The University of Newcastle

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Councils reach agreement on amalgmation

The governing councils of the University and the Hunter Institute of Higher Education agreed in September to proceed towards an amalgamation of the two institutions.

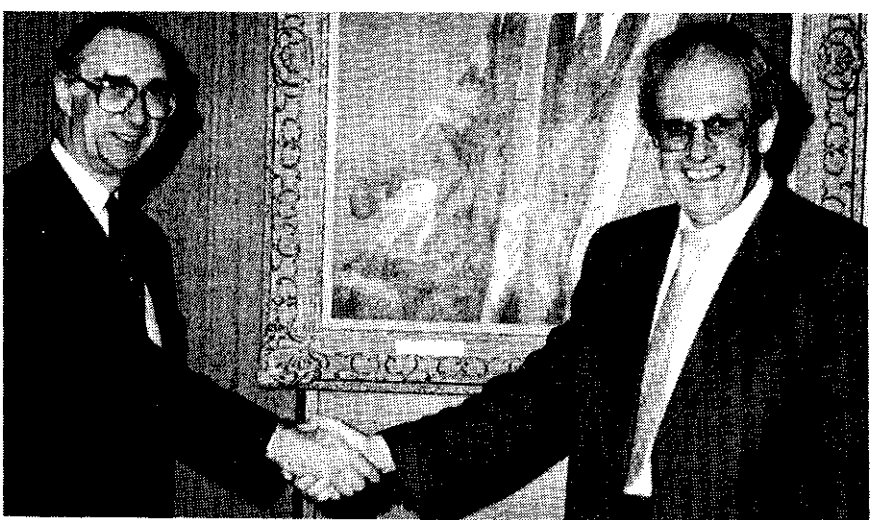
The councils approved a formal agreement, which set out procedures to be commenced immediately to implement the joint decision.

The possibility of an amalgamation between the University and the Hunter Institute was raised by the Vice Chancellor, Professor K. Morgan, at the meeting of the University's Council last April. Professor Morgan argued that in view of the Federal Government's policy there now existed a potential for overall gain for both the University and the Institute through amalgamation.

Following discussions, the council decided in June to commence negotiations with a view to amalgamation. The Vice-Chancellor and the Principal of the Hunter Institute, Dr D. Huxley prepared the agreement and recommended that their councils adopt it.

The University and the Institute agreed to form a consolidated University, which, as a member of the Federal Government's Unified National System of Higher Education, will provide a comprehensive range of teaching programmes leading to awards at all levels of higher education; pursue excellence in scholarship, research and teaching; and contribute to the economic and cultural development of the community.

The institute and the University will jointly inform the State and Federal Ministers for Education of the decision and work 'co-operatively, positively and expeditiously towards implementation of the structures and processes entailed in amalgamation'.



Professor Keith Morgan, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Newcastle, (left) and Dr Doug Huxley, Principal of the Hunter Institute of Higher Education, after their Councils agreed to procedures for amalgamation.

Gold Medal awarded to professor

Professor Ron Laura, of the Faculty of Education, was recently presented with a Gold Medal of Honour to commend his outstanding global contributions to sport education.

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Amalgamation committee established

Prof. Keith Morgan
Vice-Chancellor

The Councils of the University and the Hunter Institute agreed at special meetings at the end of September that the two institutions should amalgamate.

To give effect to this decision there was established an Amalgamation Implementation Committee (AIC).

The Committee has now held its first meetings and set up the six working groups identified in the Heads of Agreement document.

These working groups are to prepare recommendations on the key organisational and structural matters and report to the AIC.

Each of them is to be chaired by a member of the AIC:

- *Educational Profile*, Dr D.R. Huxley, Principal of the Institute;
- *Academic Structure*, Professor M.P. Carter, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic);
- *Student Services*, Dr L.R. Eastcott, Deputy Principal of the Institute;
- *Industrial Relations*, Mr D. Foster, Bursar of the Institute;
- *Administrative Structure*, Mr L. Hennessy, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration); and
- *Legislation*, Professor K.J. Morgan, the Vice-Chancellor.

Each group will make use of the position papers which have been prepared in the University in recent weeks and have similar papers provided from the Institute.

In addition the groups will be seeking and gathering information from widespread consultation with members of the Council, staff, students, graduates and other interested people.

As the work progresses, the AIC. meeting at fortnightly intervals, will receive and consider recommendations and advice from the working groups.

In turn the AIC will report to a Joint Committee of the Councils of the University and the Hunter Institute.

