

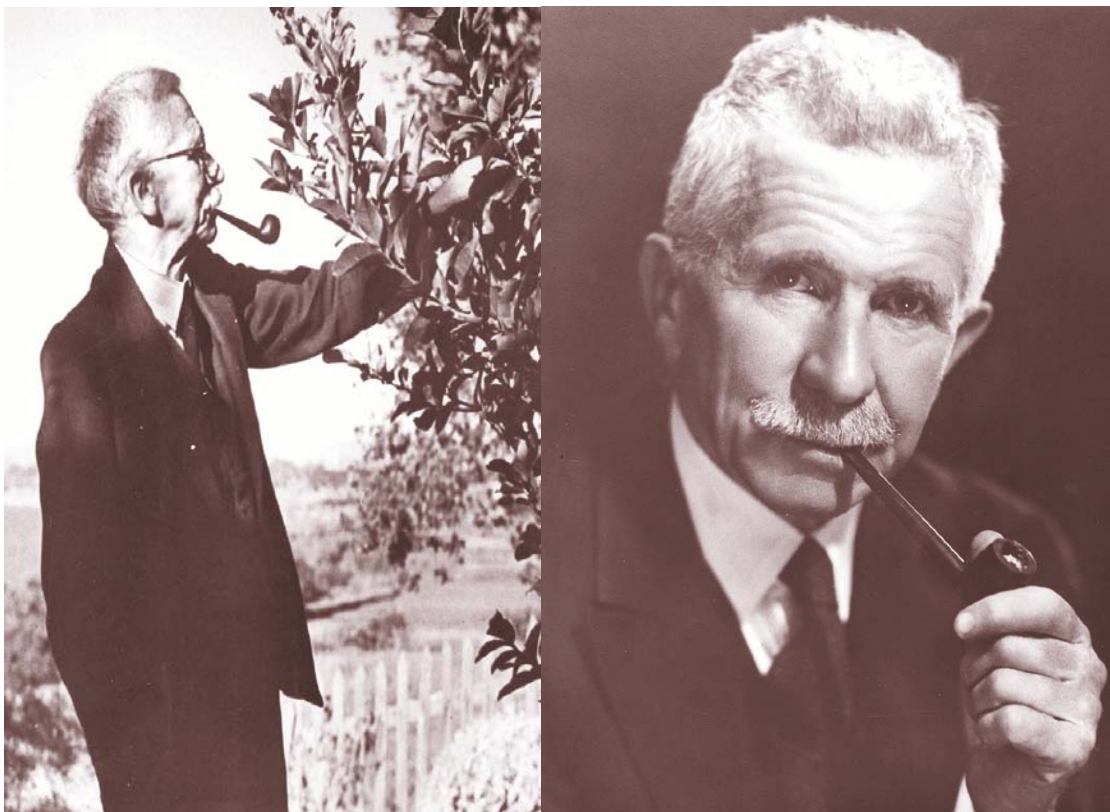
# "IT HAD BETTER BE A GOOD ONE"

## The first ten years of Murdoch University

By Professor Geoffrey Bolton

### Acknowledgements

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Photos: Sir Walter Murdoch

## Conception

He was very old and very frail, and his career included compromises and failures of imagination; but he had gone on writing into his nineties, grumbling at pretension and philistinism until he came to symbolise for his community the values of liberalism, scepticism, and social responsibility.



*Sir Walter Murdoch. A 1959 sketch by Louis Kahan, which was purchased for the University by foundation members of the Senate and senior staff. The portrait now hangs in the foyer of the Senate suite.*

There was an afternoon in July, 1970, when his wife came to his bedside and told him that Western Australia was to establish its second university, and the State government wanted to name it after Sir Walter Murdoch, professor of English at the University of Western Australia from its foundation in 1913 until 1939 and subsequently six years chancellor.

The old man was moved: what a marvelous tribute, he murmured; yes of course he was agreeable. Then a pause, and a glint of the essential Walter Murdoch: 'But it had better be a good one'. He was too ill to be interviewed by the local press, but no doubt he appreciated it a day or two later when an editorial in *The West Australian* praised the aptness of the name. 'Murdoch will have its special inspiration', said the editorial. 'If its undergraduates respond to it there will be no humbug or pretence and no ready acceptance of convention on their campus. Murdoch will be characterised by idealism, thoughtfulness, and, above all, humour'. There could have been no better summary of that debatable concept, the Murdoch University ethos.

Before July was over Walter Murdoch died. It was immediately evident that he was a suitable godfather to the new campus. In the same morning newspaper which broke the news of his death there appeared a full-page advertisement in the form of an open letter to the Western Australian government, urging that the grant of mineral rights on Crown land should be deferred until an official conservation policy was formulated and announced. Among the two hundred scholars, environmentalists, and other citizens who called for the priority of civilised values over a narrow emphasis on resource development the name of Sir Walter Murdoch stood prominent. It was a reminder that Murdoch University need not always be expected to follow the paths of safe conformity.

By naming the new university after Murdoch the authorities appeared to accept that it would possess a critically independent, perhaps even wayward character of its own, and yet this notion emerged only at a comparatively late stage. To understand its emergence we must look at the wider context of recent educational history. Until the 1960s the State's requirements in advanced tertiary education were amply served by one institution, the University of Western Australia. Even in 1962 its student enrolment was no more than 3800. But there were portents of rapid growth; partly because of the resource-led boom, which was transforming the Western Australian economy during the 1960s but also because of changing policies at the national level. Australia's universities had undergone many years of difficulty with the depression of the 1930s, the postwar demand for places for ex-service students, and a period of inadequate funding in the early 1950s. Prime Minister Menzies launched a great reform with the appointment of the Murray Committee, whose 1957 report led to heavily increased federal funding and the creation in 1959 of the Australian

Universities Commission (A.U.C.) as the instrument of growth.

During the same years some important precedents were set for siting new universities. The established practice had been a university in each of the State capitals, with the University of New England and Newcastle University College as examples of a possible model for the future through which established universities set up undergraduate colleges in country towns in the expectation that they would one day achieve autonomy and become full universities. (There was also the Canberra University College; an offshoot of Melbourne University, but in 1960 it was federated reluctantly with the postgraduate Australian National University.)

This decentralised pattern of university development followed British precedent and also appealed to Australian advocates of rural growth, but it flew in the face of the settled preference of most Australians for living in large cities. A more appropriate model for the future was found in the New South Wales University of Technology, which was formed in 1949 out of the old Sydney Technical College thus giving that State a second metropolitan university, and reconstituted in 1958 as the University of New South Wales. Victoria's second university, Monash, was founded in 1958 also on a metropolitan site and South Australia followed in 1963 with Flinders in the Adelaide suburbs. To appease rural politicians Flinders was not planned as an autonomous university but as a college forming part of the University of Adelaide on a separate campus.

