard, 'Beyond Full Employment: the Nature and Scope of Commonwealth Intervention in the Building Industry during Post War Reconstruction', Seminar on Post War Reconstruction, MS 6799, Box 1, National Library of Australia.

³² *Courier* (Brisbane), 20 February 1948, p.3.

³³ The original dates suggested for the Conference were December 1947–January 1948.

³⁴ 'Reports of the Interim Council for the period 1 August 1946 to 31 December 1949', p.7, as above.

³⁵ To appreciate the number of resolutions that had already been made before the Easter Conference, see '17th Meeting of the Interim Council, 'Notes for the Agenda, Conference with the Academic Advisory Committee', Easter 1948', ANUA 18-104/3/1.

the proposal to establish a School of Moral Research to study the inner workings of human nature in order to develop more power over ourselves and our behaviour was not endorsed.³⁶

Although outline plans for the ANU were already in place, the university's supporters knew that to attract funds from the Commonwealth government and from private foundations such as Rockefeller and Carnegie, it was vital to deflect opposition and to endorse the university as a feasible proposition.

The Conference was to concentrate on practical matters rather than on what in later decades became known as 'mission' statements. In 1946 a preamble had been proposed for the Act of Parliament: 'Whereas a free democracy has its basis in the desires of the people, and if those desires are to represent wisdom and maintain truth, it is essential that the facilities be granted for the attainment of knowledge and for the fearless and informed discussion of vital issues.'³⁷ While some members of Parliament waxed lyrical in sentiments of this kind, Coombs and others dismissed the need for such a preamble as 'too high falutin'.

If the Conference attendees would agree that the new research university would be an asset and not a drain, and were given an opportunity to consider, albeit briefly, how it would be set up and what the most important areas of research might be, then this general approval would provide the go-ahead to start building and appointing staff.

Easter Conference venue: the Australian Institute of Anatomy

The Conference was held at the Australian Institute of Anatomy, one of Canberra's first monumental buildings with an architectural style variously described as art deco or stripped classical. Primarily a natural history museum and a base for studies into nutrition, it had also been one of the early homes of Canberra University College and had the advantage of being on the edge of the new, if as yet undeveloped, ANU site.

The Institute of Anatomy was an especially appropriate venue for discussions on the proposed School of Pacific Studies. Even though the obvious suitability was not mentioned in the Conference proceedings, many participants had a vested interest in what lay beneath their feet. Significant ethnographic collections from Australia and the Pacific were stored in the basement, awaiting a National Museum (not finally established in a permanent home until 2001).³⁸

Registrar, R. G. Osborne

Roy Gumley Osborne played a key role in organising the Easter Conference. He was his mid-40s when, on 30 May 1947, he was appointed as the University's first Registrar.³⁹ This was far more than an administrative post. With both law and arts degrees from the University of Tasmania, Osborne had many strengths. He was a former Tasmanian parliamentary draftsman, Acting Solicitor-General in Tasmania, and chief legal officer in the Commonwealth Department for War Organisation of Industry.⁴⁰ A member of the Council of the University of Tasmania, Dean of the Faculty of Law, a member of the Professorial Board, he was closely associated with the establishment of the Universities Commission and had worked with economist Professor F.E. Mauldon and other Easter Conference participants. Calling on his wide experience of all phases of university administration, Osborne assisted with drafting the University's statutes and helped to develop and interpret academic policy.⁴¹ As yet there was no Bursar and so a wide range of financial and organisational matters fell to Osborne and his one or two assistants including Lois

³⁶ Canon W.J. Edwards (Headmaster of Canberra Boys' Grammar School), *Canberra Times*, 15 April 1946, p.2.

³⁷ 'Preamble, draft Australian National University Act,' A1945/1316, Part 1, National Archives of Australia, digital copy, p.339.

³⁸ 'The Australian Institute of Anatomy', *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 37, 1946-7; Guy Hanson, 'National Museum of Australia: Collecting for a Nation', www.nma.gov.au Accessed 29 October 2014.

³⁹ In the early documents, dates of appointment were often loosely recorded or, as in Osborne's case, confused with the date of his arrival in Canberra. The official date of his appointment was announced in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 1947, p.1 and the *Canberra Times*, 30 May 1947, p.4.

⁴⁰ *Examiner* (Launceston), 11 April 1942, p.4; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 May 1947, p.11.

⁴¹ D.B. Copland to R.G. Osborne, 25 February 1949 [letter on Osborne's retirement as Registrar in 1949], 'Papers relating to the History of the ANU', ANUA 99-1.

Dexter and Mary Wilding. In addition, in preparation for the Conference, he prepared a bibliography of Australian history for Professor Hancock.

To help record the Conference proceedings, Osborne called on a University of Tasmania friend, librarian Ernest H. Clark, who was paid an honorarium of £50 for coming to Canberra for a weekend of steady note-taking without any grand festivities, having been forewarned that there was 'no need for evening or academic dress'.⁴²

Conference attendees (as they were called at that time, rather than delegates) travelling from all over Australia did not necessarily appreciate how difficult it was to find rooms and catering in post-war Canberra. This was especially true during the 1948 Easter holidays when 300 visitors were arriving from interstate for a major golf tournament.⁴³ Tea, sugar, butter and petrol were still rationed in Australia and Osborne was required to provide overseas visitors with ration coupons.⁴⁴

After considerable negotiation, the attendees were housed in the two hotels favoured by politicians and visiting dignitaries: the Hotel Canberra (later, the Hyatt) and the Hotel Kurrajong, the hotel that Prime Minister Ben Chifley considered as his 'home-away-from-home'.

Coming to Canberra

In March 1948, the members of the Academic Advisory Committee left England for Australia. Wives were entitled to accompany their husbands and were encouraged for financial as well as personal reasons to travel with them, but this proved difficult for Theaden Hancock and also for Rosemary Firth and her infant son, Hugh. At escalating expense to the ANU, the wives travelled at different times. David Rivett of the Interim Council advised the ANU Registrar R. G. Osborne, 'I suppose we should do the gracious thing in each case, trusting that the Taxpayers Association will not feel aggrieved if it hears of the expenditure.'⁴⁵

In the 1940s, when conducting ANU business, academics, politicians, and bureaucrats made regular flights between England and Australia, usually by a new Qantas service provided by Lockheed Constellation aircraft, the world's first pressurised commercial aircraft, flying the Kangaroo route (via the Middle East) between Britain and Australia. The journey involved some six stops and took four days (55 hours of flying time). In 1948 Keith Hancock travelled by a Hythe Flying boat, taking off at Southampton and landing in Rose Bay, Sydney. Flying boats were generally more spacious than planes and although they also made many stops were said to be more reliable because they could land on any strip of calm water. On arrival, Hancock and Florey took time to relax on Sydney's Cronulla beach before flying to Canberra where they were met at the small airport terminal serving the Australian Capital Territory's population of some 17,000.

Participating in the Easter Conference

Easter Conference participants, overview

Those attending were referred to as attendees and participants, rather than the later term 'delegates'. They came from, or were familiar with, activities in all Australian States and Territories and they were all men. Kathleen Fitzpatrick from the University of Melbourne was on the list of those invited to attend. She was within a few months of being appointed Associate Professor of History (the first woman in Australia to hold such a position outside the natural sciences) but for an unknown reason did not turn up. In 1948, taking the whole of Australia into account, the total number of professors and senior staff in any single discipline rarely exceeded twenty – usually the number was much smaller than this. Therefore most attendees were already well known to one another either in person or by reputation and several had collaborated on academic projects. So tight was the network that the most damning indictment of an academic was to simply say, 'Never heard of him'.

⁴² R.G. Osborne to E.H. Clark, 4 March 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/12.

⁴³ *Canberra Times*, 23 March 1948, p.2.

⁴⁴ Lois Dexter (for Registrar) to Director, Department of Trade and Customs, 'Academic Advisory Committee, Arrangements for visit, Easter 1948', ANUA 18-104/1/12.

⁴⁵ David Rivett to R.G. Osborne, 24 February 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/12.

Conference on Medical Research: Sir Howard Florey and participants⁴⁶

Preparation, Medical Research

Over the previous three years, every eminent scientist in Australia had been involved in discussions about a new medical school, and so those who gathered at the Easter Conference were part of an established network. Sir Howard Florey had invited Professor R.D. 'Pansy' Wright to work with him at Oxford; Professors 'Pansy' Wright, Frank Macfarlane Burnet and Peter MacCallum (spelt McCallum in the documents) had all served on the same advisory committee; Dr Esmond 'Bill' Keogh had written papers in collaboration with Macfarlane Burnet; Macfarlane Burnet and Dr Lionel Bull had also worked together — such examples could be multiplied many times over.

This is not to suggest that all had the same views on the relative importance of research, teaching, and administration. In some cases, preferences sprang from their personalities as well as from their experience. Professor Macfarlane Burnet, for example, was by temperament rather solitary and contemplative, and given a choice preferred research to administration, as did Professor O.S. Tiegs. The more outgoing Sir Stanton Hicks enjoyed discussions about administration and organisation and gregarious Professors Rubbo and Sutherland placed great emphasis on the importance of teaching as well as on research.

By Christmas 1947, Florey had prepared a Memorandum on 'the Organisation of the School of Medical Research' in which he confirmed his approval of such a School but was anxious about the difficulty of obtaining staff.⁴⁷ This prompted his interest in having a conference in Canberra where he could see for himself the possibilities of recruiting trained staff in Australia.

Participants, Medical Research

Sir Howard Florey chaired the discussion. He declared, 'I find it most embarrassing to have any attention paid to my opinions – nobody thinks anything of them in England'.⁴⁸ This, of course, was nonsense. His involvement in the Easter Conference – a meeting he helped to initiate – came after four years of close involvement, including his submission of detailed papers. He was clear on the purpose of the meetings: 'The primary object of this Conference here is, in a nutshell, to dispel ... a fairly widespread and justified distrust [that a national university] will rob you of your young men.' He assured the State universities that the Interim Council would not go on a 'nest-robbing' expedition. He understood that detailed and sustained research was beyond the capacity of most State universities because 'both professors and their staffs teach until their eyes drop out'.⁴⁹

The problem, explained Florey, was not a shortage of students. By 1946, as the result of demobilisation and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, the offer of free places for those returning from the war had dramatically increased student numbers. 'Just now', observed Florey, 'labs are bulging out of the doors'. Nor was the problem that of potentially good researchers but rather lack of finance and what he referred to as the 'hotch-potch' nature of Australian universities.⁵⁰

Although he warned against picking the eyes out of the State universities, he stressed, albeit in a rather contradictory way, that if the State universities were not actively prepared to help in recruiting staff, 'the difficulties of setting up the university and keeping it going would be insuperable'.

Florey also announced that he had 'quite strong views' on an important point: 'You must not submit the embryo university to the slightest risk of government interference ... If it wants defence work done, here is not the place to do it'.

As for worries about salaries – whether, for example, there should be a special loading for working in Canberra – Florey was relatively unconcerned, arguing that 'the good man will go where he can do good work, regardless of salary'.

⁴⁶ Only summary reports were printed after the Conference. No individual contributions are recorded in any detail.

⁴⁷ Sir Howard Florey, 'Memorandum on the Organisation of a School of Medical Research', 19 December 1947, ANUA 77-52.

⁴⁸ Sir Howard Florey 'Medical Research in Australia. Report of Proceedings of the Conference convened by the Interim Council at the request of Sir Howard Florey, F.R.S., Canberra 3 & 4 April, 1948', ANUA 18-104/1/15.