The Joint Committee, whose 24 members are drawn equally from the two Councils, will seek approval of its recommendations from the Councils.

The framework for the implementation of amalgamation provides for these arrangements to lead to a 'consolidated University which, as a member of the unified national system of higher education proposed by the Federal Government, will provide a comprehensive range of teaching programmes leading to awards at all levels of higher education; pursue excellence in scholarship, research and teaching; and contribute to the economic and cultural development of the community'.

As a first formal step to achieve this, the Council agreed at its recent meeting that the University should write to Mr Dawkins in the following words:

'This University wishes to join the Unified National System. With the Hunter Institute of Higher Education, the University wishes to do so as the consolidated University that is to be formed by the amalgamation of our two institutions.

In indicating this wish, the University confirms its commitment to the achievement of the objectives outlined in your letter.

'Many of our plans for achieving the stated objectives were contained in our education profile submission.

'Progress towards the achievement of these objectives will of course depend on the provision of appropriate and adequate funding.'

Accountants' results hailed by national body

The outstanding performance of University of Newcastle Commerce graduates in professional examinations conducted by The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia last year has brought national kudos to the University.

The candidates completed their academic qualifications at the University in 1986 and participated in the Institute's Professional Year Programme last year.

Two achievements by the University of Newcastle graduates marked the summary of the results:

- They achieved the best success rate of graduates from the 19 universities in Australia, and
- They obtained the top pass rates in three of the examination modules (Audit and EDP, Taxation and Professional Practice) and came a close second in the other module (Accounting).

The Newcastle graduates' pass rate in Audit and EDP was 83.8 per cent in Taxation 85.7 per cent and in Professional Practice 94.1 per cent. In Accounting their pass rate was 77.1 per cent, compared with 78.6 per cent for graduates from the University of Melbourne.

It is the policy of The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia not to announce publicly the results of the professional year examinations. Instead, the Institute restricts distribution to tertiary institutions and members of the Institute.

However, in the best traditions of investigative journalism *Uninews* made a search and was successful in obtaining the results.

New worlds set to open up to blind people

A new device which allows blind people to hear, as well as feel, information on tactile maps or other tactile graphics, such as graphs, diagrams, building plans, even simple coloured pictures has been developed at the University of Newcastle.

The device is the brain-child of Dr Don Parkes, of the Institute of Behavioural Sciences. Mr Richard Dear, of the Computing Centre, developed the software for the device.

It operates via a keyboard which blind people use to activate a tactile representation of visual information. A variety of information of this nature can be stored in the device.

The Royal Guide Dogs' Association of Australia and a number of blind people, as well as those who teach and work with the blind, have given the new product their strong support. The RGDA through its Sight Enhancement Education and Technology Division Director in Melbourne, Dr Tony Heyes, has also agreed to back further tests on the production of an inexpensive prototype.