So when the time came for Western Australia to establish a second university there were four models to choose from. First, there might be a rural university like New England, and in 1960 the University of Western Australia urged the State government to set aside possible sites at Bunbury and Albany as long-range planning for the future; but as elsewhere in Australia most Western Australians lived in the metropolitan region and this factor came to dominate thinking on the subject. Second, there might be an independent metropolitan university like Monash. Third, following the Adelaide-Flinders example, a second campus of the University of Western Australia could be established among the suburbs outside the range of easy access to the Crawley site.

Finally, although the notion does not seem to have been much canvassed, there was the possibility that the Western Australian Institute of Technology (W. A. I. T.), established in 1967 under the very energetic directorship of Dr H.S. Williams, might expand along the lines of the University of New South Wales. Any of these options seemed feasible.

In 1962 the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority recommended that approximately 400 acres (162 hectares) of Crown land at Bull Creek should

be reserved for the purposes of a future university, a regional hospital, and a teachers' college. This was the region where most metropolitan growth was forecast, and it enjoyed access to the proposed freeway system, although as Sir Noel Bayliss comments: "The proposed location of the future campus gave rise to snide remarks about the "University of Bull Creek"; remarks which Vice-Chancellor Prescott countered by referring to the ancient "University of Ox Ford". This decision largely killed any expectation that the second university would be at Albany or Bunbury, but raised speculation that the Bull Creek campus would operate as a junior college of the University of Western Australia, perhaps on the Flinders model or even confining itself to the first two years of undergraduate study. It could be argued that Perth, with a population only one-third the number of Sydney or Melbourne, would find it hard to sustain student numbers for two full-sized universities of international calibre.

On the other hand it was generally accepted that the University of Western Australia's uniquely attractive campus would become unacceptably overcrowded if student numbers, having advanced by nearly 50 per cent from 3800 in 1962 to 5500 in 1967, continued growing at the same rate. It was necessary to call into being the new campus to protect the quality of the old.

By itself this argument may not have sufficed but it was to gain force when linked to another problem of siting. This concerned the location of a school of veterinary studies. Despite the importance of the subject for Western Australia's rural economy intending students had to seek admission to the University of Queensland's veterinary school. There were only two others in Australia, and they, at Sydney and Melbourne Universities, were full to capacity. It was accepted that the A.U.C. would soon approve the creation of a fourth school, and Perth's claims were strong. But the University of Western Australia's main campus was inadequate for the purpose and the financial commitment was a heavy burden for a university, which had only recently shouldered the founding of a medical school. The veterinary factor was seldom absent from the minds of those addressing themselves to the question of a second campus.

In August 1966, the State government appointed Sir Lawrence Jackson to chair a strong committee, with broad terms of reference, to examine the future needs of tertiary education in Western Australia. Its findings were released in August 1967. Summarising authoritative thought on a wide range of issues the Jackson Report reflected the optimistic temper of an era of sustained economic growth. "The implications of this kind of growth for tertiary education are complex", stated the report. "On the one hand it multiplies career opportunities in technology and helps to hold promising graduates within the State. On the other hand it requires the immigration of

skilled men into the State who may not resolve to make their homes here'. Yet the committee was not narrowly vocational or parochial. 'Educational institutions in a technological society cannot be expected to bear the responsibility of tailoring student output to industrial needs both because demand continually outstrips supply and because they have a higher duty to their students as individuals'. In the last resort the Jackson Report's arguments were national: 'a community alerted to world trends by participation in a global war and a widening role in the post-war world was displaying greater interest than ever in higher education' and 'the extraordinary "explosion of knowledge" in our time has dissolved any doubts about the advisability of governments making substantial investments in tertiary education'.

On the subject of a second university the Jackson Report was the essential catalyst. The University of Western Australia was advised to limit its numbers to 8000 full-time and 2000 part-time undergraduates. This meant that a new campus should be receiving students by 1975 at least. Because of economic and population factors a country university college was out of the question for the time being. For the same reasons a metropolitan campus should be in the first instance a junior college of the University of Western Australia catering for first and second-year students in arts and science. 'Whether it then developed higher courses and achieved independence would be a matter for decision at a later date'; no doubt the Jackson Committee was mindful that after its three-years planning phase under the wing of Adelaide, Flinders University was allowed to go it alone in 1966. A similarly open-ended approach to future growth was evident in the Jackson Report's ideas on the siting of the new campus.

The Bull Creek site was considered too small and low-lying in an era when the average size of a new university was 170 hectares. Instead the Jackson Report drew attention to the Somerville pine plantation, a 920-hectare block eight kilometres east of Fremantle, which comprised the largest piece of endowment land held in the metropolitan area by the University of Western Australia. Larger and finer than the Bull Creek site, Somerville's close proximity to the projected freeway between Perth and Kwinana was seen as offering a promising catchment area for students. On the other hand, although the Jackson Report strongly urged the establishment as soon as possible of a Western Australian veterinary school, there was no explicit mention of the suitability of the Somerville site for that purpose.

The Jackson Report received a warm welcome. Its recommendation for the establishment of a university college was referred to the University of Western Australia for advice. The Senate promptly appointed a site committee and invited the Professorial Board to set up a working party to consult with the Vice-Chancellor on the question of a university college.

Both committees worked throughout 1968 and the early months of 1969, looking towards a deadline about the middle of 1969 when the fourth report of the A.U.C. might be expected. In some respects the site committee had the more lasting effect on the future. From the start its members appear to have been partial to the Somerville site. Originally part of the Fremantle Common, it had been set aside in 1904 as part of the university endowment land grant and in 1926 was vested in the State Forests Department as a commercial pine plantation. Later it was named in honour of William Somerville, a member of the University of Western Australia Senate from its foundation in 1912 until his death in 1954 and a great advocate of tree-planting. (Unfortunately he was also a redoubtable antagonist of Walter Murdoch and his family complained strongly when the new university was named.)

By 1967 the pine plantation was maturing, and the site committee was impressed by its potential for landscaping. In a breathtaking prophecy Sir Stanley Prescott forecast that 'from the aesthetic point of view the new campus would surpass that of the University of Western Australia'. There were practical advantages, too. The block was adjacent to the site of a new regional hospital planned for completion in 1973, so that if a second medical school was required the facilities would be conveniently close. It was also important to provide for the possibility of a veterinary school. The spaciousness of the Somerville site betokened future growth. By December 1967, an area of 565 acres (228.7 hectares) in the south-eastern part of the plantation was provisionally earmarked for the campus.

Thus it was taken for granted that the second Perth campus would follow the Eastern States pattern in being located on an outer-suburban site far from the amenities and character of older inner-city precincts and poorly served by public transport. Although the geographer Martyn Webb raised at the time the notion of a university quarter in what became the Northbridge district of Perth adjacent to the Cultural Centre, and although several academics favoured Fremantle - either among the warehouses and delicensed hotels of its west end, or else the Gaol these alternatives were never taken seriously. The problems of maintaining a vigorous campus life after teaching hours in a new middle-class suburb were easily discounted as it was expected that the northern section of the Somerville plantation would become a planned suburban development with a shopping centre which would attract student custom.