⁴⁹ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

⁵⁰ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

Sufficient finance for research was, though, at the top of his list of priorities. Since medical schools already existed in the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Queensland, should significant funding be directed to improving them and to establishing a medical school in Western Australia? Or would it be better to concentrate on the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine, and other bodies not strongly connected to a university structure? Or should a School of Medicine be a central feature of a new research university? Long before the Easter Conference, discussions had swung in favour of the last suggestion but the distribution of funding remained a problem. How would a university founded by the Commonwealth government fit in with the National Health and Medical Research Council formed in 1937 that for over a decade had been responsible for distributing government grants? With the outbreak of war in 1939, grants had diminished while needs had grown. Paper rationing meant that even medical journals were dependent on grants to provide paper. How would funding for the ANU sit comfortably with such stringency? The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research had been given a Commonwealth government grant without tags attached, and it was hoped that a similar block grant would be given to the ANU. As Florey concluded: 'It all boils down to cash.'⁵¹

Participants puzzled over general questions: Would it be detrimental if research offered no vocational benefit? And what exactly did 'pure' research mean? In answer to the last question, Florey, a pragmatist, was unconcerned about making any distinction: 'I personally am very much against making any distinction between 'purity' and 'impurity'.⁵²

The following contributed to the discussion:

* Dr Lionel Batley Bull, one of Australia's most distinguished veterinarians and Chief of the Division of Animal Health and Production at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), was an important link between the Easter Conference and the CSIR. Diseases of sheep in New South Wales and Victoria were among his many research interests. To consider this major problem, the Commonwealth government combined resources with these two States, demonstrating that researchers under several authorities and across disciplines could be successfully coordinated. In the late 1930s, he was instrumental in founding the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science. His network included Sir David Rivett who was also of the CSIR and a member of the ANU Interim Council.

*Professor (later Sir) Frank MacFarlane 'Mac' Burnet was Director of the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, an Institute that Florey singled out for special mention as a centre of excellence. At about the time of the Easter Conference, Burnet was changing the emphasis of the Institute's work from virology to immunology. His preference was for medical research to be concentrated in Institutes, but if it were to take place in universities, then research and teaching should be kept separate. Although he was more interested in research than in administration, he nevertheless helped initiate major projects, including in 1946 the Clinical Research Unit designed to work in collaboration with the Royal Melbourne Hospital. As was the case with other Easter Conference participants, he served on the Medical Research Advisory Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. Frank Fenner and Gordon Ada, who were later to join the John Curtin School of Medical Research, were among his colleagues. At the time of the Easter Conference his knighthood (1960) and the award of the Nobel Prize (1978) lay in the future but he was already acknowledged as one of Australia's pre-eminent scientists. He played a major role in the development of public policy for medical sciences in Australia.

* Dr Frederick William Arthur 'Fred' Clements was Australia's first major nutrition scientist. As Director of the Commonwealth Department of Health and Nutrition Unit at the Australian Institute of Anatomy, he was the host of the Easter Conference in as much as he offered the location, the ANU not having any buildings of its own. He had been one of the first to make medical surveys of the highlands of New Guinea and more recently had conducted an Aboriginal Food Consumption Survey and the Australian Food Consumption Survey. His interests encompassed not only vitamins and hormones but also extended to the history of nutrition in Australia. At the time of the Easter Conference, he had just published an article in *Historical Studies* entitled 'The Hungry Years, 1788–1792'.

* Professor (later Sir) Harold Robert Dew was Bosch Professor of Surgery at the University of Sydney. In 1948, he chaired the Medical Research Advisory Committee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. At the time of the Easter Conference, he was busy developing the

⁵¹ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

⁵² Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

Clinical School at the Royal North Shore Hospital assisted by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Working hard to introduce the B.Sc. (Med) degree, he increasingly moved into administration. In his view, the problem with universities was not with teaching but with lack of money, which in turn led to lack of tenure. 'It is tragic', he observed, 'that trained men ... have no security whatever.' He was confident that first-class men were coming through Australian universities but he was frustrated that they proved their worth only when they took posts overseas.⁵³

* Professor (later Sir) Edward 'Ted' Ford, University of Sydney, was Director of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and concurrently the Professor of Public Medicine. He was a good example of a researcher and an administrator whose experience during World War II (in his case with anti-malaria research in the Pacific) informed his interest in medical research in the new university. In the years immediately before the Easter Conference, he had been especially busy not only as a Director but also as a student, being awarded a Doctor of Medicine (MD) degree by the University of Melbourne for his thesis on malaria control and in 1947 gained a Diploma in Public Health from the University of London. In 1946 he was appointed as a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians. He was also Australia's leading collector of first edition books and was compiling a bibliography of all Australian publications dealing with the history of medicine from the arrival of the First Fleet until 1900.

* Sir Cedric Stanton 'Stanton' Hicks held the chair of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Adelaide where a new Medical School building was being erected. With a special interest in human nutrition, he founded the Australian Army Catering Corps during World War II and the Army continued to retain him as a scientific consultant. As was the case with several other Easter Conference attendees, he was a member of a subcommittee of the National Health and Medical Research Council. Commenting on the development of the ANU, he stressed the importance of creating a productive atmosphere by giving staff the prospect of security of tenure, providing some relief from teaching, and paying juniors, in particular, higher salaries.

* Dr Esmond Venner 'Bill' Keogh, from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories, Melbourne, was an expert on epidemiology – the study of the spread and containment of disease. He had co-authored publications with Professor McFarlane Burnet and was currently preparing an article on poliomyelitis. With a reputation of being a good administrator, he organised Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Nuffield grants for medical research by Australians. He shared an interest in pathology and public health with Sir Howard Florey who had already sought his advice. Keogh had wide cultural interests in art and music.

* Professor Douglas Harry Kedwin 'Dougie' Lee was foundation Professor of Physiology at the University of Queensland. At the time of the Easter Conference he was in his last year in this position. Having a lifelong interest in nutrition and in the physiology and problems of people who live and work in hot, humid climates, he had just published a paper on 'Human Climatology and Tropical Settlement'. He was soon to leave for the Johns Hopkins University and subsequently lived in the USA for many decades. He lived to the age of 100.

* Professor Peter MacCallum held the Chair of Pathology at the University of Melbourne from 1925 to 1950, devoting a great deal of time and energy to research on cancer, especially in 1948 on chronic skin ulcers of the 'flesh-eating' kind. At the time of the Easter Conference he was engaged in establishing what became known as the Peter MacCallum Cancer Clinic, Australia's first public hospital devoted to the treatment of cancer. In 1946, as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, MacCallum advocated the establishment of a medical school in Western Australia which, if implemented, would have drawn attention and funds away from a national university (the proposal for a medical school in Western Australia was not implemented at this time). Eight of the fifteen participants in the Medical Conference came from the University of Melbourne with its reputation for increasing emphasis on medical research, postgraduate education, and international exchange. Professor R.D. Wright, a member of the Interim Council, was one of MacCallum's colleagues. MacCallum had been to the Institute of Anatomy on a previous occasion, having in 1938 delivered the Halford Oration (a medical oration) on population trends.

* Professor Sydney Dattilo Robbo from the University of Melbourne was Professor of Bacteriology with strengths in chemotherapy and a reputation as 'the salesman of science'. Having lectured in medicine, dentistry, science, and agricultural science, he developed a special interest in infectious diseases. When at Oxford, he met Sir Howard Florey and also in England had worked with medical chemist Dr Adrien Albert who was later to join the John Curtin School of Medical Research. Robbo considered that research workers and teachers should be paid the same. He had wide interests in the humanities and the arts.

⁵³ H.R. Dew in Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

* Professor Sydney 'Syd' Sunderland was a good example of an academic who was both an excellent researcher and teacher. One of his favourite sayings was that 'education should be lighting a lamp not filling a bucket'. In 1938 at the age of 27, having been a Demonstrator in the Department of Anatomy at the University of Oxford, he was offered the Chair of Anatomy at the University of Melbourne. During World War II, he researched chronic nerve injuries, advancing knowledge of the regeneration of damaged nerve fibres.

* Professor Oscar Werner 'Sandy' Tiegs. Only a month before the Easter Conference, he had been appointed to the Chair of Zoology at the University of Melbourne. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he was especially interested in insect metamorphosis. Reputed not to be overly fond of committees, he considered that the chief stumbling blocks in universities were the heavy administrative responsibilities imposed on departments: 'we have to educate university authorities not to inflict so much administration on us.' He was among those who emphasised the importance of freedom of research.

* Professor Everton Rowe, 'Rowe' to his family and 'Treth' to colleagues, was the Director of the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science, Adelaide, an Institute begun in 1938 as a development of the Royal Adelaide Hospital. Concurrently, he was also the Professor of Experimental Medicine at the University of Adelaide. His wide-ranging research interests included toxicology and pharmacology. He had published work on venomous snakes and on clotting in the heart and brain. With a reputation of being skilled in discussion, he placed more emphasis on teaching than did some of his other colleagues, observing that 'teaching is very desirable to keep persons fresh and active'. He agreed with Florey that lack of money was the fundamental obstacle to advanced research.

* Professor Victor Martin 'Triki' Trikojus gained his PhD from Oxford and was now Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Melbourne. He was interested in integrating organic chemistry with biochemistry. One of his major research projects was the metabolism of the thyroid. He helped broaden the University of Melbourne's emphasis on undergraduate education to include postgraduate education, research, and international exchange.

* Professor Roy Douglas 'Pansy' Wright, Professor of Physiology at the University of Melbourne, had a long association with Sir Howard Florey and also with the inception of the ANU. In the late 1930s, Wright undertook research in Oxford under Florey's direction. In 1944, together with army officer and medical practitioner Alf Conlon, he lobbied Florey to help initiate what was to become the John Curtin School of Medical Research. Wright acted as a link between Florey and General Thomas Blamey, Commander of the Allied Land Forces, southwest Pacific. Blamey appreciated the importance of medical research and brought Florey's proposal for a medical institute to the attention of the Prime Minister, John Curtin. Wright was the honorary secretary of the

Interim Council from 1946 until August 1947 when the first Registrar was appointed. At the Easter Conference he helped clarify the University's position that it was never going to be a grant-giving institution, arguing that it would be 'morally wrong to do so'. Wright was the only Interim Council member who is listed as taking part in the Conference on Medical Science, a matter of little importance since the Interim Council organised meetings of its own to deliberate on the Conference discussions.

Conclusions, Medical Research

Florey came away from the Conference with a much more optimistic view of the pool of scientists in Australia from which the new university could draw, even though competition for staff with State universities still had to be negotiated.

Most of the discussion that Florey chaired centered on administration rather than on the most urgent or appropriate subjects for research, although he pointed to gaps in cytology (tissue culture techniques), embryology, and in clinical work. Burnet offered his opinion that 'the genetics of microorganisms are important. I feel absolutely confident that fundamental biochemistry in the next few years is going to advance in the field of microbiology'.⁵⁴

The two main decisions reached at the end of the Medical Conference were administrative in nature: to convene a joint committee between the ANU and the National Health and Medical Research Council and to form a committee to advise on the recruitment of scholars for training in the medical field. Professor 'Pansy' Wright, a member of the Interim Council, was no doubt relieved

⁵⁴ F. Macfarlane Burnett, in Florey 'Medical Research in Australia', as above.

to report that 'the meeting had done a great deal to dispel misapprehension as to the cuckoo character of the Australian National University'.⁵⁵

The Conference on Research in the Social Sciences: Professor Keith Hancock and participants

Preparation, Social Sciences

In 1947, the Interim Council requested academics from other universities to submit papers on the state of research in their particular fields since 1933. These submissions contain more details than those recorded in the Conference discussions and help to explain why verbal contributions were kept short. As is evident from this selection, the urgent need for advanced research was central to all the written responses:

*Raymond Maxwell 'Max' Crawford, Professor of History at the University of Melbourne, pointed to fundamental gaps and considered that 'the main field requiring study is the assumption and method of the Social Sciences'.

