ACCOMMODATION CRISIS

The return to significant growth in the University's student numbers has exacerbated accommodation problems for students to the point at which the situation has become critical.

After considering a special report, the Council on April 13 commissioned an examination of student accommodation problems and ways of alleviating the critical situation.

A Committee on Student Accommodation was established to advise the Council and assist students to solve the problems of finding suitable accommodation.

Vice-Principal, Professor R. Dutton, who wrote the report, said these factors appeared to be of particular significance:

- The low level of provision of on-campus accommodation, (less than 5 percent of our students are able to be accommodated on campus, a figure which compares unfavourably with the majority of other universities in this country),
- The increase in the number of students coming from localities outside Newcastle (the growth of the Faculty of Medicine, played some part in this process),
- The option exercised by an increasing number of students to live away from home, supported by TEAS allowances at the "independent student" rate,
- The growth of the Newcastle College of Advanced Education, which has no provision for residence on campus (the total "pool" of students seeking accommodation in February-March has increased accordingly)

Professor Dutton said there was an annual "crisis" period, extending from mid-February to mid-March, in which it appeared that some qualified students who had been offered places in this University became so discouraged by their inability to find accommodation that they did not complete their enrolment but accepted alternative offers or did not continue their education.

The University Counselling Service recently conducted a survey of overseas students in their first year at this University. Based on a 55.1 per cent response rate (and thus perhaps subject to some caution in the interpretation of results), the survey indicated that 68 per cent of the sample claimed to have some, or a lot of difficulty, finding accommodation on arrival in Newcastle, with a 21 per cent reporting a lot of difficulty.

Transport difficulties, problems in viewing prospective houses and flats, a lack of knowledge as to what was a fair rent, difficulties in relating to landlords or in finding flatmates and a lack of understanding of leases were quoted as problems faced by these students.

The Vice-Principal said he expected that the committee on student accommodation would consider such questions as the provision of additional on-campus accommodation; the possibility of the purchase or rental by the University itself of houses, hostels or flats suitable for students, and the future level of operation of the University Accommodation Office, including its role and the necessary staffing.

Council gave authority for an eight-member Committee on Student Accommodation to be established with power to co-opt. Professor Dutton is the Convenor.
AWEUN – Proposals

"Scheduling" of the University and the Equal Employment Opportunity Co-ordinator are vital matters as far as the Association of Women Employees of the University (AWEUN) is concerned.

Ms Joy Hoesli, Past President of AWEUN, commented on them in her report to the Association's annual general meeting on April 9.

According to Ms Hoesli, who was President for the Association's first two years, "scheduling" under the Anti-Discrimination Act meant that the provisions of the Act which required the preparation and approval of an EEO Management Plan were to apply to this University. The University had been given until June, 1985 to prepare its plan for identifying and setting out strategies for eradicating university practices and procedures which discriminate against staff, e.g. sex, marital status, pregnancy in employment, education, accommodation, provision of goods and services, etc.

Mrs Hoesli said that despite strong representations made to it by various groups on campus, the Council decided against appointing a full-time EEO Co-ordinator and appropriate back-up staff for the University.

Instead it has moved to make a joint appointment with the N.C.A.E. "With the deadline for the completion of the plan set at June, 1985, and the complexity of producing this material for the two institutions, the Co-ordinator will be faced with a formidable task to meet this deadline."

Ms Hoesli did not seek re-election as President of AWEUN.

Mrs Jean Talbot, Tutor in Community Programmes, was elected President.

Ms Dianne Oughton, a member of the University's staff, was awarded a University Medal at the University of New England's Graduation Day ceremony on April 14.

Ms Oughton, an external student of the UNE, was admitted to the degree of Master of Letters following the completion of course work on twentieth century British writers and a thesis on Joseph Conrad.
A boost for the community

2NUR-FM's new mobile studio is now available for use by groups who want to make their own radio programmes.

To encourage people to become involved in public broadcasting the mobile unit will travel extensively throughout 2NUR-FM's service area, which stretches from Wyong to Singleton, Muswellbrook and Taree.

With the addition of the unit to 2NUR-FM's equipment, staff of the radio station and outside users will have access to a full range of modern recording, broadcasting and public address facilities.

The equipment comprises two turntables, cassette deck, 8-track and stereo recording facilities, plus monitoring and broadcast interface facilities, together with a public address capability.

All the units have been built into the back of a Toyota Hiace Commuter Bus.