When Prescott raised the possibility that the growth of Perth's northern suburbs might affect the siting of a new university he was assured by the leading planning authorities that this would cause no problems. So although Monash and Flinders were already finding in 1968 that isolation and alienation were leading to a certain amount of student bloody-mindedness,

they were to be the precedents for Western Australia's second university rather than Bloomsbury or Washington's Georgetown. There was no alternative.

Undeniably the site committee made the most of the Somerville block. Its members strongly supported an initiative by Professor Gordon Stephenson to re-route the northern boundary of the campus, South-street, then marked by a sandy track. As redrawn, its line curved around a knoll at the highest point of the site, thus including in the campus the area now known as Bush Court. At this point, Sir Noel Bayliss recalls, 'there was an enclosure, roughly a square, free of pines but containing an untidy and overgrown collection of native and exotic trees and shrubs. These were the indications of a vanished dwelling, the residence of some forgotten settler or ranger'. It was a crucial decision, for otherwise the main buildings of Murdoch University could not have been sited on their present commanding position.

By May 1968, Stephenson and the Town Planning Commissioner, J.E. Lloyd, had drawn up a plan for developing the quadrangle formed by North Lake-road, South-street, and the projected Kwinana and Roe freeways, providing for a major regional hospital (96.7 hectares), a public recreation reserve (127.1 hectares), and the new university (254.2 hectares). Given government approval in July 1968, the University of Western Australia then began negotiating land exchanges with the Metropolitan Region Planning Authority, the State Housing Commission, and various private land owners and estate agents so as to form the block required by the Stephenson-Lloyd plan. The process was to take more than two years, but from mid-1968 Somerville was definitely the site for the new campus.

But what would be its form? In July 1968, the State government 'had no intention to depart from the recommendation of the Jackson committee that the new institution should be a college of the University'. The Professorial Board working party, however, was moving towards the idea of a second, autonomous university. One school of thought, notably one advocated by Professor Alan Boyle, expected that the new establishment could grow to be a large university of the North American type with between 20000 and 25000 undergraduates, perhaps developing as a constellation of five or six colleges of about 4000 students each. Others accepted that an academic structure would be required very different from that of the University of Western Australia.

By August 1968, the professors reported to the Senate that there had emerged 'a broad basis of agreement on the need for the academic organisation and the course structure at the new site to be planned by those who would be teaching there untrammelled by any commitment to the arrangements on the present site except to the extent necessary to avoid



wasteful duplication of courses and to ensure that interchange of students could take place at appropriate levels'. This generous view went a long way towards implying autonomy for the new site, although at this stage the working party still favoured a federal structure with each campus having virtual academic independence under a single governing body.

It remained to take the opinions of vice-chancellors from elsewhere in Australia who had recently gone through the exercise of establishing a new university. Invitations were issued to Matheson of Monash, Myers of LaTrobe, Mitchell of Macquarie, and Karmel of Flinders. The three latter were able to pay advisory visits between March and May 1969, and spoke to a series of seminars attended by academics, students, and members of the Senate and the Western Australian Tertiary Education Commission (W.A.T.E.C.). Not surprisingly each of the visiting vice-chancellors argued that the new campus should not be a carbon copy of older universities.

Each favoured interdisciplinary studies flowing from an administrative structure based on schools of study rather than faculties and departments; and each placed some stress on participatory decision-making and the provision of academic advisers and other support systems to help undergraduates find their way into university studies, thus implying that like most new universities the second Western Australian campus would largely draw its student intake from first-generation students without a family background of academic or professional expertise. All this sounded like an accurate set of blueprints for Murdoch.

In May, 1969, the A.U.C. in its fourth report recommended that a second university should be established in the Perth metropolitan area in time to take students by 1975 and that the University of Western Australia should receive a total of \$200000 towards its planning. On 21 August 1969, the Federal Minister for Education, Malcolm Fraser, announced in the House of Representatives that the government accepted these recommendations. Four days later the Senate of the University of Western Australia passed a series of resolutions based on the findings of the Professorial Board's working party.

It was unanimously agreed that instead of moving towards the establishment of a university college, plans should be made for a new university, which would be autonomous from the beginning. If in the future the two institutions decided to federate it would be a negotiation between independent equals. The State government should be advised to set up a planning committee independent of the University of Western Australia but including some members of its academic staff as well as representatives drawn from the newer universities in the eastern states. This planning committee should be authorised to appoint a vice-chancellor and key staff, to

recommend the terms of an act of parliament, and to proceed with academic and physical planning. The Senate of the University of Western Australia offered its full co-operation, including the temporary use of accommodation and facilities.

It was ten months before the State government followed these recommendations. This was not because of apathy or negligence. The Senate included as Pro-Chancellor (Sir) Kenneth Townsing, who as Under-Treasurer was probably the State's most influential public servant and a powerful advocate for the new university. Townsing was well aware that before his political masters decided finally on the form of the new institution it was necessary to settle the fate of the new veterinary school. The A.U.C. during 1968 commissioned Dr R.N. Farquhar of the Commonwealth Department of Primary Industry to conduct an inquiry into the most suitable location for the school.

He recommended in favour of the University of New England because of its rural setting and existing facilities. This would not have gone far to meet the needs of South or Western Australia. In his announcement to the House of Representatives in August 1969, Malcolm Fraser agreed to Commonwealth funding for a fourth veterinary school but left its location undecided. During the next six months the Western Australian government and the local branch of the Australian Veterinary Association must have gone in for some persuasive lobbying because in March, 1970, the decision came down in favour of the new campus in Perth.

This promise of a strong professional school from the outset tilted the balance in favour of proceeding with an autonomous new university. Events then moved fairly quickly. In May 1970, Townsing sounded out Noel Bayliss, professor of chemistry at the University of Western Australia, with an invitation to act as chairman of the planning board of the new university. For Bayliss 'the opportunity to play such an important part in the foundation of a new university was so exciting that the only possible answer was yes'. It was a heartening response from a senior academic of great practical experience and sagacity, and subsequently many others would follow this example.

There remained the naming of the new university. Australia's new foundations were customarily named after some eminent figure in history or public life. Four possibilities were canvassed for the second Perth campus, each of them happening to begin with the letter 'M'. These were Sir Robert Menzies, the patron of Australia's modern university growth; Lord Melville, the British cabinet minister whose name was given to the locality around the Somerville site; Sir James Mitchell, an affectionately-remembered governor and premier of Western Australia, and Sir Walter Murdoch. But Menzies

and Melville lacked specific connections with Western Australia, and Mitchell though a mighty champion of rural industries was not noted for intellectual interests.

Gently guided by Townsing the authorities settled for Murdoch. Subsequently, some contended that the name should have been 'Walter Murdoch University' to avoid confusion with his great-nephew Rupert Murdoch, but at the time nobody thought it necessary. So it was that on 9 July 1970, while Sir Walter Murdoch was still able to appreciate the compliment the name of the new university was announced at a modest function at the University of Western Australia at which senior officials and twelve members of the Murdoch University Planning Board met for the first time.