*Professor William Matthew 'Bill' O'Neil of the University of Sydney observed that 'little organised, sustained research is carried out in the psychological field in Australia' and advocated closer affiliation with the Social Sciences, one fertile field for research being social relations in industry. He complained that there was no specific psychological research centre in Australia.

*Professor Percy Herbert 'Perc' Partridge described the study of Political Science as being practically non-existent: 'Melbourne University at present possessing the only independent school of Political Science in the country'.

*Professor Sydney Thomas 'Syd' Butlin held the chair of Economics at the University of Sydney and was the brother of economic historian, Noel Butlin, after whom the Noel Butlin Archives of Business and Labour was later to be named. Syd Butlin was concerned that 'most of the writing on economic history has been indistinguishable from 'general' history being based on little or no knowledge of economic theory'.⁵⁶ Syd Butlin and John A. Cardno, University of Sydney, both considered that Demography and Law were undeveloped fields.

*Sir Frederick Eggleston, a member of the Interim Council, was familiar with Hancock's correspondence. He took Hancock to task on several fronts, suggesting that his approach was shallow. First, he considered it a mistake to disregard 'ologies' claiming that 'they did not disregard us, and the air is full of claimant ideologies'. Second, he considered that 'It is possible to overvalue research in the Social Sciences and attribute a false value to such a phrase as 'the extension of knowledge'. Eggleston expected the research in the Social Sciences to be less descriptive than was generally the case and instead deal with fundamental social truths, for example, the application of Philosophy and Political Science to Town Planning. For his part, Hancock wanted to concentrate on researching a subject of his own choice without the necessity to teach it. Eggleston disagreed. As a third criticism, he considered that teaching was an essential part of refining understanding. He doubted that 'the lonely researcher produces results of much value'.⁵⁷

While it is not the purpose of this essay to pursue comments far beyond the dates of the Easter Conference, Eggleston kept firing his vehement criticism of the current state of the Social Sciences: I have long been of the opinion that the confusion of thought which affects western civilisation is due largely to the defects of scholarship displayed by the social sciences [lacking in] systematic methodology. We want economists who are aware that their main decisions are political; political scientists who understand how dependent they are on law; historians who are capable of explaining how institutions work'.⁵⁸

Participants, Social Sciences

In chairing the discussion, Hancock's contributions were generally more discursive than those of other members of the Academic Advisory Committee, perhaps because the Social Sciences encompassed such a wide field. He valued a high degree of academic freedom and was reluctant to generalise too quickly or to be governed by administrative constraints. He was more at home with the exploration of ideas than he was with the Conference's emphasis on general structure.

⁵⁵ R.D. Wright, 'Medical Conference, Summary of Proceedings', 30 April 1948, ANUA 18-109/1/15.

⁵⁶ The papers are included in Academic Advisory Committee, 'Professor Hancock's Seminar, Easter 1948, Part I', ANUA 18-104/1/9.

⁵⁷ For F.Eggleston's criticisms of the proposals of both W.K. Hancock and R. Firth, see 'Notes on Professor Hancock's Letter', Conference with Academic Advisory Committee, Easter 1948, ANUA 18-104; Eggleston to Hancock, 18 August 1949, 'Signing Off Correspondence', ANUA 77-1.

⁵⁸ F.Eggleston to W.K. Hancock, 1 December 1949, ANUA 77-1.

Hancock organised the discussions under the main headings of Economics, Political Science, and Sociology with secondary comments on Statistics, Demography, Geography, History, Philosophy, Social Anthropology, Psychology, Law and a Library. He said less on History than might have been expected, explaining it could not easily be singled out because History and Philosophy underpinned all the other fields. He was interested in appointing only first-rate people who would do first-rate research: writing books for Penguin publishers, for example, was too 'popular' to be considered serious academic work.

He questioned the assumption that because the national university would be located in Canberra, its economists would study Government policy and nothing else. He argued that State universities were in the same position with State government policy and yet this did not limit their work. He advocated the inclusion of business archives in the university, a specific recommendation that was later adopted.

As was the case with the other discussion groups, contributors to the discussions on the Social Sciences were well known to one another. The anthropologist Professor Adolphus Peter 'A.P.' Elkin was a mentor to fellow anthropologist, Dr Arthur Capell; Professor Frank R.E. Mauldon and Dr Peter W.E. 'Pike' Curtin were among the co-authors of 'The influence of female labour on the employment industry' (1939) – examples of connections that could be multiplied many times over.

The large number of participants meant that verbal contributions were generally short:

* Professor Henry Alcock, McCaughey Professor of History and Economic Science at the University of Queensland, saw merit in pure research.

* Professor Fred Alexander, the founding head of the Department of History, University of Western Australia, specialised in foreign affairs and policy, developing an early interest in Asia and the Pacific. He played several roles concurrently: Director of Adult Education in Western Australia; a successful promoter of summer schools; and an advocate of community involvement in the Festival of Perth and other cultural events.

* Mr Allen Stanley Brown was noted for his administrative skills. A former lecturer in Law at the University of Melbourne and a tutor at associated colleges, he was currently Director-General of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction.

* Associate Professor Herbert 'Joe' Burton, economist, said that experience at the University of Melbourne had shown that courses on the subject of European contact with peoples in the Pacific attracted some of the best students and so it would be wise not to restrict studies of the Pacific to political science. He expressed the hope that the ANU would help Canberra University College to develop into 'a respectable full-time University'. In November 1948, a few months after the Easter Conference, he was appointed as the inaugural Principal and first Professor (the chair was in Economic History) at Canberra University College.

* Mr John Alexander Cardno, Director of the Board of Social Studies, University of Sydney, had a particular interest in Sociology. He suggested that the problems arising from different positions in social status would be a suitable research topic. Among the inadequacies in sociological literature was the tendency to make sweeping generalisations from only one person's experience together with the general vagueness of sociological terminology.

* Mr Charles Hope Manning 'Manning' Clark, Senior Lecturer in History, University of Melbourne, recommended the completion of *Historical Records of Australia* begun by Dr Frederick Watson, together with a history journal concentrating exclusively on Australia, and a multi-volume 'History of Australia'. He recommended that a Commonwealth-wide committee on historical research be set up. This would deal with the standardisation of methods of reference; the prevention of duplication in research; and help keep people in Australia informed of advances in other universities and overseas. In July 1949 Clark and his family moved to Canberra when he took up the position of Professor of History at Canberra University College. In 1950 he produced the first of two volumes of *Select Documents in Australian History* and later, in 1962, as Professor of History in the School of General Studies at the ANU, published the first of his six-volume *History of Australia*.

* Mr Colin Clark, who, among much else, had been a former lecturer in Statistics at the University of Cambridge, was Under-Secretary of the Queensland Department of Labour and Industry. He 'protested against economics being placed first on the [Conference] agenda because he did not agree with the Marxists that economics was the first of the social sciences'. Concerned that the ANU would be a research-only university, he expressed the view that 'research and teaching could only be divorced at the peril of both of them'.

* Mr (later Sir) John Grenville 'Jack' Crawford, Director of Research in the Department of Post-War Reconstruction from 1943 and founding director in 1945 of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, moved to Canberra in 1944. He had contributed an especially influential chapter 'Australia as a Pacific Power' in Walter Duncan ed., *Australia's Foreign Policy* (1938). In the same year, he produced with Colin Clark, another Easter Conference participant, *The National Income of Australia*. Publishing widely on the subject of trade, Crawford advocated greater co-operation with Asia, the major conflict with Japan during World War II notwithstanding. At the Conference he spoke of surveys conducted in the dairying industry as the result of representation from that industry. The surveys had been successful because there had been an economic incentive to co-operate.

* Professor Raymond Maxwell 'Max' Crawford, Professor of History, University of Melbourne, suggested that 'Government Departments should be included in the research teams of the National University' and that government economists could then be granted leave to write up their research. In a later reflection, he confessed to Hancock, 'I don't much like the idea of a research institution by itself', but was prepared to see how it would develop.⁵⁹ He had earlier suggested that 'the role of the National University might be the eventual production of an Australian Dictionary of Biography' (ADB) and would have been pleased by the ADB's success, an undertaking developed some years later under Hancock.⁶⁰

* Dr Pearce William Edward 'Pike' Curtin, an economist and former Assistant Director of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction, was involved with post-war education policy. He was concerned with the balance among government, corporations, press and broadcasting, and the individual. He quoted Max Weber: 'the problem is that of the survival of the individual in an age of mass bureaucratisation'. His network included Dr H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs who recruited him to work with the Reserve Bank during the period of the decolonisation of Papua New Guinea.

* Mr Richard Ivan Downing was Acting Chief Economist to the Department of Post-War Reconstruction and also lectured on public finance and statistical method at the University of Melbourne. He considered that the ANU would play a useful role if it kept government economists and academics in touch with one another and ensured that State universities were kept well informed.

* Sir Frederic Eggleston, anthropologist and member of the Interim Council, declared that whether or not Australians were currently aware of the importance of the Pacific, in the next ten years a study of the Pacific area would be forced on Australia by political developments. Interest in the Pacific was much more widespread than formerly. In the past, most applicants for colonial service applied to go to such places as South Africa but most now expressed a preference for the Pacific.

* Professor Gerald Gill Firth had been involved in drafting the White Paper on Full Employment, a central feature of the Chifley government's post-war economic policy. In 1947 he took up the chair of Economics at the University of Tasmania, a post that carried with it an appointment as economic adviser to the government of Tasmania.

* Professor Raymond Firth, Professor of Anthropology at the London School of Economics and one of the four Academic Advisers, chaired the discussion on the School of Pacific Studies and also attended the discussions on the Social Sciences. He stressed 'the importance of being able to offer both adequate salaries and future prospects to young economists who tended to be attracted away by the high salaries offered by the Commonwealth Government'. He believed that teamwork with contributions from historians and political scientists was important in economic research. It was clear, he said, that anthropologists working in the Pacific School would sometimes have to rely on other Schools. Like Hancock, he considered that academic staff should be free from domestic tasks, hence the importance of establishing a Faculty Club.

* Professor Wolfgang Gaston Friedmann, who had fled Nazi Germany to come to Australia, held the Chair of Public Law at the University of Melbourne. A well-known commentator on world affairs, he considered that monopolies in all their legal, economic, and sociological aspects were valuable subjects for research. He speculated whether the ANU could set to work as a kind of Economic Royal Commission on contemporary problems. He used sociological jurisprudence as an example of the importance of a team approach to subjects such as prison reform. Teams, he argued, should not be confined to academics but should also include intelligent laymen and public servants. A few years after the Easter Conference, he moved to the USA where, at the age 65, he was robbed and murdered.

* Acting Professor Gordon Greenwood, historian, University of Sydney, believed that every question was a national question and that the federal system – States' rights – had outlived its

⁵⁹ R.M. Crawford to W.K. Hancock, 7 June 1949, ANUA 77-1.

⁶⁰ R.M. Crawford to R.G. Osborne, 10 October 1947, ANUA 18-104/1/9.

usefulness. He was soon to be appointed Professor of History at the University of Queensland, cementing his interest in both Australian history and political science.

* Mr Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck (later Sir, Governor-General of Australia, 1969–1974), Reader in History, University of Western Australia, 'emphasized that it was just as important for Government economists to keep in touch with university economists as it was for academic economists to be aware what was happening in Government departments'. He also pointed out that many of the documents required for social research were not available in Canberra.