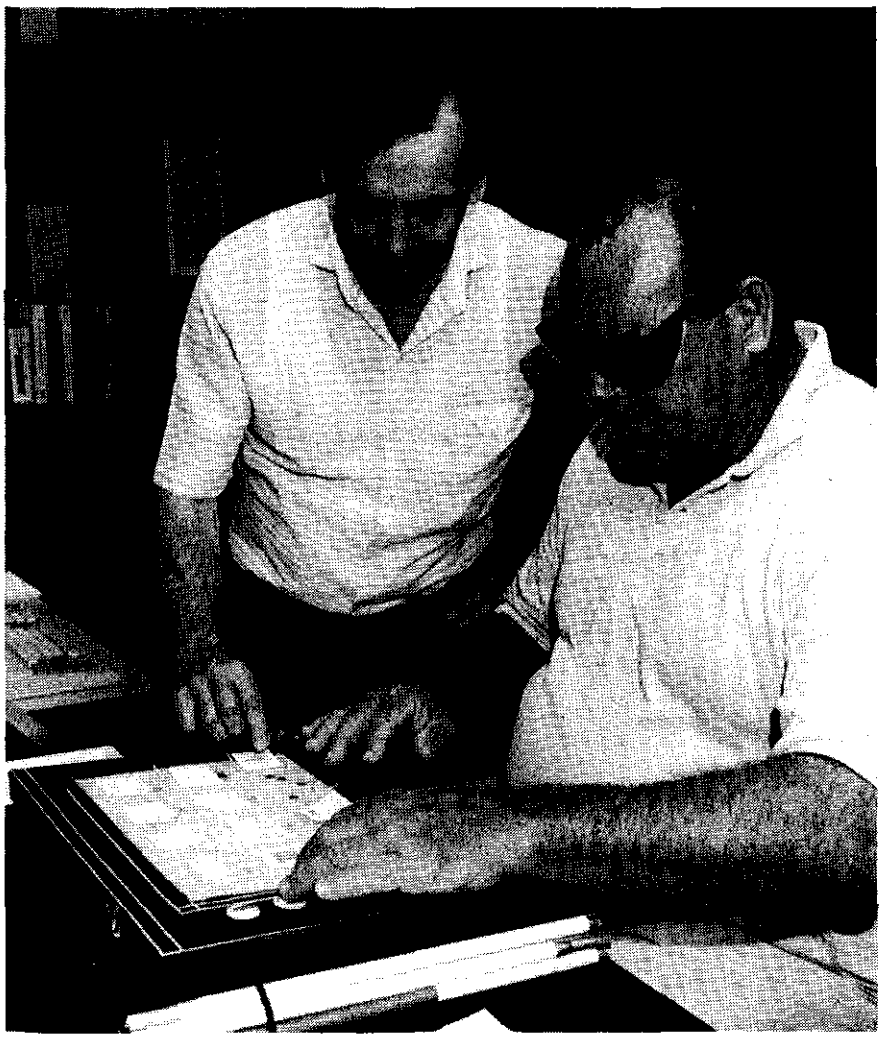
Collaborative Work

Professor Reg Golledge, a University of California academic who recently went blind, said the invention had the potential to help an enormous number of visually-impaired and blind people in that it included their ears in the communication and learning exercise.

'It's incredibly easy for a blind person to use,' says Professor Reg Golledge, 'and has great potential as an information and teaching system,' he said during a recent visit to the University of Newcastle.

Professor Golledge last worked with Dr Parkes at the Institute of Behavioural Sciences for five months in 1986. He later returned to Newcastle for further collaborative work. He and Dr Parkes presented papers on blindness and mobility earlier this year at the International Psychological Union Congress and the International Geographical Union Congress in Sydney.

Professor Golledge will return to the University of Newcastle next year on a US National Science Foundation Grant to work with Dr Parkes on navigation, mobility, orientation and cognitive maps for the blind. In particular they will work on another of Dr Parkes' inventions presently known as a WAI Finder, a device that will literally 'talk blind people through complex environments.' He and Dr Parkes have been comrades in research for many years.



● **Dr Don Parkes, left, and Professor Reg Golledge with the new aid for the blind.**

Professor Golledge added: 'One of my interests is in building electronic aids for blind people, such as computer and navigational systems.

'The tactile audio device is one of the most interesting developments I have come across. It has everything that Dr Parkes claims, being both an information and a teaching system.

'The system can probably be enlarged to take in an enormous range of subjects.'

Professor Golledge, who is Professor of Behavioural Geography at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California, was born at Dungog. He holds degrees from the University of New England, the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and the University of Iowa, US. He has been severely vision-impaired since 1984.

Dr Parkes calls his device NOMAD after a guide dog belonging to a blind student at the University who had contributed enormously to his understanding.

Three manufacturers, one Australian and two overseas, have recently expressed interest in manufacture.

Gold Medal for sport education

Professor Ron Laura, of the Faculty of Education, was recently presented with a Gold Medal of Honour to commend his outstanding global contributions to sport education.

The medal was presented to him during the Bicentennial bodybuilding Games held at Expo in Brisbane.

Professor Laura has for four years been Chairman of the UNESCO affiliated Australian Sports Medicine and Health Education Committee, and the award was made on behalf of the International Federation.

During his time as Chairman of the Committee Professor Laura has written some 70 articles on various aspects of sports medicine and health education. One article, written in collaboration with Professor Ken Dutton, has been translated into five languages and is presently being used by the International Bodybuilding Federation in Seoul as the main source document in support of bodybuilding being accepted as an Olympic sport.