Essentially, the unit is being operated by 2NUR-FM to provide unemployed youth, senior citizens and high school students with an opportunity to broadcast their own radio programmes.

Merise Downey, Rosemary Austin and Craig Shaw have been employed by 2NUR-FM as trainee producers for eight months to supervise the project.

Ms Downey is working with unemployed youth on programme production and conducting media courses at Community Youth Support Scheme centres.

Ms Austin is assisting senior citizens to become involved in community broadcasting. Narla Village, at Belmont, recently began to broadcast on a regular basis.

Craig Shaw is taking classes in The Media in local high schools and advising students on radio broadcasting.

The new mobile studio has boosted teaching effectiveness in their respective community categories.

The purchase of the van and equipment was made possible by a grant of $49,182 under the Commonwealth/State Wage Pause Programme.

In addition to involving the community in broadcasting, 2NUR-FM will use the mobile studio in recording and broadcasting music live, for example Mattara concerts, presentations in the Great Hall and recitals by brass bands.

Staff and students of the University will now have access to advanced facilities for recording seminars, conferences and lectures.

With the addition of the new equipment to 2NUR-FM's facilities, the station will make the unit available to the combined universities' unit that will broadcast proceedings from the ANZAAS Congress in Canberra during May.

The Manager of 2NUR-FM, Mr. Anton Donker, said the new mobile studio was essential if the radio station was to get around and about more.

"The unit acts as a billboard and the publicity brings us many more listeners," he said.

"By getting greater visibility and playing a more positive educational role in the station's service area, we are helping the University to achieve one of its main functions."

Mr. Donker said that the following businesses around Newcastle had assisted 2NUR-FM with funding to obtain the mobile studio:

Cardiff Toyota, Newcastle Windscreen Service, Britash Pty. Ltd., Wardell's Sight and Sound, Newcastle Audio, Freeze Equip., Newcastle Technical College and Altapac.
Female hormones, good for men?

Dr. Wendy Brown, a recent University of Newcastle Postgraduate Scholarship holder working with Professor Saxon White and in collaboration with the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, will receive her Ph.D. in May.

During the past three years, Dr. Brown has studied the hormonal changes which accompany endurance exercise in untrained and trained men and women. Dr. Brown examined the postulate that the hormone oestrogen may uniquely enhance endurance performance in women by facilitating the use of fat for energy production.

Volunteers, both male and female, from several Newcastle and national sporting groups participated in the study, which involved exercising for two hours at about half of maximum effort.

During this form of endurance exercise, surprisingly, quite marked increases in the circulating levels of the hormone called oestradiol (usually regarded as a "female hormone") were found in both sexes, whether they were trained or untrained. In the most highly trained male athletes, the levels reached were equivalent to those found in the female menstrual cycle.

In trained females, these increases may also be responsible for the well-known menstrual irregularities through a "feedback" effect on the pituitary gland which normally produces the hormones which promote ovulation.

However, her data also suggest that the hormone may well play a role in determining whether the body uses a greater proportion of fat or carbohydrate as its energy supply during exercise.

In endurance events, such as the marathon or long-distance cycling, the ability to utilise fat becomes very important as carbohydrate supplies become exhausted after about 90 minutes of exercise. In the absence of the capacity to utilise fat, the athlete "hits the wall". Dr. Brown's studies confirmed the hypothesis that females utilise a greater proportion of fat during endurance exercise than males, but the idea that the female's sex hormones may confer some advantage on her during endurance performance has been countered by the finding of very high levels of oestradiol in males who also have the capacity to utilise fat after an initial dependency on carbohydrates.

It seems, therefore, that the hormone responses represent a useful adaptation in both sexes to promote superior metabolic performance for highly trained athletes, if leading to secondary menstrual problems in the women. It is unlikely that in either sex jogging will result in any permanent effect on fertility.

Nevertheless, the pattern of hormonal changes on a day-to-day basis, in relation to physical training and other behaviour, will be followed by Dr. Brown and her colleagues in an effort to clarify further their physiological effects and significance.

It has been suggested, for example, that the reduced incidence of coronary artery disease in females is related to their capacity to produce oestrogen. If this be true, then the finding of evoked oestrogen responses in men during exercise justifies the current movement to increase their level of activity in the community, by jogging or any other convenient means.

Dr. Brown's findings may indirectly represent one of the most important findings for preventive medicine in the late 20th century.
**Graduation**

This year's Graduation Day ceremonies will be held in the Great Hall on Friday, May 4 and Saturday, May 5.