* Professor James Macdonald Holmes, the gregarious McCaughey Professor of Geography, University of Sydney, expressed the hope that there would be no cloistered remoteness about the new university, that it would not develop into a purely research institution solving problems in principle but leaving the work of extension and application to the States. The object of political science should be to discover laws, such as 'people will always vote in such and such a way in such circumstances'. Research of the kind undertaken overseas was required in Australia, the work of Professor Halford Mackinder of the London School of Economics who studied the links between political power and geographical space being a good example.

* Professor Charles King, History with a special interest in political science, University of Tasmania, supported Manning Clark in the need for publication of archival documents. Much of the material for Tasmania for the period before 1824 was located outside Tasmania and some was still in private hands.

* Mr John Andrew La Nauze, Reader in Economic History at the University of Sydney, was the recipient of an ANU Research Fellowship, 1947–1948, studying the history of the Australian tariff. La Nauze was wary of too close a contact with Government departments. He said there should be a place in the School 'for a man who took an anti-government line [but] this might be difficult in Canberra'. He considered that economic history in Australia was at the stage that English economic history had reached in the 1920s and so more work was needed in this field as well as the building up of archives. He welcomed the idea of a 'Guide to Australian Documents'.

* Professor Frank Richard Edward Mauldon, formerly economic adviser to the Tasmanian government and Professor of Economics at the University of Western Australia, was now Director of Research in the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics. A prolific author, he published books on the mechanisation of Australian industries, the coal industry, labour mobility, and the use of statistics.

* Professor Richard Charles Mills, economist and prolific author, was a central figure in the development of the ANU. Formerly of the University of Sydney, he was presently Chairman of the Interim Council. Having been involved in the vast range of matters engaging the Universities Commission and the Commonwealth Office of Education, he expressed a particular interest in the financing of universities.

* Professor Oscar Adolf Oster, foundation chair of Sociology, University of Melbourne, opened the discussion on Sociology. Perhaps because this subject was a relatively new field, his comments were recorded in more detail than any others: 'There seemed to be three types of conception of the nature of sociology: first Comte's view that sociology is the most general of the social sciences; second, Spencer's view that sociology is the synthesis of the social sciences; and third, the basic point of view represented by Ginsberg and others. Sharp conflicts had occurred between the realists (e.g. Max Weber, Pareto) and the nominalists (descending from Aristotle) who held that society was not a real entity and that explanations of social behavior should be sought in terms of individual members of society. In fact, the realist-nominalist controversy could now be regarded as settled, at least to this extent that both the macrostructure and microstructure had to be studied. Great advances had recently been made in the abstract theory of the organism, to the synthesis represented by the structural functionalists, and to the increasing prominence of empiricism in sociology as seen in the development from Machiavelli through Mark and Pareto to Malinowski. In methodology, there were three clearly defined approaches in any of the social sciences: the descriptive, the experimental and the mathematical, and the modern tendency was inductive and positive. Although the social sciences may not be expensive in materials they were certainly expensive in men.' Oster recommended that the ANU provide statistical and indexing services and a new classification of census returns.

* Professor William Matthew 'Bill' O'Neil was McCaughey Professor of Psychology at the University of Sydney (at that time the only chair of Psychology in Australia) and was also a member of the Social Sciences Research Council. A great advocate for psychology, he was interested in its history as well as in its current methods and concepts.

* Professor Percy Herbert 'Perc' Partridge, Chair of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney, said it would be absolutely necessary to have a clear conception of the tasks

to be undertaken before detailed work could begin. Later, in 1952, he was appointed as foundation professor of social philosophy at the ANU.

* Professor George Whitecross Paton was Professor of Jurisprudence at the University of Melbourne. His well-regarded *Text Book on Jurisprudence* (1940) was a seminal work for students. He had earlier expressed the view that 'the whole field of Australian legal history has been shockingly ignored'.⁶¹

* Professor Wilfred Prest, Dean of Commerce and Economics at the University of Melbourne, thought there was a danger that the ANU would become more involved with Government economists than had been the case with economists working in State universities.

* Associate Professor Geoffrey Sawer, Law, University of Melbourne, published his highly regarded *Australian Constitutional Cases* in the year of the Easter Conference. He asked if he was correct in thinking that the ANU was not contemplating a Department or School of Law? Was it the view that, instead, lawyers would be attached to particular departments? Two years later, in 1950, at the age of 39, he was appointed foundation Professor of Law at the ANU.

* Professor Kenneth Owen Shatwell, Challis Professor of Law at the University of Sydney and Dean of the Faculty of Law, considered that the legal field, like economics, was in great need of synthesis and interpretation.

* Professor Julius Stone, Challis Professor of International Law and Jurisprudence at the University of Sydney, had a special interest in the post-war Jewish settlement in Palestine. He said that although the new university could expect some reinforcement from distinguished visitors from other countries, most 'cerebral resources' would be Australian. He considered that the mere geographical relocation of minds would not make much difference to the quality of researchers' work. He recommended that the name of the new school should not be 'Research School in the Social Sciences' but rather something along the lines of the 'Institute of Human Relations'. This would make it clear that its research would not impinge on the work of other universities because its functions would be essentially integrative. He pointed out that Australia had received a substantial heritage of political ideas from England and other English-speaking countries and suggested that the study of adaptations to the Australian environment was an important research task.

* Professor John Hedley Brian Tew, Economics, University of Adelaide, suggested an interchange of staff between government departments and universities.

* Mr Wilfred Asquith Townsley, Political Science, University of Tasmania, opened the discussion on political science. Although Canberra seemed to have many advantages, he hoped that its atmosphere would not become too rarified. Machiavelli had assigned importance to the study of military science (now referred to by the Americans as 'logistics') and he recommended this subject to research workers.

* Mr John Manning Ward from the Department of History at the University of Sydney had a special strength in constitutional history. He argued that Australian history was best studied in an international context, especially against a British background.

* Professor Samuel MacMahon Wadham, Professor of Agriculture, University of Melbourne, had a particular involvement in rural sociology through the University's Agricultural School. Referring to the technique of sociological surveys, he emphasised the need to see that the people approached for information were stimulated and well prepared in advance. Canberra was distrusted throughout Australia and therefore it would be wise to seek assistance from people in State universities.

* Professor Gordon Leslie Wood, Professor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne since 1944, considered that Professor Butlin's suggestions [below] were too narrow, and that specific fields of research could be undertaken more appropriately by State universities and that the ANU should study broader fields such as 'national and international economic tensions'. In a paper submitted in advance of the Conference, entitled 'Pacific Studies, A Practical Charter?' he laid out some of the basic problems: 'As a concept, the Pacific is as unsatisfactory as 'the West', the 'Orient' or any other of those pseudo-geographical terms whose lack of definition has become sanctioned by usage.' Determining what should be the School's main concern, he stressed the difficult choices to be made between 'area' versus 'studies'. He observed that countries remote in distance might be, or might become, more immediate in influence and also warned that 'backward but populous countries may quickly acquire a nuisance value in international politics.' He advocated a broad emphasis on human geography.

* Absent: Professor Noel George Butlin, lecturer in Economic History at the University of Sydney, submitted a paper which, among administrative matters, recommended the value of dairying and manufacturing as being important potential projects in economic history.

⁶¹ G.W. Paton to R.G. Osborne, 9 October 1947, ANUA 18-104/1/9.

Conclusions, Social Sciences

The Social Sciences seminar gave voices to many disciplines, generating optimism that new ground was ready and waiting to be developed. Some fields, such as Demography and the sources of Australian History, were to find a prominent place in the ANU, but many loose ends remained. Hancock appreciated there was much more to discuss both outside and inside the ANU. As well as conferring in Canberra, he also visited colleagues in Melbourne, the University of Melbourne being the home of his undergraduate studies. Reflecting on these discussions, he concluded that, 'Although I was out of my depth at times with some of the specialists and perhaps now and then was maladroit, I felt we got long fairly well'.

It was a different matter, he said, with the Interim Council. 'If only I had taken similar pains to get alongside the leading members of the Interim Council! ... I shall not try to explain what the friction was about.'⁶² One highly probable cause of the trouble was his conviction that the School of Social Sciences and the School of Pacific Studies should be located in the same building and should to some extent be intertwined, probably to the advantage of the School of Social Sciences. He also appeared to insist that he (and not the ANU Council) would appoint his staff. His position on these matters was sometimes difficult to determine but he certainly expected to enjoy significant freedom.

Conference on Research in Pacific Studies: Professor Raymond Firth and participants

Pacific Studies, Preparation

Initially called 'The School of Pacific Affairs and Diplomatic Studies', the name of the School suffered from a double entendre which was soon altered (after acrid criticism) to the more nebulous 'Studies'. In addition, 'Diplomatic Studies' was dropped as being too vocational.

A few days before the Conference, a number of participants (including E.H. Hipsley, J.M. Ward, H.I. P. Hogbin, A. Capell, R.M. Crawford, F. Eggleston and T. Inglis Moore) were invited to submit papers on the historical work required in Pacific Studies. The list of subjects in Crawford's response illustrates the urgent desire for updated information on a number of wide-ranging issues: 'European impact on native peoples. History of European intrusion into the Pacific and of unofficial contact with the natives. The establishment of colonial empires. Forms of control and administration. Native policies, or lack of them, under such headings as pacification, health, economic development (e.g. of native agriculture). Depopulation. Disintegration or modification of native cultures. ... Economics of both rulers and ruled. Nationalism in South East Asia and Indonesia and on a smaller scale, in Samoa'.⁶³ On Australia's special interest in the Pacific, Crawford was already a significant publicist having reached a wide audience especially through the school text book *Ourselves and the Pacific* (1941) that was to run through at least 35 editions.

Sir Frederic Eggleston was one of the most controversial contributors, especially on the subject of vocational training. Since he claimed that it was his idea to establish a School of Pacific Studies, he declared that it 'was definitely intended to train men for careers and the School of Social Research, though it will have a fundamental purpose, may also be an agency in such training. Professor Hancock refers to this as vocational training. I do not know whether this remark is intended to depreciate this form of training. If so, I do not agree with Professor Hancock'. Eggleston went on to state what he considered blindingly obvious: 'Those who study Oriental or African subjects do so for their careers. I do not think that there can be any higher form of education than giving men who have the responsibility for performing public services of great importance, the training necessary for them to discharge that responsibility in the most enlightened way...no slur can be attached [to such training]'.⁶⁴ Eggleston's view did not prevail at the Easter Conference. Oliphant put the opposition case very clearly: 'The University should not, in any of its branches, attach first importance to the

⁶² 'Draft' [re the decision of the Interim Council not to accept Hancock's proposals for the two schools], Sir Walter Crocker Papers, MSS 327.C9538p, Series 9, 1949-1952, as above.

⁶³ R.M. Crawford, 'Historical Work in Pacific Studies' in Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies', ANUA 77-50.

⁶⁴ F. Eggleston, 'Memorandum on Cadet Training', in 'Conference with Academic Advisory Committee', Easter 1948, ANUA 77-50.

training of professional men'.⁶⁵ Training was very different from research and was better accommodated at Canberra University College rather than at the ANU.

Since the numbers accommodated at the Conference were necessarily limited, it is understandable that Professors and Heads of Department were selected as the main representatives. More junior staff, Melbourne University History lecturer Miss Dorothy Frances Crozier being one, prepared bibliographies on Australian History and Pacific Studies to advance the work of the Conference. To achieve this, Crozier worked at great pace over the Easter weekend. At the time, she was researching 'Social Services for Natives in the South Pacific'. A specialist on Tonga and a protégé of Raymond Firth and Jim Davidson who was to become the foundation professor of Pacific History at the ANU, she became the first professional archivist in the South Pacific and had lengthy academic career in New Zealand.