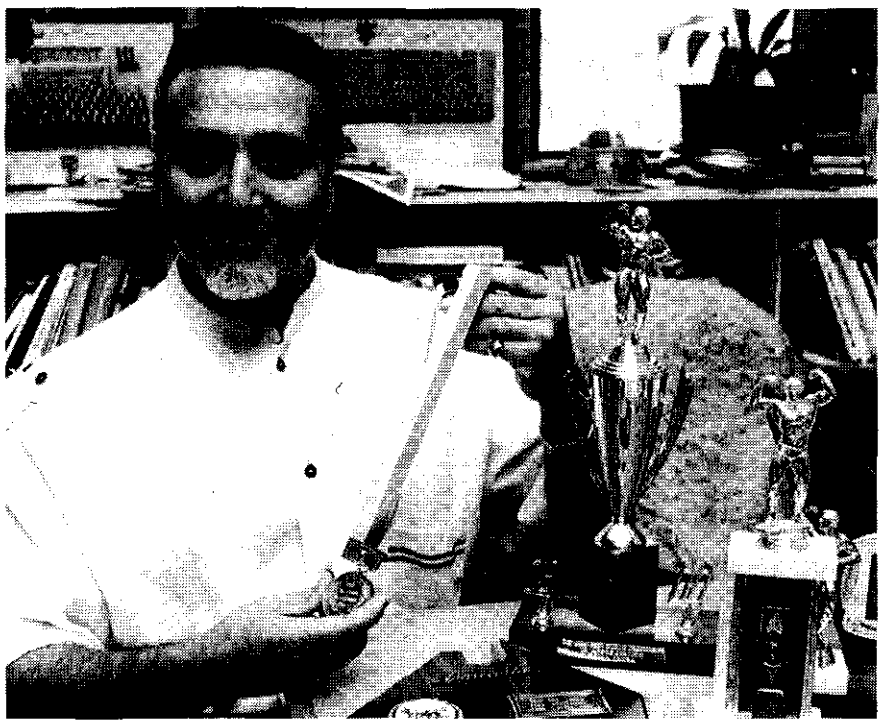
One US health and fitness magazine in which his articles regularly appear has a monthly readership of 4,500,000.

He has been elected to the editorial board of Australian Sport and Training and invited to contribute quarterly feature articles for the magazine, Nature and Health.

His book, Philosophical Foundations of Health Education, is co-authored with Sandra Heaney, and will be published by Routledge and Kegan Paul as a volume in the Harvard University Research Library Series in May of 1989. He is currently working on a book with Professor Dutton, tentatively entitled, The Evolution of the Human Body as a Form of Art.

In addition to his numerous publications in sport and health education, Professor Laura has judged or compered major bodybuilding events around the world. He judged the Australian Championships on October 1 and 2 and represented Australia on the judging panel of the World Championships at Expo from October 12. Seventy-six countries sent teams to compete at these championships, including Russia, many Eastern Bloc nations and China.

The major thrust of Professor Laura's educational research, however, has been in mounting an anti-drug offensive in sport. He argues that the drug problem in sport is a facet of the drug problem in society.



● **Professor Ron Laura with his Gold Medal of Honour and some of his many sporting trophies.**

'Constantly trying to find "short-cuts", we have as a culture turned to pills and injections to improve performance,' he says.

He also believes that winning at the Olympics has taken on a political and commercial significance which has robbed sport of its recreational value. 'To lose is to fail.

'Winning is not the only thing, but it has come to mean everything. It is not just our athletes who need to be re-educated, but ourselves,' he says.

He has lectured and written widely on the topic and worked to develop training programmes, coupled with nutritional advice, which affords healthy but effective alternatives to performance-boosting drugs.

His development of the Matrix Programme has been acclaimed worldwide, and he has been invited to deliver a keynote address and workshop on the system at the International Convention of Strength Coaches, to be held in Sydney in November and which 500 delegates from around the world are scheduled to attend. The Matrix Programme is based on a relatively recent discovery in physiology.

During the late 60s and early 70s European scientists found that the muscle cells of some animals adapted to high intensity exercise by splitting in two. This compensatory response is called hyperplasia and in recent years muscle biopsies have provided evidence that accelerated muscle growth in humans can also be achieved with certain types of exercise overload.

Professional teams in the United States and a number of athletes in Australia are employing the programme with great success, as an alternative to ergogenic drugs.

Professor Laura is also well-known for his free health and exercise clinics, held on the weekends at his home gym. Using the Matrix Principle, he has coached national champions in three sports — bodybuilding, powerlifting, and field and track.

Professor Laura will resign his present Chairmanship to take up the position of Chairman of the Sports Medicine and Health Education Committee of the Hunter Academy of Sport. One of his first initiatives will be to mount a major anti-drug offensive in sport.

Readers may be interested to learn that Professor Laura came out of retirement from competition recently to win his sixth Australian Armwrestling Championship.