The Board's membership largely followed the recommendations of the University of Western Australia Senate committee nearly a year earlier, except that there were no advisers from outside the State. Apart from Bayliss, who was shortly to resign his chair in order to devote himself full-time to the Planning Board, five of its members came from the staff of the University of Western Australia. Three were senior State public servants, and the others were a businessman, a barrister, and an educationist. At its first meeting the Planning Board decided that a registrar should be appointed as soon as possible because of the need to meet the deadlines set by the A.U.C.

Within a fortnight the position was accepted by D.D. Dunn, deputy-registrar of the University of Western Australia. A popular administrator and sportsman Dan Dunn brought to the post qualities of experience, legal training, an uncommonly retentive memory, and a coolly relaxed manner, which was often very effective in deflating academic pomposity. He was to be called 'secretary', rather than 'registrar' or 'principal', a title suggesting a role as the essential linch-pin of Murdoch's future administrative structure. This assumed that the vice-chancellor, when appointed, would work happily with this arrangement or possess the skill to make changes acceptably. As things fell out this expectation was not entirely fulfilled.

The Planning Board's responsibilities covered every aspect of the first phase of development for Murdoch University: the creation of an academic plan, estimates of student numbers, maintenance of liaison with the University of Western Australia and the Federal and State governments, appointment of foundation staff, planning for accommodation, equipment, and expenditure, and much else. During its three years of existence from July 1970, to June 1973, the Board's task was complicated by wildly-fluctuating official estimates of the scope and number of Murdoch's potential student intake.

Incredible as it seems with hindsight, it was commonly thought in the early 1970s that by 1984 Murdoch would reach the 10,000 undergraduates which the conventional wisdom held to be the desirable maximum for an Australian university, so that in 1985 a third university would be needed at Wanneroo. In mid-1975 a planning committee was set up for a teachers' college at Cockburn, which if it had come into being must have looked for students in the same catchment area as Murdoch. Under such promptings the Planning Board naturally expected to have to plan for rapid growth instead of the relatively slow and frugal conditions, which in fact characterised the later 1970s and early 1980s.

The A.U.C. at first pressed the Planning Board to proceed with the setting up of the veterinary school as quickly as possible and at one point Bayliss was informally requested to consider a date as early as 1972. This was clearly impossible, but after visits from the deans of the three existing Australian veterinary schools in September 1970, it was accepted that 1974 would be the opening date for both the veterinary school and the rest of the university. Consultation was accordingly hastened. In December 1970, the Vice-Chancellor of Macquarie (Professor A.G. Mitchell) and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Flinders (Professor A.M. Clark) met the Planning Board, followed in January, 1971, by Professor P.H. Partridge of the Australian National University. Then, faced with the first rumblings of the 1970s recession, official thinking went into reverse.

By September 1971, the A.U.C. was not merely recommending the postponement of Murdoch's opening to 1975 but also suggesting cutbacks in staff, student numbers and buildings. At the end of the year it was even suggested that the opening of the veterinary school might be deferred while a start was made with less costly areas of scholarship. Unimpressed with these vacillations the Planning Board resolved in January 1972, that such a delay 'would seriously prejudice not only the veterinary school alone but also the whole university in the mind of the public'. The issue dragged on for some months amid recriminations between State government ministers and the Federal Minister for Education, Malcolm Fraser. By May it was clear that the veterinary school would be kept, but the episode revealed the vulnerability of an infant university to the shifting whims of official convenience.

Murdoch was fortunate in that veterinary science was not to provide its only professional school. In September 1970, the Western Mining Corporation announced its intention of endowing the new university with a chair of environmental studies. This chair remains alone to this day as an example of private endowment, but at the time it was hoped that others might follow the good example. Early in 1971 the W.A.T.E.C. recommended that Murdoch should enter the field of teacher education, probably with emphasis on

primary teaching. The Planning Board agreed at its meeting on 5 April, 1971. These developments meant that in contrast to its peers among the new universities - Griffith and Deakin - Murdoch was comparatively well endowed with vocational disciplines, an important point in its favour when in future years its survival was under question. As these decisions were taken early it was possible to accommodate them easily in planning the site and costing.

In budgeting for the 1970-72 triennium the Planning Board requested an allocation of \$1.161 million supplementary to the \$200,000 already earmarked for planning in the University of Western Australia grant. For 1973-75 the request totalled \$4.5 12 million for recurrent expenses such as salaries and maintenance and \$15.907 million for capital, equipment, and buildings. In reply the A.U.C. suggested cutbacks in the proposed number of students and foundation professors, as well as recommending the postponement of a student union building and a biology block and rejecting outright a student hall of residence. The eventual allocation was \$8.641 million with an additional \$700,000 for equipment. Given these figures it was then possible to proceed seriously with the physical planning of the site.

This task was entrusted to Gordon Stephenson, who in order to devote his attention fully to it resigned his chair of architecture at the University of Western Australia and entered into partnership with R.J. (Gus) Ferguson. One of the ablest and most innovative of Perth's younger architects, Ferguson was noted for his use of colonial idiom and materials harmonising with the sands and rocks of the Perth region. He also possessed the virtue of imaginative inexpensiveness. A good example could be found in his attractively simple holiday cottages at Rottneest. The landscaping firm of Blackwell and Cala was a felicitous choice among the consultants appointed for site planning. To them the campus owed the early recommendation to concentrate on indigenous trees and shrubs so that the phased withdrawal of pines from much of the site was soon to be followed by an attractive variety of new growth.

The Planning Board soon assented to the proposal to locate Murdoch's first buildings on the highest point on the site, the knoll which was included through Stephenson's initiative in securing a deviation in South-street and which contained one of the few significant stands of native trees remaining in the Somerville plantation. Gradually the concept matured as Bush Court, a quadrangle open on its north side to take advantage of the view towards the Perth city skyline. To the south on a ridge dominating the rest of the campus would lie the library, symbolising its central importance as a resource for every branch of learning. The first academic buildings would flank Bush Court to east and west. As others were needed they would fan out from the central block southward down the slope of the knoll until they formed a

crescent with Bush Court in the keystone position. At the foot of the knoll was a small swamp, which might in time be converted into an ornamental lake. (Fashions have changed, and it is now intended to retain the swamp in its pristine condition as a sanctuary for native flora and fauna.)

At some point it was decided that the academic buildings to the west of Bush Court would be devoted to social sciences, humanities and education while the east academic buildings would be designed for physical and biological sciences. The veterinary school would be sited at the southern extremity of the east academic wing, from which position it would command easy access to the paddocks and animal houses and would be also well placed to share facilities with the nearby regional hospital and the medical school which might one day grow there. Unfortunately, the only building erected on the hospital site was a laundry for the service of all Perth's public hospitals. With tightening finances it came to be thought that Perth needed no new public hospitals or schools for medical practitioners. However, the siting of the veterinary school has proved generally satisfactory.