Participants, Pacific Studies

Professor Raymond Firth chaired the discussion. He endorsed the view that the Australian National University was 'to be an institution for research and that to couple it with career training would definitely dilute the whole research component of the university'.⁶⁶ He explained that, 'One difficulty with the School of Pacific Studies was that there was no organized group of disciplines with which it could be concerned – there was rather a regional projection of almost independent range'.⁶⁷ In a paper he prepared in anticipation of the Conference, he wrote, 'It would seem to me reasonable to say that one main job of the Pacific School should be to do research on the island territories which Australia controls and with the development and administration of which her international reputation is bound up. Research should also be done...in the fields of Chinese and Japanese affairs. But this should be oriented towards the effects of movement in these bordering countries on Australia and the Pacific Island Territories rather than analyse conditions in these countries per se...Adequate work in the Sinological and other bordering fields...is impossible without access to documents and contact with contemporary events which is really not possible for an institution working from Australia'.⁶⁸

In answer to the suggestion that Pacific Studies should be incorporated into the School of Social Sciences, Professor Firth, Sir Frederic Eggleston and Professor Ward were among those who stressed its value as a separate School.⁶⁹ They advanced several strong arguments: that 'the colossal ignorance of countries near our own shores' had been revealed by Japan's entry into the war; that 'up to the last generation, a great deal of this area has been subservient to Western Empires, but its peoples are now affected by new ideas, conscious of new wants and the dynamic this generates is producing vast changes'. Moreover, in other countries, 'Schools of Oriental Studies were quite common'.⁷⁰

While the need for such studies seemed self-evident, Eggleston declared that his views on what a School should research 'differed entirely' from those of Academic Adviser Professor Raymond Firth. Firth, he claimed, wanted to concentrate mainly on Anthropology whereas Eggleston favoured a broader approach.⁷¹

In either case, a dauntingly vast field of research appeared before them, Eggleston's mention of 'the 48 different nations of Indonesia' being only one example. Priorities had to be established. Firth suggested that: 'On such questions as the rights of peoples ... since Australia had its own dependencies, these might be given highest priority and Malaya left to others'.

⁶⁵ M. Oliphant, 'Professor Oliphant's memorandum of 8 February 1947, with particular reference to the proposed school of Physical Sciences', Conference with the Academic Advisory Committee, Easter, 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/12.

⁶⁶ For a fuller account of Raymond Firth's views on the founding of the Australian National University: Sir Raymond Firth interviewed by Margaret Murphy, 1974, OH ORAL TRC, National Library of Australia.

⁶⁷ Professor Firth in 'Summary of Discussions at a Conference convened by the Interim council at the request of Professor Raymond Firth, Pacific Studies, 3 & 4 April, 1948', ANUA 77-50.

⁶⁸ F. Eggleston, 'Memorandum on School of Pacific Studies', ANUA 77-74.

⁶⁹ Paul Hasluck in 'Summary of Discussions', Conference on Research in Pacific Studies, as above.

⁷⁰ Professor Ward, Sir Frederic Eggleston, 'Summary of Discussions', Conference on Research in Pacific Studies, as above.

⁷¹ Sir Frederic Eggleston to R.G. Osborne, 21 January 1948. 'Summary of Discussions', Conference on Research in Pacific Studies, as above.

The inclusion of China posed a particular problem because of difficulty of access both to the country and to the complexity of contemporary events. As Firth explained, 'China is a country free from foreign control endeavouring to adopt Western institutions and industrialisation, but her people are divided and she is at present in a state of acute political instability.'⁷²

As well as a general discussion, the Pacific Studies Conference was broken up into topics: Anthropology, Economics, History, and Geography. The eighteen-page Conference report does not include every contribution from individuals. Where the participant is not recorded as having made a comment or his views need to be set in a wider context, an effort has been made to glean from other sources his university or organisation affiliation as at 1948 and his general line of interest: * Sir Frederic Eggleston stressed the urgency of the situation: 'Australia might shortly be faced by great states, created probably by a handful of intellectuals and unless the transitions were successful, a long period of chaos could be expected.' He asked, 'What would happen to native races at present under imperial domination if the imperial power walked out?'. In a paper he wrote in preparation for the Conference, he drew attention to nationalist movements designed to throw off foreign ascendancy...these people demand a better social, economic and organization relief from the burdens of ignorance and poverty. He was especially worried about migration and uncontrolled occupation. He favoured the inclusion of India, China, and Japan in the study areas.⁷³ At the same time he argued that the School could not deal with all issues, especially medical problems. He reiterated that 'it was clearly understood' that the ANU would be independent of government departments.

* Mr Charles Studly Daley, a prominent Canberra administrator, was both a member of the Interim Council and a founding member of the Council of Canberra University College (CUC). As a keeper of the CUC's corporate memory, Daley was well aware of the key role that the CUC and its Chair, Sir Robert Garran, had played in promoting the idea of a national university. During World War II, Prime Minister John Curtin clearly saw Australia's need for more trained men as well as advanced research into medicine, chemistry and other sciences. In April 1945, Curtin was spurred on by the request from the CUC's Council to form a national university. Curtin reflected that as Canberra had no industries, it was even more important to promote it as a centre of learning. There is, he declared, 'no reason why Canberra should not become a city like Oxford or Cambridge'.⁷⁴ The 1946 ANU Act permitted some kind of amalgamation between the ANU and the CUC but the discussions concentrated on research. It was clear that a merger would not be seriously entertained until the research schools were firmly established. Daley was interested in education at all levels, and at the time of the Easter Conference also attended Education Week to mark the centenary of public education in New South Wales. In almost every discussion about education, Commonwealth versus State responsibility was a major topic, as it was in university funding.

* Dr John Andrews, Senior Lecturer at the University of Sydney, denied an assertion that geographers were either parasites or handmaidens: '[Although] it was necessary to draw on other disciplines, geography was not unique in this respect – historians did it also.' In defining 'Pacific', he favoured initial concentration on Melanesia, Indonesia and then on South-East Asia generally. The first problem to be investigated should be the relation of population and population density to resources.

* Professor Alec Hutcheson Baldwin held the newly established chair of Tropical Medicine in the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in Townsville. He was an expert among much else on hookworms. He commented that, to avoid unnecessary duplication and expense, the ANU could help by circulating information about research projects being undertaken in Australia.

* Dr Arthur Capell, Reader in Oceanic Languages, Department of Anthropology, University of Sydney, and President in 1948 of the Anthropological Society of New South Wales, stressed the importance of linguistic studies. In a paper submitted before the Conference, he declared that 'almost the whole area of Papua requires a large amount of linguistic work.' He pointed out that the location of tribes was not well known, even near the Papuan border. In addition, in 'the northern part of central Australia [there were] a number of tribes whose languages have not been studied at all.' The lack of knowledge of vernacular languages had very serious implications for teaching.⁷⁵

⁷² Raymond Firth, 'School of Pacific Studies, Memorandum', 30 January 1948; G.L. Wood, 'A Practical Charter', 'Summary of Discussions', Conference on Research in Pacific Studies, Academic Advisory Committee, 3 & 4 April 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/11.

⁷³ F. Eggleston, 'Administration of a Mandate for New Guinea', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies, ANUA 77-50.

⁷⁴ *Canberra Times*, 12 April 1945, p.4.

⁷⁵ A. Capell, 'Linguistic Research in the Pacific Area', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies', ANUA 77-50.

* Mr Ernest William Pearson 'Pearson' Chinnery spoke from his experience as Government Anthropologist in Papua New Guinea. He highlighted the vast fields for urgent research ranging from the influence of magic and sorcery to laws relating to fisheries and reefs. He advocated the development of co-operative societies and the establishment of native courts.

* Mr John Grenfell 'Jack' Crawford, economist, public servant and administrator, had taught rural economics at the University of Sydney and in 1945, among many other activities, was a major player in establishing the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. He considered that the fear of government dominance of research was 'a rather unreal and unnecessary phobia'. He pointed to the possible danger that the School might be so concerned not to undertake work that could conceivably be used by Government departments that it would only undertake such pure and rarified research as to be altogether pointless. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research had occasionally been subject to government pressure but had yielded only when it wanted to. He did not think it necessary to have a blueprint or a detailed conception of subjects but that men of calibre should be appointed who would then determine the areas of research. It was probably best to select topics related to Australia's interests, a study of capital investments in Indonesia being especially appropriate. With reference to Professor Hancock's views about the dangers of premature synthesis, he thought it was useful in academic matters to put one's neck out and make generalisations, even on insufficient evidence, to guide people engaged in detailed research. He considered that fact-finding would be important and that the study of 'universals' would have to be limited. Teamwork might involve staff from State universities visiting the ANU.

* Professor William John Dakin, Challis Professor of Zoology at the University of Sydney, especially well known for his study of Australian seashores, favoured a staff with mainly anthropological interests but also recommended that the School consider attaching experts in medicine and biology.

* Professor Adolphus Peter 'A.P.' Elkin, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Sydney, had a special interest in Australian Aboriginal peoples. He agreed that studies of Indonesia-Australia contacts were important, but asserted that they fell more within the field of archaeology than of social anthropology, which raised the question of whether the School should include archaeology? Referring to teamwork and fieldwork, he asked how natives would react to teams of six or seven researchers suddenly appearing among them?

* Acting Professor Gordon Greenwood of the University of Queensland had an established interest in Australian constitutional history and a growing concern with Australian foreign policy, including Australia's relationship with Asia.

* Professor William Keith 'Keith' Hancock, one of the four Academic Advisors, who, in addition to chairing the sessions on the School of Social Sciences also took part in Firth's Conference, urged that the School of Pacific Studies limit the fields to be investigated. He argued that smaller problems were more manageable and the major problems were reflected in them. No history was good unless it was based on all the evidence. He was impressed by the suggestion that 'Australia might be able to make a good job of Melanesia'. Overlap would necessarily exist between the School of Pacific Studies and the School of Social Sciences.

* Mr Paul Meernaa Caedwalla Hasluck, Reader in History, University of Western Australia, advocated the inclusion of India. Wary of government demands, he advised that the University should make no promises about results.

* Dr Eben Hamilton Hipsley of the Australian Institute of Anatomy, whose field of expertise was the nutritional health of the Australian nation, had conducted a survey of health in New Guinea and saw great value in many specialists working as a team. In a paper he had earlier submitted to Florey he had thought mainly in terms of a School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, surveying issues such as protein deficiency.⁷⁶ In 1948 the Institute of Anatomy was under the control of the Commonwealth Health Department with Hipsley as its Medical Officer and fellow Conference participant Dr Fred Clements as the Director.

* Dr Herbert Ian Priestley 'Ian' Hogbin, Reader in Anthropology, University of Sydney, had conducted extensive fieldwork in the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. In the post-war years, he advised the Australian government on policies regarding the Territory of Papua and New Guinea. In a paper he submitted in preparation for the Conference, and again in the Conference itself, he stressed the urgent need for basic research in the anthropology of Melanesian societies to build up understanding of cultural differences, without which it was impossible to understand the politics of the region. Special studies on labour in Fiji; the labour policy of New Guinea; and the anthropology

⁷⁶ E.H. Hipsley, 'New Guinea Nutrition Survey, suggestions for future research', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies, as above.

of New Caledonia were also required. Not all these subjects would necessarily be tackled by the ANU.⁷⁷

* Professor James Macdonald Holmes, geographer, University of Sydney, was wary of political pressures. He supported the study of geography, especially for the assistance it could give to environmental studies. He favoured exchanges with Chinese students. He also suggested that young people resident in New Guinea should be brought back to Australia with a view to sending them out again as research workers. World War II had made it quite clear that, despite the national scheme for mapping Australia and work in the States, 'there was not sufficient precise geographical information about our own country, let alone the whole of the Pacific area'.