International spotlight on Newcastle Medical School

Over 700 participants from approximately 20 countries attended the workshops and seminars organised to celebrate 10 years of innovative medical education in Newcastle.

Three weeks of celebrations in September confirmed the continuing local, national and international interest in Newcastle's approach to the training of doctors and established Newcastle as a clear centre of excellence in the field.

During the celebrations events were built around the themes of explaining the Newcastle approach, reviewing and evaluating its success and looking to future developments.

Overseas participants included delegates from South Africa and Zimbabwe, sponsored by the Kellogg Foundation, a long-time supporter of this school's innovative approach.

The World Health Organisation was represented by the retiring Director of Health Manpower Development, Dr Tamas Fulop and by his successor, Dr Eric Goon.

Representatives from other Australian medical schools and Newcastle's sister schools at McMaster in Canada, Maastricht in Holland and the Arabian Gulf University medical school in Bahrain contributed to the discussions.

A meeting that focussed on regional opportunities for initiatives in medical education saw the WHO representatives encouraging Newcastle to play a greater role in the Network of Community Orientated Educational Institutions for the Health Sciences. Important contacts were forged with medical schools and organisations in Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Fiji and South Africa.

The second David Maddison Lecture, delivered by Dr Donald Lindberg, Director of the National Library of Medicine in Washington DC, addressed the issue of medical information systems and their management.

A feature of the celebrations was the presentation of a 17-minute, multi-screen, slide tape programme that outlined the development of the medical school in Newcastle. Using the architectural features of the David Maddison Lecture Theatre, the computer controlled display ran through 400 slides on nine projectors.

Looking to the future, workshops on Clinical Epidemiology, Medical Ethics, Palliative Care, Human Sexuality, Aboriginal Health and Nutrition, brought international and national experts to Newcastle to set the agenda in these fields for coming years.

The students' Medical Society participated in the celebrations with a number of social events which included a dinner and the annual medical students ball.

The celebrations reinforced the message that to continue its work, the medical school must remain innovative in its approach to medical education, maintain its strong links with the community which fought hard for its establishment and continue to promote its already significant international profile.

● The South African delegation to the celebration of the first 10 years of the Medical School included: Back, from left, Dr Neil Bloem, Dr Barry Kistnasamy and Dr Serati Moloi; front, Professor Jack Moodley, Dr Cecil Nanitshana and Dr Peter Owen.

Engineering review confirms 'outstanding results'

The Report of the Review of the Discipline of Engineering led by Professor Sir Bruce Williams was recently published. The Review Committee's terms of reference were to review the current provision of professional engineering education and research in Australian engineering schools and to report on future developments in engineering education in the light of industry and community requirements.

The general conclusion of the review was that Australia has a fairly good system of engineering education that should be made better. However, among the recommendations there is emphasis on the large drop out of students in first year engineering and the need for more co-operative research projects with industry.

Professor Alan Roberts, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, comments specifically on these recommendations and their pertinence to the University's Engineering Faculty.

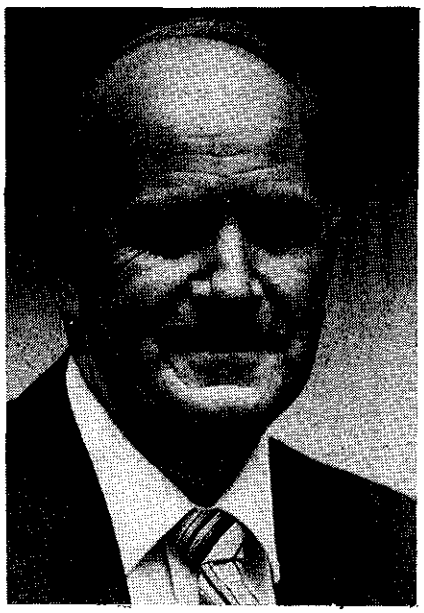
Rated more highly

'The report of the Review of the Discipline of Engineering confirms that "outstanding results have been achieved in research and consultancy" by the Engineering Faculty, which ranks second among all engineering schools on each of the two indicators of research activity and consultancy work for industry on a per-staff-member basis.

'One further indication of the pure and applied research excellence of the Faculty was the award by the Federal Government of one of the seven Special Research Centres established across Australia in all disciplines in recognition of the outstanding research achievement and capability of Newcastle's Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering.

'On the important question of satisfaction with teaching and courses, tables published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* last July confirm that final year students and graduates rated Newcastle more highly on most indicators than was the case for most metropolitan engineering schools.