All this was readily accepted by the Planning Board. Far more contention was aroused by Ferguson's choice of building materials. He proposed using a light-coloured cement block set off by copper guttering and down pipes, with corrugated asbestos sheeting as roofing material. This concept would give the buildings something of the low-slung lines of a pastoral homestead, with covered walkways suggesting a mixture of the verandah and the cloister; an idea which works brilliantly in the long walkway on the library side of Bush Court, with its east end framing a view of the shifting colours of the Darling Range scarp.

When he saw its jarrah beams the historian Sir Keith Hancock commented: 'The oak beams of New College in Oxford have lasted for six centuries and there is no good reason why the jarrah beams of Murdoch should not last even longer'. But the asbestos roofing roused a storm of protest. Those accustomed to the handsome Mediterranean tiling of the University of Western Australia could not imagine any more suitable material. Besides, the prospect of Murdoch University had upgraded the social expectations of neighbouring suburbs, so that subdividers were exhorting homebuyers to build 'near the \$12 million Murdoch development' and taking it for granted that substantial brick and tile homes would follow. Asbestos roofing was associated with industrial estates and the working class.

The Planning Board had by far its most animated series of debates on this issue but in December 1972, accepted Ferguson's recommendation by six votes to four. By this narrow margin Murdoch's architecture came to symbolise a willingness to attempt the innovative rather than submitting to safe precedent. Of course there were critics. The mayor of Melville spoke for

many when he asserted that Murdoch 'looked like a prison... It has no colour - just grey bricks'. Nevertheless, with the planned growth of native trees and shrubs in their surroundings, the Ferguson buildings have come harmoniously and successfully into their environment. Instead of being Victorian sham-Gothic or modern international-glasshouse they constitute that rare achievement among Australian university buildings of sustaining an authentically Australian idiom. Their fellow-professionals knew what Stephenson and Ferguson were about. In 1976 they received an architectural citation from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects for the design of Murdoch University.

Meanwhile the appointment of staff continued. On the administrative side Geoff Field, now chief finance officer, was Dan Dunn's first aide, being joined in 1971 and 1972 by Brian Cosgrove as senior administrative officer, E.S. Ballinger in charge of buildings and property and a number of others. In seeking a vice-chancellor the Planning Board advertised widely, attracting a respectable field. On 31 May 1971, the Board unanimously resolved to invite Stephen Griew, the forty-three year-old professor of psychology at the University of Dundee. Griew accepted. Quick-witted and modern-minded, he had risen rapidly in his field including four years of Antipodean experience as professor at Otago, and looked the right choice to give Murdoch an energetic and unorthodox start.

As Dan Dunn recalls: 'He was seen as excited and exciting and imaginative; with some sort of political feel and a talent for bringing people's ideas together'. On a visit to Perth in September, 1971, Griew confirmed this impression. There was, he said, 'no excuse for a new university to make the same mistakes as the older universities which had been handicapped by tradition'. He also predicted that all members of the university, including students, would have a say in its administration. Thus by the time he took up appointment in August, 1972, Griew was already confirming the expectation that Murdoch University would deliberately break with the practices of established universities, would encourage participatory decision-making rather than control by senior administrators and would welcome innovation.

Coming at a time when traditional universities in the Western world, and not least in Australia, had borne the brunt of four or five years of student demonstrations, it was understandable that Murdoch should attempt to meet a demand for fresh and socially-relevant approaches to learning. By 1972 the Planning Board in fact had gone a long way towards adopting many of the academic innovations for which Murdoch would be noted. The Board was committed to the encouragement of interdisciplinary students on the basis of Schools of Study; it also favoured the kind of special provision for first-year students, which led to the formation of the Board of Part I Studies.

Beyond this it was not certain that more was required. In the face of the established and fairly traditional University of Western Australia whose confidence had not been much shaken by student protest, as well as the energetic and thrusting W.A.I.T. with a student catchment area overlapping Murdoch, the new university needed to devise strategies, which would attract students quickly. It was unclear how far Western Australian students were demanding innovative approaches. As at all times many were simply looking for qualifications, which led to jobs.

One vital opportunity was handed to Murdoch on a plate. Many academics at the University of Western Australia were worried that Murdoch would draw away a large number of full-time students. R.F. Whelan, the Vice-Chancellor, candidly admitted to Stephen Griew 'that senior staff, particularly in the natural science departments, are currently feeling very threatened indeed by the prospect of Murdoch University in 1975'.

Believing that because of its more central position it would always carry the major load of part-time university students, the University of Western Australia sought to achieve balance by encouraging Murdoch to take responsibility for the tuition of external students. Murdoch accepted, and soon found that although external tuition had been underdeveloped and neglected at the University of Western Australia there was major scope for growth in the light of recent advances in audio-visual technology. Griew was quick to see the opportunity of reorganising external study as a mode open to all students, whether studying off or on campus.

Previously, external tuition was available only to those living outside the metropolitan area. Murdoch was to grant eligibility to all, thus bringing tertiary education within the reach of housewives, people holding full-time jobs and others whose circumstances made it difficult for them to attend regularly on campus. This was innovative thinking at its best, and in the early years of struggle the external students represented for several of Murdoch's programmes the essential margin, which made for viability.

After Griew's arrival the pace of preparation quickened. Much time was spent in the selection of senior academic staff. As librarian Murdoch was fortunate enough to recruit W.G. Buick, a scholarly conchologist who as foundation librarian at the University of Papua-New Guinea possessed rare experience of the problems and opportunities of pioneering universities. It was unthinkable that a Planning Board chaired by Bayliss would overlook the three foundations of the physical sciences, mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Four chairs remained to cover the range of humanities, social sciences, and biological sciences. Griew preferred not to pre-empt decisions about the subject areas for these appointments. Instead the Planning Board should choose four candidates of individual excellence who, between them,



promised to cover a wide range.

In the end appointments were made in biology, history, literature, and what was termed 'social inquiry' - a name avoiding some of the methodological implications of 'social sciences'. The latter appointment was made in the knowledge that during 1971 and 1972 requests came in from a variety of sources (ranging from the Australian Labor Party to the Mount Lawley Rotary Club) urging that Murdoch should set up a course in peace and conflict studies. Unwilling to rebuff a hopeful initiative but unprovided with funding, the Planning Board chose an appointee willing to foster peace studies. Altogether more than two hundred candidates applied for the foundation chairs. The process of selection was complete by April 1973. All the successful applicants were males aged between thirty-eight and forty-eight. At fifty Dunn, the Secretary, and Buick, the Librarian, were the oldest of Murdoch's appointments. The foundation professors were scheduled to take up duty on 1 July 1973, and from that date Murdoch would be on its own.

### **Birth**

Optimism was buoyant. The election of the Whitlam government in December 1972, suggested that Canberra would welcome Murdoch's commitment to experiment and to the nurture of the academically disadvantaged. On 28 May the Planning Board held what was to be practically its valedictory meeting. Stephen Griew informed them that the A.U.C. seemed determined to reward resourcefulness and innovativeness in educational planning; he would be pessimistic about Murdoch's chances of attracting support for a programme that did not evidence a healthy and realistic commitment to innovation. In the discussion, which followed, some members commented on the tendency of students to play safe, especially in professional faculties, but more were interested in the prospects for mature students, either for professional retraining or as newcomers to university study.