* Mr Tom Inglis Moore, literary scholar and lecturer in Pacific Studies at Canberra University College, had been lecturing to diplomatic cadets since 1945. He argued that one of the School's main tasks should be to train such personnel. In a statement prepared for the Conference, he wrote of the 'general want of interest by Australians in the pre-war years in the Pacific as a political sphere'.⁷⁸

* Mr Norman MacDonald Richmond, a New Zealander, formerly of the University of Queensland and Director of Tutorial Classes for the Workers Educational Association, was appointed in 1945 as the lecturer in Modern History at Canberra University College. He had a special interest in New Guinea. His main responsibility was to teach diplomatic cadets, a role that caused concern among security forces when he increasingly voiced his militant left-wing views.

* Professor John Hedley Brian 'Brian' Tew was Professor of Economics at the University of Adelaide. During his Professorship, Economics was separated from History and formed another department within the Faculty of Arts. At the Easter Conference, he expressed his interest in post-war finances and recovery.

* Dr Donald Thomson, who as Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne had lived among Aboriginal peoples in northern Australia, emphasised the importance of including them in the studies. 'One of the mistakes committed in the administration of the peoples living on the Northern coast-line had been the failure to realise that these people were not barbarians ... but had extensive contact with Indonesia and others in the Pacific Ocean. The anthropologist would be able to assist the geographer in many ways as, for instance, explaining the unusual manner in which the natives named the seasons. It was also urgently necessary to study the aftermath of the war especially on islands in the Pacific.'

* Mr John Manning Ward, an historian with legal training, was from 1948 the newly appointed Challis Professor of History at the University of Sydney. For some years he had been studying islands in the South Pacific and in 1948 published *British Policy in the South Pacific Islands prior to the establishment of government by the Great Powers*. In a paper submitted in preparation for the Conference, he wrote that 'Research into the Pacific Islands has too long suffered from overemphasis on the political and diplomatic aspects of the record. This deficiency is to be attributed to the lack of information in almost every possible form concerning the social and economic aspects of island history ... Greater attention to economic relations is necessary, while the whole field of cultural interchange remains virtually untouched.'⁷⁹

* Professor Gordon Leslie Wood, Professor of Commerce, University of Melbourne, noted the significant increase in Australia's international responsibilities and the adjustment of native races upon contact with Western civilisations. He stressed that the School of Pacific Studies should not degenerate into a fact-finding organisation for the Department of External Affairs and instead should concern itself with human adjustments and perhaps attempt to improve standards of living by bringing the results of technical advances to the appropriate places. He supported the work of the economic geographer.

Conclusion, Pacific Studies

Even though this School was considered one of the hall marks of the new university, defining the most important areas for study remained contentious as did its relationship with the School of Social Sciences. However 'Pacific' might be defined, the political, economic and social aspects were especially fluid in the immediate post-war years, the impact of China being one of many as yet unknown pressures on the region. Meshing anthropological and historical studies with current and forward-looking research and activities was a significant challenge.

⁷⁷ H.I. Hogbin, 'Anthropological Research in the Pacific Area', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies, as above.

⁷⁸ T. Inglis Moore, 'Research in Political Affairs', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies, as above.

⁷⁹ J. M. Ward, 'Research into the Pacific Islands', Summary of Discussions, Pacific Studies, as above.

Research in the Physical Sciences: Professor Mark Oliphant

Preparation, Physical Sciences

Oliphant's involvement had begun years before with talks at the highest political level. In 1947, in preparation for his visit to Australia and meeting with the Interim Council, he wrote persuasively about the importance of Physical Science and the value of cooperation between disciplines: 'Physics is the basic science, in terms of which all natural phenomena, inanimate or animate, must be explained. It is hence highly desirable that a very close relationship shall be encouraged between a research institute in physical science and similar institutes of medical science and even of social science'.⁸⁰ So, for example, 'our understanding of the transmission of nerve impulses depended on our understanding of the complex molecules which made up the nerve fibres'. He was already sufficiently familiar with the work of Physics departments in all six State universities. At the University of Melbourne, in addition to teaching undergraduates, Professor Leslie H. Martin and others were conducting significant research along the lines of Oliphant's interests. Oliphant and Martin had previously worked together and were to add to their mutual interests when, later on, Martin was appointed to the Interim Council.

In 1947 Oliphant put forward estimates of the School's cost and running expenses for the first five years. The isolated position of Canberra makes it necessary to have at our disposal larger workshops and a more complete range of facilities than are required in an industrial city. Although the estimates were much higher than the government had anticipated, Prime Minister Chifley gave him the go-ahead and organised to meet him at the time of the Easter Conference.⁸¹ As equipment was expensive, it was only realistic to expect that the Director's interest would be paramount – it was no use funding projects that no one was able to lead or recruiting staff to work on a particular project and then changing it.

Discussions, Physical Sciences

Arriving in Canberra in March 1948 for the first round of meetings with the Interim Council, Oliphant confessed he felt worn out after the long journey to Australia, the constant demands for his views on nuclear subjects, and by the responsibility of leaving England for Australia when post-war England still needed assistance. He escaped to his parents' home in Adelaide for a quiet week before returning to Canberra for the Easter Conference, but had not arranged a specific session on the School of Physical Sciences. It was sufficient that he should meet with the Prime Minister and the ANU's Interim Council, be available to talk with other scientists, and to look around with a view to establishing a new home in Canberra.

Unlike Florey, who proposed that the medical school should cover a wide range of topics, Oliphant became increasingly focused, envisaging himself as the Director of a School, concentrating on his interests, the most important of which was high-energy accelerator physics. Sometimes referred to as referred to as 'particle physics', this research concentrated on examining the very smallest particles from which all matter is made. This included a study of the interaction of particles and the forces governing their behaviour. In order to break apart the building blocks of matter, it was necessary to cause these constituents to collide with higher and higher energies, at speeds very close to the speed of light. Machines designed for this purpose were large and expensive.

Like Hancock, Oliphant stressed the importance of securing first-rate researchers. 'The possibility of building a good school depended upon obtaining the services of first-class men to lead the various departments. In my view it was more important to begin work at the highest possible level in the few branches of the physical sciences than to attempt to develop all aspects, and even this limited effort should grow only at the rate which was determined by the availability of suitable men.'⁸²

Conclusions, Physical Sciences

Oliphant had already planned nuclear physics as one of the University's most important research projects. Although he had played a research role in the development of the first atomic bombs dropped on Japan, he was now concerned with nuclear power for peaceful purposes, later describing himself as 'a belligerent pacifist'. He was not entirely single-minded: theoretical physics,

⁸⁰ M. Oliphant, 'Comments on the Foundation of a National University in Canberra with particular reference to the proposed School of Physical Science', 8 February 1947, ANUA 18-104/1/12.

⁸¹ *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales*, Vol.133, 2000, in Stewart Cockburn Papers, MSS 92 04775p, Series 14, University of Adelaide Archives.

⁸² M. Oliphant, 'General Policy ANU 1955-1956', ANUA 10-2.

geophysics and mathematics were among other research areas to be considered, and perhaps in the future it might be possible to add astronomy which was already operating in well-established federal government funded facilities at Mt Stromlo, in the hills to the west of the city.⁸³

Consulting University architect Professor Brian Lewis, the ANU site, and University House

The year before the Easter Conference, the government had approved university buildings as an urgent priority. In late 1947, Professor Brian Lewis was appointed as the Consulting Site and Building Architect for the Acton area. At one time Acton was Canberra's administrative heart but in accordance with Walter Burley Griffin's plan, the site was always intended for a university. The year or so leading up to the Conference had been especially busy for Lewis. His wife Hilary, also an architect, had given birth to twin boys increasing the number of children to five; he had been appointed to the first chair of architecture at the University of Melbourne; and, on the eve of the Conference, he returned from Europe where he had been studying university buildings, especially those designed for scientific research.

Lewis was on hand at the Easter Conference to show the members of the Academic Advisory Committee the 204-acre (approximately 82½ hectares) site at Acton. Earlier, Hancock, expressing his views in private, was scathing about the land 'dropping down to swampy stuff that could be drained to form a lake'. Since there was no sign of the planned artificial lake (Lake Burley Griffin was not officially inaugurated until 1964), the university's boundaries were still being determined. The only physical signs of progress were a few piles of soil and timber from a dismantled Mess and other buildings that had once served the Airforce at Cootamundra.⁸⁴

Concerning new buildings, the Academic Advisory Committee was emphatic that no final decisions as to any aspect of the building program should be taken before the Easter Conference. Lewis agreed with their advice that, unlike the dreaming spires of Oxford, the character and construction of all buildings should be unpretentious. Nevertheless, he was taken aback when the Academic Advisers appeared to show little interest in his ideas for designs, being much more concerned with action on the ground.

By Easter 1948, plans for a Faculty Club – later to become known as University House – were developing rapidly, but no foundations had as yet been laid. The proposal had a long history but became a particular hobby-horse of Sir Keith Hancock: 'What we want is the twentieth-century equivalent of that medieval institution, the Oxford College ... Meals and every kind of service are provided for the Fellows of the College; in consequence, they can give their days to their proper work. Somebody else washes their dishes ...'.⁸⁵ He also advocated setting up some corner of the university where the wives of academics could meet, an idea later realised in a spacious Ladies Drawing Room at University House.

First Vice-Chancellor, Professor Douglas Copland

The Labor Cabinet's decision to appoint Professor Douglas Berry Copland as the first Vice-Chancellor from 3 March 1948 was prompted by the forthcoming Easter Conference. Since the Academic Advisers were originally to meet in Canberra December 1947–January 1948, his appointment had long been rumoured and he had some say over who was to be invited to the Conference. When the Academic Advisers were within a week of leaving England, Prime Minister Chifley was adamant that a formal appointment was urgent.

Still to leave his post as Australia's Minister in China, Copland did not officially take up his duties at the ANU until 11 May 1948 but the *Canberra Times* reported that on Sunday morning 3 April, the last day of the Conference, he returned to Canberra, a city he knew relatively well having kept a flat there during the war years. Although any contribution he might have made on 3 April is not recorded, two weeks later he reported that he had been 'plunged into discussions' and was aware that 'many people have done some first-class basic thinking on the Australian National University.' Having been out of academic life for eight years, he was pleased to acknowledge that 'I shall profit by this thinking and I am grateful to those who have already given me such valuable advice.'⁸⁶

⁸³ M. Oliphant, 'Comments on the Foundation of a National University in Canberra', as above.

⁸⁴ *Canberra Times*, 2 August 1947, p.2.

⁸⁵ W.K. Hancock to R.C. Mills, 16 July 1947, Academic Advisory Committee, Part 2, ANUA 18-104/1/8.

⁸⁶ *Canberra Times*, 19 April 1948, p.2; *Queensland Times*, 3 March 1948, p.1.

Copland explained what he now thought was the fundamental problem: it was no longer money, but men. 'It is the irony of Fate that I now find myself in a position where, for the moment, the monetary resources are ample, but the men and materials available to carry out the intentions of Parliament are woefully inadequate.'⁸⁷

After the Easter Conference: meetings with the Interim Council and others

Discussions continued well after the Easter Conference, including meetings in other cities. The Interim Council was reassured by the report-back from the Academic Advisers, confirming the principles established in 1946, and also by the presence of the Vice-Chancellor in Canberra. Real progress now seemed possible.