'The policy of the University of Newcastle to offer the opportunity to study engineering to as many students as possible means that we accept many students who do not meet the HSC cut-off marks for entry to metropolitan institutions.



● **Professor Alan Roberts**

'The students are obviously less well prepared and have lower prospects of completing an engineering degree than is the case for students who enter our courses with high HSC aggregates.

'Our graduation rate would no doubt be improved if the Faculty only accepted students with very high HSC attainment, but this would mean that Newcastle would produce fewer new engineering graduates in total.

'In some cases the University of Newcastle acts as a feeder institution to more specialised courses, such as Mining Engineering, available at metropolitan institutions — thus raising the "graduates rates" of those institutions and lowering our own.

'Also, students from Sydney, unable to gain a place at a metropolitan engineering school, come to Newcastle and return to their homes in Sydney after succeeding in their first year of studies at Newcastle.

'The Faculty has taken action in recent years, within the limits of its resources, to assist students to meet the high standards the community has a right to expect of its professional engineers. These initiatives are recognised in the report. The Faculty will continue to constructively improve its courses and to this end will give detailed consideration to the report of the Review.

'We will definitely take measures to improve the retention rate in first year. We will introduce major changes in the course curriculum and our general philosophy in 1990, in particular in the teaching of engineering sciences in first and second year. By helping students to experience a sense of belonging to the Faculty, we will be addressing one of the chief criticisms made by the Williams Committee about engineering education generally in this country.

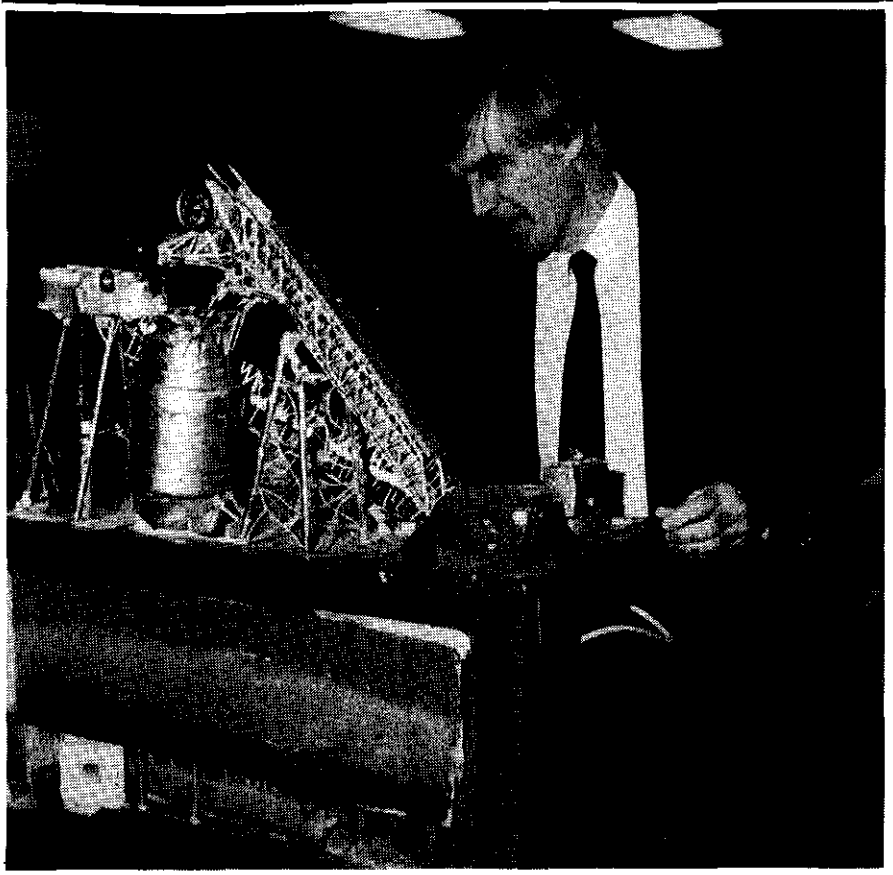
'The report says there appears to be an appropriate balance between research and teaching responsibilities of academic staff in the Engineering Faculty with a reasonably well co-ordinated research programme and suitably limited range of activities resulting in a relatively productive research and development output and high level of staff morale.

Encourage these activities

'As for relationships between the engineering school and industry, the report notes the existence of a level of informal contact which operates in association with the major research and development projects and consultancy activities of staff. In some respects this type of interaction appears to be quite effective and should certainly be maintained.