On 29 June the act of parliament establishing Murdoch University was proclaimed. Seeking to crystallise reforming enthusiasm and to bond together his foundation staff into a united group, Griew was receptive to an idea suggested by Dan Dunn that the foundation staff should be brought together for an intensive preliminary discussion. A three-day 'think-in' was arranged at the Contacio Motor Inn at Scarborough on 10-12 July 1973. From this would emerge a statement of the Murdoch ethos and a set of guidelines against which to develop the future growth of the University.

In the isolation of an out-of-season beach hotel, away from any distractions beyond a brisk walk along the wintry shore of the Indian Ocean, the

founding fathers of Murdoch subjected themselves to an intensive exchange of ideas. Stephen Griew had few preconceptions to impose on the gathering beyond a leaning towards the new and the exotic and perhaps a corresponding tendency to undervalue anything, which seemed to smack of the conventional wisdom of Western Australia, particularly the University of Western Australia.

He saw his role rather as that of the impresario, stimulating the foundation professors to develop their ideas, picking and choosing those that seemed best fitted to his concept of the Murdoch ethos, but never allowing himself to seem the constant ally of one particular view or faction. Sometimes unspecific on long-term strategy, he relied on his prowess as a nifty tactician and found it uncongenial to entrust responsibility to an academic bureaucracy whose structures restricted manoeuvre. Contacio was to be his great moment, the point at which all the exciting potentialities for Murdoch could be sketched out and admired before being submitted to the tests of the workaday world.

Of the ten foundation professors present at Contacio six were appointed chairmen of Murdoch's Schools of Study. Robert Dunlop was already in charge of veterinary studies, having previously worked at Makerere in Uganda and as head of physiological sciences at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at Saskatchewan. Broad-shouldered, energetic, and possessed of a yeoman sense of humour, he was a tireless worker for veterinary studies but sometimes lacked proportion in intervening in matters outside his field. Jack Loneragan, formerly of the Institute of Agriculture at the University of Western Australia, was a plant biologist who became Dean of the School of Environmental and Life Sciences.

Unassuming and practical, he was one of the most thoughtful and consistent influences on the early years of Murdoch. Jim Parker became Dean of Mathematical and Physical Sciences. One of the most distinguished products of the chemistry school at the University of Western Australia, Parker made his name as a kineticist and subsequently at the Institute of Advanced Studies in the Australian National University for his researches in mineral chemistry. He brought with him to Murdoch a number of patent rights administered through a company known as ANUMIN. Serious-minded and passionately devoted to his subject, he was yet able to recognise quality in fields far removed from his own, and was a great influence in ensuring that Murdoch did not neglect research and postgraduate studies.

Brian Hill, Dean of Education, came from a senior lectureship at the University of Wollongong but was by origin a Western Australian who followed Dan Dunn as secretary of the Jackson Committee. He was an admirably systematic administrator, whose reputation as a committed

evangelical Christian did not hinder him from operating tenaciously and successfully in the sometimes cut-throat world of educational politics. John Frodsham, Dean of what he wished should be called the School of Human Communication rather than humanities, came from a chair at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, which he held on secondment from the Australian National University.

The most eloquent of all the foundation professors, he was credited with understanding seventeen languages and enjoyed a profound scholarly reputation in classical Chinese studies. Committed to an intellectual course, which diverged from many of his colleagues, he withdrew after a while from administrative responsibilities to concentrate on adding the study of paranormal phenomena to his scholarly interests. John Raser, Dean of the School of Social Inquiry, belonged to that group of American students of international relations who, having mastered the new disciplines of simulation and games theory, were repelled by the United States involvement in Vietnam and turned to the Californian 'third wave' school of psychoanalysts with their emphasis on personal self-awareness. An exuberant personality who sported an ear-ring and enjoyed surfing, Raser more than any of his colleagues embodied for many 'the Murdoch ethos'.

The remaining professors negotiated themselves into appropriate Schools. Desmond O'Connor, Professor of Environmental Science, momentarily considered linking with Parker but joined Loneragan in what became the School of Environmental and Life Sciences. Originally a lecturer in engineering at the University of New South Wales, O'Connor served some years as chief of the environmental sciences division of the United States Army Research Office, acquiring a trace of American accent. A wry, unaggressive character, O'Connor was a keen amateur aviator and yachtsman. Bruce Mainsbridge came to the Chair of Physics from a similar rank at the University of Papua-New Guinea, having been previously one of Sir Ernest Titterton's team at the Australian National University.

A robust and independent-minded controversialist, he sometimes found himself in a minority of one, but was respected for his resourcefulness in finding new approaches to the teaching of physics at a time when the subject was under challenge. He was attached to the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences together with Alex Robertson who came to the Chair of Mathematics from a similar post at the University of Keele in England. Robertson shared to the full the Scottish love of argument from first principles and the Scottish scepticism about ambitious plans for human improvement. He soon found himself stereotyped as Murdoch's resident Doubting Thomas, and his prudent reservations sometimes received less attention than they merited. Geoffrey Bolton was attracted to Murdoch after serving on its Planning Board while Professor of Modern History at the

University of Western Australia.

With Loneragan, Parker, and Hill he was one of the four native-born foundation professors. Although he strongly asserted the need to respect Western Australian sensibilities in presenting Murdoch's innovations he was too easy-going and conciliatory to have much influence on policy. After consultation with Raser and Frodsham it was decided to place history with the former in Social Inquiry. Later Bolton became Pro-Vice-Chancellor and chaired the Board of External Studies.

Raser in 1981 described Frodsham, Hill, Mainsbridge and himself as the 'radicals' among the foundation professors with Robertson, O'Connor, Parker, and Loneragan as the 'conservatives' and Bolton and Dunlop occupying some ill-defined middle group. At the Contacio meeting, however, these lines of ideology were not easy to discern. Stephen Griew asked each of the foundation professors to write a statement of their expectations for Murdoch. Robertson and O'Connor joined Dunlop and Raser in urging that Murdoch should not be dominated by its bureaucracy; Hill and Mainsbridge said that teaching should not be subordinated to research, where Parker put the claims of research somewhat higher. Frodsham struck a global note: 'the human race is growing so fast that it threatens the stability of the biosphere itself...' He urged his colleagues to see themselves 'as custodians of established humanist values, creators of new standards, critics of society and prophets pointing the way to the future... As secular missionaries academics must be out to educate, instruct, persuade, convert, and save'.

Bolton was mildly skeptical of Murdoch's capacity to fill this role: 'Western Australia is not adequately noticed or consulted by the rest of Australia and Australia is not a major power. If we take the responsibility for disturbing these people out of their present complacency, we should be quite clear why we are doing it, and what we expect to come of it'. But Griew, although he stressed the importance of close relationships between Murdoch and the community it served, found this pragmatism disappointing.