At an evening ceremony on May 5 degrees will be conferred upon graduands in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce and the Faculty of Mathematics.

The Occasional Address will be given by Mr Alex Young, Chairman of the Hunter Development Board.

The second ceremony, when degrees will be conferred in the Faculties of Arts and Science, will be held on May 5, commencing at 10.30 a.m.

Emeritus Professor A.G.L. Shaw, a leading Australian historian, will deliver the Occasional Address.

The final ceremony will be held on May 5 at 2.30 p.m. Degrees will be conferred upon graduands in the Faculties of Architecture, Education, Engineering and Medicine.

The Occasional Address will be given by the Australian Minister for Education and Youth Affairs and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister in Women's Affairs, Senator Susan Ryan.

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**Help for Brain-Impaired**

A three-month rehabilitation programme for 12 severely brain-impaired aged females was implemented in a Newcastle institution for custodial care of the aged. The females' ages averaged 83 years five months and they had been institutionalised on the average for four years eight months. Mr. Dean G. McKinnon, a Court Counselor with the Family Court of Australia in Newcastle, earned a Master of Psychology (Clinical) degree and the W.H. Ward Prize in Psychology for his thesis on the rehabilitation programme. He was supervised by Assoc. Professor B. Fenelon. Here he writes for the NEWS about the project.

The programme was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team including medical specialists, nursing personnel, an occupational therapist and a psychologist (the author). Medical examinations and a large number of tests and measures were applied before and after the programme assessment period.

The main finding of the study was that a group of aged, severely brain-impaired females could be upgraded in terms of physical, psychological, behavioural and affective state over the period of a three-month rehabilitation programme. The control group (of matched residents) as compared with the experimental group was found to deteriorate significantly in physical, mental and verbal functions over the same time period and declined in nearly every other function tested. A group of eight judges agreed in rating the experimental group as significantly more improved than the control group.

Qualitative data were consistent with the statistical data. Reports suggested that members of the experimental group had improved memory, attention, recognition, ability for retaining information, and orientation for time. Marked advances for the experimental group were also noted in social participation and interaction, interest, involvement in activities, and responsiveness to staff.

One of the most significant implications of the study is that the relative sensory deprivation associated with an institutional environment, even with the best medical and sanitary conditions, is detrimental to the overall functioning of brain impaired aged persons. Intensified sensory stimulation, on the other hand, produces more alert social behaviour, improved functioning in activities of daily living and improved cognitive performance and physical condition.

The results of the study indicate that, contrary to traditional expectations, the functioning of the very old can be improved by changes in social, psychological and physical environment. This funding is important because the sample studied was more deteriorated and much older than most previously studied populations.
Aid to bird survival

Black swans are much more likely to accept foreign eggs than moor-hens, according to a study by a visiting Saudi Arabian zoologist.

Eventually, certain species of birds, including swans, could be used to incubate the eggs of species facing extinction, provided the eggs are the same size, thus aiding their survival.

Professor Hussan Eltaher, Assoc. Professor of Ornithology and Malacology at King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, is completing a study of black swans and moor-hens (or swamp-hens) in Newcastle and its environs. He is making use of "dummy" eggs and a movie camera to study the birds' acceptance or rejection of foreign eggs.

Due to the continual rise in the world's population and the pollution of wetlands, certain species of birds face extinction and zoologists are interested in finding ways of saving them.

Professor Eltaher has been working in the swamps at Morpeth and Shortland since last November attempting to gain more knowledge about swans' and moor-hens' reaction to foreign eggs.

He says black swans build their nests in the water in order to gain protection from mammalian predators, such as foxes. Black swans accept additional eggs in their nests, seem not to recognise "dummy" eggs and accept eggs of practically any colour.

However, black swans seem to have a sense of size, because they rejected the largest of Professor Eltaher's collection of "dummy" eggs, which has a diameter of 30 cms.

According to Professor Eltaher, the behaviour of moor-hens is very different from that of black swans. Moor-hens abandon their nests easily and act temperamentally, often breaking their eggs by jumping on them. They also reject eggs of all colours except yellow and light orange.

"Anybody wanting to work with moor-hens have to be ultra cautious, as I have lost seven nests during my experiments."

The visiting zoologist was able to have his "dummy" eggs made in Newcastle. Two staff members of Newcastle Technical College did the job for him and he says he greatly appreciates the College's assistance.