'However, the report states that the engineering school should move to establish a more systematic and effective forum for exchange of views with local industry representatives on matters of common academic concern.

'Nevertheless, the report concludes by praising the Engineering School for the outstanding results that have been achieved in research and industrial consultancy in some fields and advising the school to encourage these activities.'



● **Professor Ian Plimer with one of the 128 entries in the Annual Schools' Competition.**

Children made aware of their planet

In 1986, an approach was made to BHP by Professor Ian Plimer, Head of the Department of Geology, to sponsor a competition for school children to enable a greater awareness of their ultimate environment — their planet.

In 1987, a schools competition was initiated for the Illawarra-Campbelltown and Hunter areas. The 1988 competition required the children to submit a project entry on *The Coal Chain, The Importance of Coal Mining in the Hunter/Illawarra District* or the *History of Coal Mining*.

The competition was advertised by contacting every school in the Hunter and Illawarra districts, a televised competition launch in both Newcastle and Wollongong with their respective Lord Mayors, a television and radio advertising campaign and follow-up contacts of schools.

Professor Plimer judged 128 entries in this year's competition.

First prize went to Jason Lear and Luke Manhood, who attended Belmont High School, for their joint entry. Both students and their teacher will win an all expenses paid trip to Central Queensland to inspect a giant BHP open cut coal mine and a coal loader before flying to Brisbane to spend two days at Expo 88.

Their prize also includes a trip down a BHP coal mine and visits to a coal washery, a power station and a steel plant in the Newcastle area. The students will be accompanied by their winning counterparts from Wollongong.

BHP Collieries Division Manager Personnel, Mr Alan Priestly, said the competition attracted many high quality entries from students in Newcastle and Wollongong.

The judges found it extremely hard to decide between some of the entries. The winning entry from Newcastle was a joint effort submitted on a computer program which the judges felt showed a great deal of innovation, considering the ages of the students.

'I am confident the same high standard will continue during next year's competition,' he said.

New librarian impressed with Auchmuty facilities

The new University Librarian is impressed by the Auchmuty Library's expanded facilities.

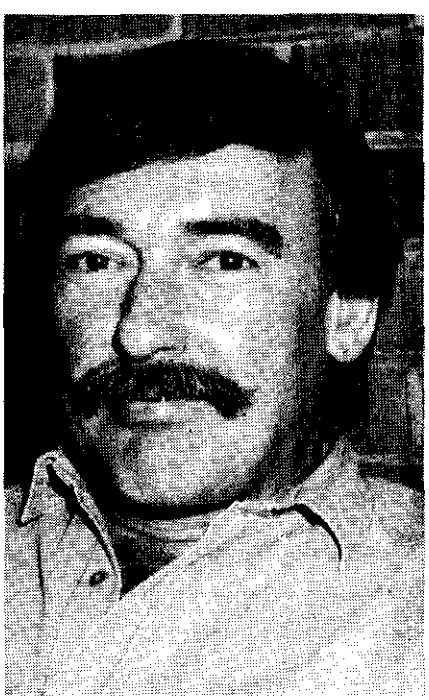
Mr Bill Linklater, who will succeed Mr Flowers after he retires at the end of this year, said Stage IIB of the library, completed and occupied this year, provided excellent facilities in terms of flexible space.

At Swinburne Institute of Technology in Melbourne, where he is Librarian, the library enjoyed the latest information technology resources but lacked funding to expand space.

Mr Linklater spoke to *Uninews* during a brief visit to the University on September 28.

He mentioned his strong interest in the role of audio-visual services and associated educational technology in supporting undergraduate instruction and training and said that at Swinburne he was responsible as Librarian for the provision of these services in the Institute.

Aged 44, Mr Linklater is married with two teenage sons and a daughter.



● **Mr Bill Linklater**

Expert comment on cell research

Professor Alan J. Husband, Assoc. Professor in Immunology, is the editor of *Migration and Homing of Lymphoid Cells, Volumes I and II*, a collection of reviews by experts on cell migration research. The issues dealt with are crucial to a basic understanding of the immune system, for the design and implementation of improved immunisation strategies and a better understanding of the processes of disease and recovery.

The contributors to *Migration and Homing of Lymphoid Cells* address the issues of lymphocyte recirculation leading to inductive interactions in the immune response to antigen, the sites of these interactions, and the subsequent migration and homing of effector cells generated from these responses.

Volume I covers systemic migration of cells from central and peripheral lymphoid organs.