Reaching consensus

General

Throughout the copious files relating to the Easter Conference, the following declarations stand out: 'the urgent need for advanced research' and 'the progress that, with care, is likely to follow, both at home and abroad'. While the expense and work involved could not be underestimated, the cost of doing nothing was even higher. It was best to look to the future in the spirit of optimism. Sir Frederic Eggleston's prescient statement on the value of Australian research and interest in the Pacific illustrates this forward-looking view: 'If the transition period [from colonial rule] is successfully accomplished, we shall be faced with millions of people with considerable economic strength and this will be a stimulus to the Australian economy.'⁸⁸

Reports from the Easter Conference contain outlines of the discussions but not specific recommendations. When participants started to talk in greater depth, Florey advised, 'Better not to specify details, just put [the matter] in a few general terms'.⁸⁹ Detailed discussions about the roles of senior staff, scholarships, honorary degrees, study leave, the library, and decisions to appoint yet more committees took place in meetings that fell outside the dates of the Easter Conference. For the moment, the Academic Advisers and the Interim Council considered it sufficient that consensus was confirmed on the following matters.

Emphasis on research

Except in exceptional circumstances, the emphasis was to be on advanced research rather than on undergraduate teaching or on vocational studies. In Oliphant's view, to embark on undergraduate teaching at this early stage would be 'a fatal mistake'.⁹⁰ The 1946 Act of Parliament left the door open for undergraduate studies through a merger with Canberra University College as well as training for the diplomatic and public service but this was not to be contemplated until the research schools were firmly established. The amalgamation of the ANU and Canberra University College finally took place in December 1960, more than 12 years later.

Appointment of first-rate men

Professor Keith Hancock was adamant that he could not work at any price with 'dim and portentous' colleagues.⁹¹ Both the Interim Council and the Academic Advisers emphasised the importance of securing first-rate men. If this smacked of elitism, so be it. This argument had some force. A person experienced in extending the boundaries of knowledge was needed to lead the team. Innovative ideas did not exist in a vacuum. A first-rate researcher would be a pre-eminent leader in his field, but the definition also included those who might not be 'brilliant' but who were stimulating influences.

Postgraduate students only

The inclusion of postgraduate students (and the occasional work in exceptional circumstances with undergraduates) was to be limited to the most promising. Rather than having free rein over what they might study, postgraduates would work in the fields of interest to their particular School. While supervision of students was secondary to research, it was nevertheless necessary in order to enlarge the pool of experts. Florey later explained: 'The performance of research is the horse and

⁸⁷ *Canberra Times*, 19 April 1948, p.2.

⁸⁸ F. Eggleston, in 'ANU Conference on Research in Pacific Studies, Canberra, 3 and 4th April 1948, Reports required by Professor Raymond Firth', ANUA 18-104/1/11.

⁸⁹ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia, Conference', as above.

⁹⁰ M. Oliphant, Interim Council, 'Special Meeting, 13 July 1947', ANUA 18-104/1/12.

⁹¹ W. K. Hancock to R.C. Mills, 16 July 1947, ANUA 18-104/1/8, Part 1.

the postgraduate students the cart, though the cart clearly makes the horse more useful for serious work.⁹²

Freedom from political interference

Many Conference participants were advisers to the Commonwealth and/or State governments. This was regarded as an essential part of their job and one in which they took pride. In addition, the appointment of four members of Parliament to the Interim Council was in the pipeline.⁹³ The ANU Act of 1946 had specifically allowed for vocational training for the Public Service.⁹⁴ Therefore it is surprising to find a high degree of consensus on the following declaration: 'There is to be no public or other extra-University work, except when a Director or his staff may desire to undertake it as an emergency measure.' Florey was adamant: 'You must not submit the embryo University to the slightest interference'.⁹⁵

Firth specifically stated that, 'It is to be clearly understood that the School is to be a place for Pacific Research and not an information bureau on Pacific Affairs.'⁹⁶ Even regular radio broadcasts were not encouraged because by popularising the topic, academics might dilute the seriousness of the research or represent the view of the individual researcher rather than that of the team, or, worse still, invite uninformed outside comments and interference.

At Oxford and Cambridge, Directors were accustomed to having the all-important say over the work of their Departments. Once the budget had been allocated, the Directors decided the research priorities. Hancock believed that, should he decide to relocate to Australia, he should be free to write a book on any topic he chose.

The Interim Council's hackles were occasionally raised when the Treasury representative Herbert John Goodes insisted on passing proposals before Treasury. Even the *Sydney Morning Herald*, worried as it was about the financial problems of the University of Sydney, was more than willing to concede that, 'It is to the credit of the Commonwealth Government that in devising the charter of the new National University at Canberra, it recognised the need for preserving this independence.'⁹⁷

In many ways, the university was to be 'an ivory tower', a phrase in vogue since the early 1900s. Professors Mark Oliphant and Richard Mills were among those who considered that keeping a distance also applied to the job of the Vice-Chancellor. Although the Vice Chancellor necessarily engaged with the university's political masters and bodies such as the Education Commission, his job was to 'protect the University from outside pressures ... [He] would not be called upon to do outside things or enter too much into the life of the city'.⁹⁸

Although it was never mentioned, an underlying concern about communism may have played a part, at least with some, in the desire to quarantine the university from outside pressures and also in the government's willingness to concur with the demand for independence. In these years, the fear of communism was described by some as 'the most alarming force today' having the power to undermine democratic institutions and personal freedom.⁹⁹

This concern about 'undue influence' from whatever source was of long-standing. The Advisers and others at the Easter Conference would have been aware that the Universities Grants Commission in Britain had been established as far back as 1919 with the explicit aim of being a buffer between political interests and university spending. Closer to home, in the 1940s, Sir Robert Wallace, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, and Ian Clunies Ross, Council for Scientific and Research, had already gone into battle over the protection of independence in research. The ANU's resolution was, therefore, very much in line with long-standing concerns about freedom from external demands and was in conformity with the ideal that democratic nations would protect academic freedom in their universities.

⁹² Sir Howard Florey, 'Report to Council', 2 January 1956, as above.

⁹³ *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 30 June 1949, p.3.

⁹⁴ Australian National University Act 1946, Section 9, comlaw.gov.au Accessed 1 October 2015.

⁹⁵ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia, Conference', as above.

⁹⁶ R. Firth, 'Memorandum on School of Pacific Studies', 30 January 1948, ANUA 77-74.

⁹⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 1948, p.2.

⁹⁸ 'Conference between the Interim Council and the Academic Advisory Committee', Friday 19 March 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/15.

⁹⁹ Sir Thomas Blamey, radio broadcast, *Chronicle* (Adelaide), 9 September 1948, p.9.

Keeping political interference at arm's length sounded very well in theory but Sir Frederic Eggleston and others realised almost immediately that, for example, Australian policy in New Guinea would rely heavily on anthropological research, and so 'any attempt to frame the design of a School so that questions of political import are completely avoided would be wrong'.¹⁰⁰ Within a few months of the Conference, the public face of research came to be more acceptable, so long as the researcher retained the right to refuse to give advice.

No religious test to be applied

From the time the Australian National University Act was drafted, it was agreed that 'no religious test shall be administered to any student or officer'. This remained unquestioned. The university was not an ecclesiastical foundation; at Federation it had been decided that there was to be no established church in Australia; and that such sectarianism as existed had not prevented cooperation in fighting during the War. No appeal to the traditions of Oxford or Cambridge would have been relevant, for both had long abandoned religious tests. In any case the government simply could not afford to finance separate provisions for different religious groups – or for atheists – and so religious provision, or lack of it, was not the concern of the Easter Conference.

Administration to interfere as little as possible with research

The Interim Council and the Academic Advisers carried the responsibility for working out how many senior academic staff, technicians, and administrative assistants should be appointed; what arrangements should be made for superannuation; how scholarships should be awarded; what rents should be charged for University houses for married staff (Florey asked whether they might be rent free?). These discussions continued well beyond 1948.

Almost nothing was said at the Easter Conference about the internal organisation of Departments or the relationship between the Director of a particular School and its Professors, even though these matters worried the Interim Council. Professor Oscar Werner Tiegs, who held the chair of Zoology at the University of Melbourne, voiced a common concern of researchers, that administration was a distraction to be avoided. He complained that, 'our chief problem is administrative. That is the real bug-bear of heads of departments ... we have to try to educate university authorities not to inflict so much administration on us'.¹⁰¹ Tieg's plea was rarely (never?) heeded in any university.

A research university would enhance Australian culture and Canberra's status as the national capital

It was not the purpose of the Easter Conference to seek opinions on Australian culture or on Canberra as a site for the new university. Nevertheless, contemporary correspondence and interviews given to newspapers show that these subjects were never far from the minds of the participants. It was clearly important that they should see the developing city for themselves and come away with an optimistic view of its future. Dr H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs and Sir Frederic Eggleston were among those who highlighted Canberra as one of the 'loveliest places in the world and has in its population a collection of the most interesting and energetic people'.¹⁰² But others were suspicious of Canberra extending its authority in an extravagant fashion, while Walter Crocker, a close friend of Keith Hancock, considered that Australia was a cultural vacuum. For those who were critical of Australian culture, the new university, if it could attract talented researchers, was a beacon of hope. Crocker confessed: 'My own feeling is that everything is right with Australia except the Australians; or more accurately excepting the Australian way of life ... the cultural standards are unbelievably dreary. That is why the new university must have a 'dominating nucleus of the right men'.¹⁰³

Qualified women welcome

Even though all the attendees at the Easter Conference were men, no bias was voiced against women either as researchers or as postgraduate students. Although it was very rare at that time for a woman to occupy a senior position in a university, as far as the Academic Advisers were concerned, they did not show a bias against the tertiary education of women or their capacity to hold academic positions.

¹⁰⁰ F. Eggleston to R.G. Osborne, 'Memorandum Re the School of Pacific Studies', 23 February 1949, Crocker Papers, MSS 327 C938p, University of Adelaide Archives.

¹⁰¹ Florey, 'Medical Research in Australia, Conference', ANUA 18-104/1/15.

¹⁰² H.C. Coombs, *Canberra Times*, 16 December 1948, p.6.

¹⁰³ W. Crocker Papers, 'ANU 1949-1952', MSS 327 C938p, University of Adelaide Archives.

The wives of Florey, Firth and Hancock had significant professional achievements to their credit. Ethel Florey, a graduate of Adelaide University, worked alongside her husband, being instrumental in the successful clinical trials of penicillin. At the time of the Easter Conference, she was unable to leave her clinical work to accompany her husband to Australia, although she finally made the journey in June 1948. At the age of 47, she was preparing to submit a thesis on the use of penicillin to the University of Adelaide and in 1949 was awarded the degree of Doctor of Medicine.¹⁰⁴ At about the same time, the Florey's daughter was hoping to go to Oxford to study History. Raymond Firth's wife, Rosemary, had a Master of Arts in political economy from the University of Edinburgh and was a distinguished anthropologist in her own right. In 1943 she published *Housekeeping Among Malay Peasants*. Theaden Hancock met her husband at Melbourne University. During the war she was a producer with the Pacific service of the BBC and in 1947 began drawing lessons from British artist Henry Bird in Oxford. As far as the ANU was concerned, Hancock advised 'It is a good thing to get a woman when she makes the grade'.¹⁰⁵ Hancock was currently working with co-author historian and archivist Margaret Gowing on an officially sponsored history of the Second World War. Women present at the meetings Hancock held in Melbourne included S. Rowley, Agriculture; J. Eyre, English Literature and Society; R. Hoban, Social Studies, and Mrs A. Wheaton, Lecturer-in-charge, Department of Social Science, University of Adelaide.¹⁰⁶ Of those mentioned at the time of the Easter Conference, Joyce Fildes, an Australian microanalyst working in London was the first woman to be offered a research post at the ANU.

The founders of the ANU often held up English universities as a model. While Oxford admitted women to degrees in 1920, at the University of Cambridge women undergraduates were not admitted as full members until 27 April 1948, well behind Australian universities including the ANU.