On sabbatical leave until June, and working from the Department of Biological Sciences at the University, Professor Eltaher intends to publish the results of his study on his return to Saudi Arabia.

SPORT

Newcastle University Tennis Society has arranged a social tennis day on Saturday, April 28 at the campus tennis complex, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. All interested persons are invited to attend together with family and friends. Self-catering is the order of the day.

The Annual Universities Sports Association Inter-Varsity Contests will be held from 14 to 18 May.

Details of the University of Newcastle Clubs attending are:
- Athletics, Queensland, men;
- Baseball, Sydney, men;
- Hockey, Wollongong, men and women;

The Annual Students versus Staff Golf event will be conducted at the Steelworks Golf Club Links on Friday, May 4. Intending players should contact the sport and recreation Department Ext. 469 for full details.

Sponsor a Runner in the "Run For Your Life" campaign. Telephone Sport and Recreation Department 68 5500 or Ext. 500 (ask for Margaret Heron).
At its meeting on April 13, the University of Newcastle Council considered a report by the Vice-Chancellor.

Professor George said that members of Council would be interested to know that enrolment figures for 1984 exceeded the projections foreshadowed at the time of the Universities Council's deferred visit in 1983, both in terms of enrolled students and effective full-time student equivalent. Increases were experienced in every undergraduate area without quotas, but the postgraduate enrolment might not differ much from 1983.

The Chairman of the Universities Council, Professor Dunbar had advised that the Council proposes to make more frequent and longer visits to universities to inform itself better on matters of concern. The Vice-Chancellor has indicated that the University would greatly welcome such a visit later this year, so that the full impact of the increased student numbers can be raised with the Council.

The Vice-Chancellor said that a request had been received for a copy of Council's papers as circulated to members of Council to be placed in the Auchmuty Library for consultation by members of the University. At present the minutes only (with deletion of any confidential items) were made available.

Council asked the Secretary to the University to investigate the proposal and report on it.

The Vice-Chancellor said he had recently sought an appointment with the new Minister for Education, Mr Cavalier, MLA, and had also invited the Minister to visit the University and meet members of the Council.

A general Open Day for the public would be held at the University on Saturday September 15, or on two days. Associate Professor Max Maddock, of the Department of Education, had kindly agreed to act as Organiser of Open Day.

The Vice-Chancellor said Professor C. Renwick, a member of the Council, had agreed to act as Chairman of a committee to examine 2NUR-FM with respect to the radio station's present level of funding and present management by a Board.

The Hon. R. Dyer, MLC, has been elected Chairman of the By-laws and Constitutions Committee and Dr D. Day has been elected a member of the Committee.

Emeritus Professor L. Short has been elected to the Buildings and Grounds Committee.

Council recorded its appreciation of the contribution made to its work by Mr S. B. Jones, a former member of the New South Wales Parliament who is no longer a member of the Council.

Miss Jess Dyce, a member of the Council elected by Convocation, will receive her Ph.D. degree during the graduation ceremonies on May 5.
The 54th ANZAAS Congress will be held in Canberra at the Australian National University from May 14 to 18.

Over 900 speakers, including 60 from overseas, will speak on topics ranging through pure science, applied science and the social sciences.

Amongst the topics under discussion will be robotics, VDU’s, issues in human bio-ethics, nutrition and athletic performance, Agent Orange, crime, the environment, women, the law, aging, the social effects of exotic disease invasion (AIDS), and the Nuclear Arm race.

Working with the theme, The Horizons of Science, the Congress will include 31 section programs (conferences within conferences), nine congress symposia, and 30 inter-section symposia. All up, there will be 60 concurrent sessions each day.

Ms Kay Jackson, of the Department of Geology’s staff, was elected Secretary of the University Sub-division of the PSA on April 18. Kay has filled a vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr B. Kelleher, of the Secretary's Division.

Mrs. Robyn Leggett, Captain of the Australian Women's Hockey Team to take part in the Olympic Games in Los Angeles, will be the guest speaker at this year's University Blues and Sports Union Colours Presentation Dinner.

The dinner will be held in the Union on Friday, May 4 at 7.15 pm for 8 pm.

The Vice-Chancellor will present the Blues and the Sports Union will present the Sportsman of the Year Award and Colours.

Mrs. Leggett (formerly Robyn Fernley) is a Blue in Hockey from this University.

The cost of attending the dinner is $20 per head.

Further information regarding the dinner may be obtained from the Sport and Recreation Office.

1984 Graduation Dinner Dance
University Union,
May 5, 7.30pm