In Volume II, particular attention is given to the dichotomy of behaviour between systemic and mucosal lymphoid cell pools, and explanations sought for mechanisms mediating selectively of migration and homing.

The two books were published by CRC Press, of Florida, and sell for $295.

Religious Centre for University

A meeting of representatives of the Hunter Region's main religious bodies has endorsed a proposal that a Religious Centre should be built at the University.

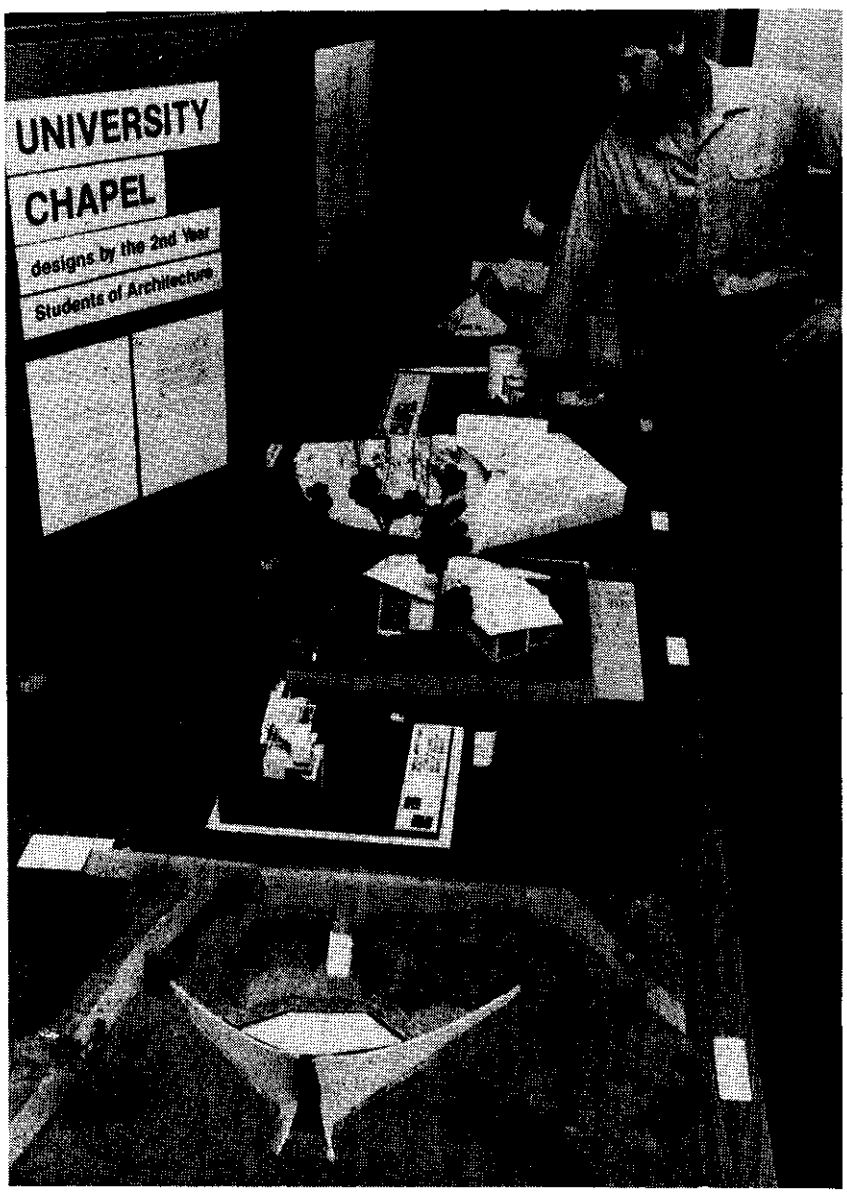
The meeting was called by the Vice-Chancellor at the request of the Religious Centre Steering Committee.

Official representatives of eight Christian denominations, the Newcastle Hebrew Congregation and the Newcastle Muslim Association attended the meeting or sent messages of support.

Professor Ken Dutton, Chairperson of the Steering Committee, gave outlines of the Committee's work to date and the concept of an 'inter-faith' centre on which it had been working. The Committee's report would soon be available as a background document for a public meeting to be held in November to decide whether to proceed with the project.

The meeting with religious leaders was a necessary step, because no such project could hope to succeed unless it had the moral support of religious bodies within the community.

The public meeting in November will decide whether a Planning and Fundraising Committee should be established, to bring the centre a stage closer towards becoming a reality.



Religious centre models designed by University Architecture students.

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