Official resolutions

The following principles were confirmed:

1. That the first objective of the University would be the establishment of the four Research Schools named in the Act.
- 2(a) That the primary function of the Research Schools of the University would be the advancement of knowledge, the first duty of members of staff being the dual task of-
 - (i) prosecution of research
 - (ii) the training of research workers.
- (b) There would be no undergraduate teaching in the Research Schools, with special exceptions for genuine work at high standard.
- (c) There would be no postgraduate vocational training in the Research Schools, with special exceptions for genuine honours work at a high standard.
- (d) There would be no public or other extra University work, except where a Director or his staff with his approval might desire to undertake it as an emergency measure.¹⁰⁷

Next steps

Invitations to become directors of Research Schools: acceptances and rejections

Describing the Academic Advisers as 'luminaries', the Vice-Chancellor acknowledged their significant advice. After the Conference, they were invited to set up the four separate Research Schools and to be the first Directors. Yet in the years directly after the Conference only Oliphant accepted the invitation. His appointment was formally announced in October 1948 and in August 1950 he arrived in Canberra with his wife Rosa and two children. Concerns still rankled. He explained that as Australia did not have any institution equivalent to the Royal Society, it had 'no international voice' in the scientific arena.¹⁰⁸ Setting up a research university was not sufficient to secure this recognition and so it is not surprising that he was a strong supporter of the establishment of an Australian Academy of Science. Modelled on the prestigious Royal Society

¹⁰⁴ *Australian Woman's Weekly*, 26 June 1948, p.20.

¹⁰⁵ W.K. Hancock to D. Copland, 28 July 1948, ANUA 18-104/1/8, Part 1.

¹⁰⁶ Records of attendance at meetings noted in ANUA 18-104/1/20; ANUA 18 Part 1 104/1/9. Among other references to women, historian and radical freelance publicist Brian Fitzpatrick asked about opportunities available at the ANU for the employment of women, including for his second wife, historian Dorothy Fitzpatrick.

¹⁰⁷ Douglas Copland, 'The Place of the Australian National University in the Academic Structure of Australia', Hobart, 11 January 1949, p.14 in Report of the Interim Council, 1 August 1946 to 31 December 1949, ANUA 101-1.

¹⁰⁸ M. Oliphant, 'Comment on the Foundation of a National University in Canberra, with particular reference to a Research School of Physical Sciences', ANUA 18 104-1/12.

located in London, the Australian Academy of Science opened in 1954 in a unique dome-shaped building, adjacent to the ANU. Oliphant was the first President.

Florey, Oliphant and Firth continued to give essential advice on the development of their particular Schools and to recommend staff, but they hesitated over the prospect of leaving their high-profile positions and moving to Canberra. Firth had never given the impression that he would join the ANU but Florey and Hancock were more ambivalent.

Hancock wrote rather plaintively to Mills: 'There is something implausible in the idea of myself as the head of the Research School of Social Sciences. [I am] more of a social artist than a social scientist—a craftsman'.¹⁰⁹ He wanted to be totally free to write on whatever subject he wished – the European state since the Renaissance came to mind. He was much more interested in research than in administration. Eggleston wrote to Copland about Hancock's curious preoccupation with first-rate men: 'Hancock's stars all appear to be with eccentric orbits ... the difficulty is that he will not run out a systematic plan.'¹¹⁰ To Hancock he wrote that 'Men should be willing to work for an institution like a Research School even with men they do not know or like....The men you approached were all men with a career behind them and a well-developed specialist. The result would be a series of specialists dealing with narrow sections of the field. Florey has adopted the course of appointing young men in whose future he has faith.' Then Eggleston delivered the final and most pointed thrust: 'The final dénouement was of course the fact that you failed to get anybody to take any of these positions.'¹¹¹

The Interim Council watched these delays and prevarications with some irritation. The view of Walter 'Rusty' Crocker, appointed in 1949 as Professor of International Relations, was shared by many: 'Why do so many academics get the temperament of ballet dancers or operatic tenors?'¹¹²

In hindsight it seems clear that Florey and Hancock would have accepted the initial invitation only if the ANU had got down on bended knee begging them to come, guaranteeing not only world-class academic facilities and their choice of distinguished colleagues but also the domestic staff and comfortable housing that they were accustomed to in England.

Even then, this might not have been sufficient. Hancock was critical of what he considered to be the Interim Council's shallow views. 'The Council and politicians want something "improving" that will add "dignity" to Canberra ... "Let's appoint a chap who is used to doing big things". So you see why we think twice about going to Canberra. We are very tired and don't want to spend our days being hectoring prigs.'¹¹³ In May 1949 Hancock wrote to Mills, 'Conscience forbade me to take responsibility for starting a second rate show'.¹¹⁴ His friend Crocker commented, 'the true reason for [Hancock's] vacillation was a gnawing doubt about ... exchanging, shall we say, *The Times* for the *Canberra Times*...'.¹¹⁵

In 1949, Hancock resigned from the Academic Advisory Committee and was replaced by a fellow Australian expatriate and Fellow of All Souls, Professor Kenneth Clinton Wheare, Gladstone Professor of Government and Public Administration at Oxford.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Hancock continued to consider the University's offer and in 1957, seven years after Oliphant, he arrived to take up the position of Director of the Research School of Social Sciences.

Firth continued to give useful advice on the development of Pacific Studies and occasionally visited Canberra, but stayed on at the LSE and was still writing articles shortly before he died at the age of 100.

Florey had exceptionally strong links with England having lived there since the age of 23. Frustrated with the slow pace of developments at the ANU and unsatisfactory correspondence with the ANU

¹⁰⁹ W.K. Hancock to R.C. Mills, 16 July 1947, Academic Advisory Committee, ANUA 18-104/1/18 Part 2.

¹¹⁰ F. Eggleston to D. Copland, 4 January 1947; Professor W.K. Hancock, Academic Advisory Committee, ANUA 18-104/1/18 Part 2.

¹¹¹ F. Eggleston to W.K. Hancock, 18 August 1949, ANUA77-1.

¹¹² W. Crocker to M. Oliphant, 18 September 1954, in Crocker Papers, MSS 327 C938p, as above.

¹¹³ Theaden Hancock to W.R. Crocker, 4 January 1948, in Crocker Papers, MSS 327 C938p, as above.

¹¹⁴ W.K. Hancock to R. Mills, 15 May 1949, ANUA 77-1.

¹¹⁵ Sir Walter Crocker, 'Origins and early days of the ANU, 1949-1952', in Crocker Papers, as above.

¹¹⁶ *Age* (Melbourne), 14 July 1949, p.7.

Council, he did not give a definitive answer until 1957, when he decided remain in Oxford. Nevertheless, having been seen for many years as the non-resident head of the John Curtin School of Medical Research, he opened its first permanent building in 1958, and in 1965, still based in England, became the ANU's third Chancellor.

First appointments

In May 1948, the first Librarian Arthur Leopold Gladstone McDonald was appointed from Melbourne. He saw the library as part of a regional and national network, coordinating acquisitions and developing reciprocal arrangements.

From 15 August 1948 the School of Medical Science was the first to be developed. Dr (later Sir) Arnold Hughes 'Hugh' Ennor was appointed to the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry. As no suitable accommodation yet existed on the ANU site, the Department worked from the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories in Melbourne, the main thrust of its research being a better appreciation of liver metabolism. In Canberra, on 9 December 1948, Ennor delivered his inaugural lecture entitled 'Some objectives and accomplishments of Biochemical Research'.

By the end of 1948, a pamphlet was produced giving a factual picture of Canberra but one which was also designed to entice applicants: 'Being a pioneering venture, it should attract those who are interested in adventures in ideas, in expanding and strengthening the academic structure of one of the members of the British Commonwealth, and in establishing a university community in one of the youngest of national capitals'.¹¹⁷

Buildings

Especially after the Easter Conference, plans for accommodating the Research Schools were increasingly refined. In the meantime, old wooden buildings, formerly a hospital but at that time occupied by the Department of Post-War Reconstruction, were gradually turned over for the University's use. As the geographer Oskar Spate recalled, '... physicists, historians, lawyers and geographers were all packed into the little tearoom of the Old Hospital Buildings, a collection of weatherboards and tin roofs surrounded by a rickety decking, with Law housed in what had been the Labour Ward and Joe Jennings [a geomorphologist] in the operating theatre because it had a sink'.¹¹⁸

Stimulated by Professor Oliphant's enthusiasm and insistence to begin work on nuclear and particle physics, Prime Minister Ben Chifley laid the foundation stones for the Research School of Physical Sciences in October 1949, the year following the Easter Conference. Three years later, on 5 September 1952, Sir John Cockcroft, a leading British atomic scientist and a colleague of Oliphant, opened the ANU's first purpose-built, on-site, permanent building, a £1 million laboratory for the Research School of Physical Sciences. An office building for the Research School also opened this year. Women were employed as well as men. By November, four young women were described as the 'eyes' of the research project as they searched photographic emulsions for certain nuclear events visible with the aid of high powered microscopes.¹¹⁹

University House, with its multiple roles of faculty club, hall of residence, and ceremonial centre had the honour of being named building Number 1 on the ANU's site plan, so acknowledging its importance to the whole enterprise. The Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Philip) performed the opening ceremony in February 1954. The John Curtin School of Medical Research followed, being officially opened by Sir Howard Florey in March 1958.¹²⁰

Conclusion

Exhaustive consultation in Australia and overseas over many years was a distinctive feature of the creation of the Australian National University, the Easter Conference of 1948 being an integral part

¹¹⁷ R.G. Osborne to D. Copland, 23 December 1948, ANUA 18-104/2/21 & 107/2/14.

¹¹⁸ Oskar Spate, 'Old Visionaries Never Forget', 16 April 1989, on-line press.anu.edu.au Accessed 14 November 2014.

¹¹⁹ *Canberra Times*, 6 September 1952, p.4; 14 November 1952, p.5; Gooden, Mackay, Logan, Australian National University, 'Acton Campus Heritage Study, Site Inventory, RSPE Building, Site Inventory', July 2012.

¹²⁰ The development of the ANU can be traced through 'Reports of the Interim Council, 1 August 1946 to 31 December 1949 and 1 January 1950 to 30 June 1951', Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra, ANUA 101-1and ANUA 84-2.

of this lengthy process. The principles confirmed by the Conference and the associated discussions signaled the go-ahead for the Interim Council to begin the building program and appointing staff. Intensive consultation continued well after the Easter Conference, accompanied by considerable frustration when post-war restrictions on bricks and other materials hindered progress. Almost six years were to pass before University House opened; 10 years before the substantial building of the John Curtin School of Medical Research was completed; and 16 years before the H.C. Coombs 'octagon' building provided Social Sciences and Pacific Studies with a permanent home. Discussions on appropriate roles for Directors (whether their role was to be autocratic or consultative) added to a host of other concerns about staffing and accommodation.

Although the Easter Conference attempted to allay fears of the State universities and research institutions, resentment over the ANU's special status and preferential Commonwealth funding continued to rumble. Nevertheless, as time was to show, the discussions in the 1940s had enormously influential consequences. The creation of a new national research university elevated the stature of universities in general; led to important developments in research; improved Canberra's standing as the national capital; and strengthened Australia's capacity to contribute to the post-World War II world. By bringing together representatives from all over Australia in the aftermath of the war, the 1948 Easter Conference was cog in the wheel of what H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs described as 'this great new university ... the powerhouse of ... social reconstruction'.¹²¹

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¹²¹ H.C. Coombs, 'The Fragile Pattern, Institutions and Man', *The Boyer Lectures*, 1970, ABC, Sydney, p.11.