In the end it was Raser whose submission was accepted by all as best expressing the views of those present. He argued that Murdoch's students would be not only part of the first generation whose parents and teachers were themselves products of the post-atomic age but also the first products of the electronic revolution and the counter-culture. Past experience would not be a useful guide for teaching and planning in the future. Loneragan said that the Contacio consensus could be summed up in a passage from Raser's paper:

...I believe Murdoch should respond to that need for humane

and vital intelligence. *Humane* in that it is oriented towards development of the maximum human potential for creativity, growth, love, community and joy rather than towards exploitation of man and nature. *Vital* in that it is deeply rooted in the real emotional, spiritual, and physical needs of men rather than being mere cleverness. If Murdoch is to succeed in fostering such humane and vital intelligence, it must play the role of a *healer*. At first glance this may seem an unusual goal to suggest for a university, for universities (at their best) have traditionally tried primarily to *nurture critical thought* by preserving, exploring, and goading. While I do not denigrate either this goal or these means, I believe that in a world as profoundly troubled and pathology-riddled as ours, the highest calling may be that of healing.

This was the Murdoch ethos as accepted without dissent at Contacio. Raser saw well enough that areas of potential disagreement remained. ‘Some of the foundation professors were of the opinion that what commonly exists is now a betrayal of the idea of education. Others felt that the problems are minor enough; that they require simply better techniques and policy rather than a revolutionary vision’. Some accepted existing definitions of excellence, others sought new and less exclusively cerebral standards.

Beyond these issues however there were other problems, which simply were not faced at Contacio. In the euphoric first year of the Whitlam era few could have foreseen the scale or length of the economic recession, which was about to overtake the Western world, turning students to the single-minded pursuit of job qualifications and to political neo-conservatism. But even in 1973 more might have been done to find out the qualities, which would entice students to enrol at Murdoch rather than the safer (because better known) alternatives of the University of Western Australia (now becoming referred to as U.W.A.) and W.A.I.T.

In succeeding months Griew nailed his colours to Murdoch’s ‘commitment to make a university education available to all people with the ability and inclination, regardless of their age or where they live’. Nor would Murdoch care for students alone:

We see ourselves as going out into the community with the services we can offer. And we are opening our campus not only to our students, but to anyone who wishes reasonably to use them. Our library, for instance, will be open to the people of Perth to use fully... It was also hoped that parents would come into the university: Perhaps a university child care centre could serve them also, so that mum can attend a few courses, browse

in the library, sit in on a discussion, while the kids are at the campus child care centre.

In looking for such interactions with the local community Murdoch was not indulging in visionary trendiness. Such ideas had been urged by one of the finest of Australian academics, Hugh Stretton, only a few years earlier. But would they be accepted by the inhabitants of the new suburbs around Murdoch and would they be funded by an Australian Universities Commission which was too cost-conscious to take readily to new demands?

With hindsight it can be seen that not enough was done to spell out the practical implications of the Murdoch ethos. Did it simply mean, as was agreed at Contacio, a commitment to interdisciplinary studies and other fresh approaches to learning which broke down the restrictive practices of discipline-centred departments? If so, would students still be expected to master conventional disciplines before moving on to interdisciplinary work or would they be thrust immediately into problem-oriented studies, picking up the necessary intellectual skills as they went along?

How would Murdoch graduates compete with others educated more conventionally elsewhere? And to what extent would these new approaches and the widely held disdain of academic bureaucracy commit Murdoch to participatory democracy, with students exercising a larger voice in decision-making than was customary in Australian universities and with mass meetings taking over the function of representative committees? It was a fine thing to launch Murdoch with a statement of ideals but a good deal of subsequent trouble would have been avoided if their implications had been spelt out more clearly.

The experience of Monash, La Trobe, Flinders, Macquarie, and other new foundations suggested that a small new university always had to struggle to establish itself securely in a city dominated by a large older-established foundation. There was no reason to believe that Perth would be different, particularly with the added competition of W.A.I.T. It was unwise of Murdoch to handicap itself by arousing expectations, which it might not be possible to fulfil. As it was criticism was soon voiced by some at the University of Western Australia. At a meeting in October 1973, a lecturer in politics, Patrick O'Brien, denounced Murdoch's aims as 'appalling in their irrationality'. He was saying aloud what many of his colleagues thought privately.

Perhaps because of these reactions the foundation staff at Murdoch did not long persist with an offer of temporary accommodation in a house belonging to the University of Western Australia. Instead arrangements were negotiated for the use of portion of the Noalimba migrant hostel in the Bull

Creek area, about two and a half kilometres from the permanent site. Because of cutbacks in overseas migration the buildings were not required for their original purpose and could later be adapted for student accommodation. Here planning was to go on for the next eighteen months. In July and August the membership of the first Senate was announced.

Government nominees included Noel Bayliss, Robert Hillman, John Ahern, and Sir Stanley Prescott from the old Planning Board, with Sir Thomas Wardle ('Tom the cheap grocer'), the lawyer Michael Lewi, and the Director General of Education, J.H. Barton, as newcomers. The Labor Party nominated A. D. Taylor M LA and Philip Adams (formerly on the Planning Board), and the Liberal-National Country Party coalition chose Andrew Mensaros MLA and Althaea McTaggart, the first woman to serve on Murdoch's governing body. The academics elected Bolton (formerly of the Planning Board), Dunlop and Robertson.

Many took it for granted that Bayliss was the obvious choice as first chancellor after his services as chairman of the Planning Board, but he declined to let his name go forward. It might have been difficult for a seasoned academic to serve comfortably as figurehead to an energetic vice-chancellor and a foundation team with a marked inclination to carve out their own path. However he agreed to take the chairmanship of the Senate's general purposes committee. The chancellorship was accepted by Mr Justice Wickham of the Western Australian Supreme Court. John Wickham was a humane, thoughtful, and fair-minded jurist and an excellent choice in most respects except for a lack of previous experience of the international world of scholarship from which many of Murdoch's innovations were drawn.

The Senate's early meetings were occupied considerably with the formal and ceremonial aspects of the new university. When it came to the choice of formal academic dress the Chancellor, showing some instinct for the Murdoch ethos, 'wondered whether it was necessary to invent personal paraphernalia for academic purposes... Prestige came from the person inside the clothing rather than the clothing itself. We should establish our own position'. By May 1975, Senate agreed on robes in the magenta, which was to become Murdoch University's colour, a reluctant Wickham commenting that they were 'sufficiently vulgar to impress'. The Senate then confirmed its commitment to innovation by circulating the port at dinner anti-clockwise.

It proved more troublesome to find a suitable motto for the University. The works of Walter Murdoch were ransacked in vain for a phrase, which was suitably pithy and inspirational, and to this day Murdoch remains without a slogan. The choice of a coat of arms was almost as difficult since the Murdoch family crest consisted of two ravens transfixed by an arrow and was neither aesthetically nor ecologically apt. A number of amateur heralds

tried their hand at a substitute until the impasse was broken late in 1975 by Noel Bayliss who appeared one day at a Senate meeting with a fine specimen of the *Banksia grandis* which grew in great profusion on the Murdoch site.

A chance conversation with Sir Hugh Springer, Secretary of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, had alerted Bayliss to the idea of choosing some flower characteristic of the Murdoch locality, and Murdoch's botanical consultant Marion Blackwell immediately suggested *Banksia grandis* when Bayliss consulted her. Placed under a chevron suggesting the Murdoch initial 'M' this proved an appropriate choice, particularly since the banksia is one of those peculiar Australian shrubs which regenerate only after burning - and Murdoch University would pass through the fire before its flowering.

For the ten foundation professors 1974 was a busy year. In May the Academic Council was established by statute. This was intended as Murdoch's major academic policy-making body. Its members were the Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, librarian, chairmen of schools, director of external studies, five elected members of academic staff and a postgraduate student. Its duties were to report and recommend on issues referred from Boards and Schools, advise the Senate and Vice-Chancellor as requested, and submit recommendations to Senate on academic policy, development, student admission, studies, examinations and discipline. Its numbers were soon augmented by the chairmen of three major boards reporting to Academic Council, each of them representing an important area of Murdoch's commitment: the Board of Part I Studies, the Board of External Studies, and the Board of Research and Postgraduate Studies.

The Board of Part I Studies testified to the pivotal role of first-year teaching. Mindful of the needs of students without tertiary experience and anxious to avoid early over-specialisation, Murdoch intended that the first year of study should include, as 25 per cent of its content, a 'trunk course' embracing some broad theme of contemporary relevance to which contributions would come from a variety of disciplines, thus ensuring the students' exposure to a spectrum of academic insights and illustrating the value of an interdisciplinary approach.

It was also proposed that Part I students should not be required to undertake more than half their courses in prescribed compulsory units. This was intended to combat specialist narrowness, particularly in professional schools, but had to be modified almost immediately for veterinary students whose certification depended on taking a range of courses comparable to those offered elsewhere in Australia. However, in general, Part I was meant to enable students to try new options which they had no opportunity of encountering previously and to provide some of the breadth of outlook



embodied in the Contacio statement. It was also expected that all staff would participate in Part I teaching. It was not a chore to be left to part-time and junior members.

In like manner it was expected that senior as well as junior staff would play their part in external tuition. It was accepted that external courses would not form a separate and potentially second-grade branch of Murdoch's activities. Courses would be drawn from the normal undergraduate curriculum and taught by academics who usually worked internally. Teaching should employ the best technology available rather than follow the old 'correspondence course' methods, because external tuition was to be regarded as a viable mode available to all students wherever resident, and not just a substitute for the geographically disadvantaged.

Murdoch was fortunate in appointing in 1974 as Director of External Studies Patrick Guiton, deputy regional director in South-East England for the Open University, who proceeded to make a swift and efficient start in taking over external studies from the University of Western Australia. The north of Western Australia was considered particularly in need of attention, and in July, 1974, Griew, O'Connor and Frodsham visited the Pilbara to assess the prospects for distance education, followed by Dunlop, Raser and Bolton who went to the Kimberleys. In 1975 Murdoch and W. A.I.T. established joint arrangements for their students in the Pilbara in collaboration with the staff and resources of the Australian Inland Mission, and this worked well until superseded in 1980 by the setting up of two regional colleges at Karratha and Port Hedland. But it was from the metropolitan area and the South-West that Murdoch would make its main harvest of external students.

Academic Council also created a Board of Research and Postgraduate Studies, despite initial reluctance from both the A.U.C. and the Vice-Chancellor to support an early move into postgraduate studies. Several foundation professors insisted that Murdoch should take postgraduates in 1974, partly to establish its credibility as a fully functioning university and partly to bring on campus an age-group who, through part-time tutoring and in other respects, would bridge the gap between first-year students and mature academics. Some would become members of Murdoch's staff in time, but they would face ample competition. Already the universities of Britain and North America were encountering hard times and eight hundred applicants came forward for twenty-five sub-professorial posts advertised in 1974. The process of selection was not laggardly but with so many to consider a number were barely finalised in time to take up duties for the 1975 academic year.

The formal inauguration ceremonies began on 17 September 1974, the centenary of Walter Murdoch's birth. This was marked by the laying in Bush

Court of a suitably-inscribed commemorative stone, a piece of granite from Murdoch's birthplace at Rosehearty in the burgh of Pitsligo in Aberdeenshire. Next to it was a striking abstract sculpture by Mans Raudzins. The ceremony was performed by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, who spoke movingly of the recent death of his wife and his appreciation of study as a consolation as well as an enlivening interest for those of mature years. He also observed that a university tagged with the name of Murdoch would need to match Walter Murdoch's standards. He probably never met with a warmer reception on an Australian university campus.

Towards the end of November the library was ready for occupation, the third floor being reserved temporarily for Administration. During the following summer months the academic staff gradually left Noalimba for their new quarters. The teaching facilities were slower to reach completion; in the main lecture theatre the workmen were still screwing the armrests on to the seats as the students arrived for their first lecture at the beginning of March. But the neighbours came over to pay courtesy calls, the University of Western Australia Senate late in 1974, the W.A.I.T. Council in February 1975. By the end of February the first students were on campus for orientation. They were greeted on 24 February by an audio-visual programme, 'Murdoch is', which began with a quotation from Walter Murdoch and led by way of the slogan 'Let us change promise and idealism into fact', through various lyrics from Moody Blues and Deep Purple to the conclusion 'To know and be yourself Murdoch is'.

For the more formally minded there was a ceremony at the Perth Concert Hall on 23 April at which the first honorary degrees were awarded to Noel Bayliss, Sir Lawrence Jackson as Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, and Peter Karmel, chairman of the Australian Universities Commission. This was combined with an orchestral concert at which Brahms' 'Academic Festival' overture was deliberately *not* part of the repertoire. Four Indonesian universities were represented by senior officials as well as the vice-chancellor of the University of Papua-New Guinea and every Australian university, since the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee was meeting for the first time at Murdoch.

They were only the first of a stream of visitors who came that first year to the Murdoch campus: Princess Anne, the United States ambassador Marshall Green and, with scrupulous impartiality, the USSR envoy Alexander Borasova, the diplomatic representatives of Malaysia and West Germany. Murdoch dispatched a party of four members of staff and Senate to tour China in May, and in September Walter Murdoch's biographer, John La Nauze, gave the first Walter Murdoch Memorial Lecture, an occasion held annually on or near the anniversary of his birth. In many ways Murdoch

seemed to be receiving its due meed of recognition from the outside world.

Yet confidence on campus was shaky. Murdoch had offered its ethos to the community but the community's response was doubtful. Even the emphasis on opportunity for mature-age students may have misfired. Although more than one thousand applicants sought admission to Murdoch by the beginning of 1975, few came from among the ranks of the better-qualified school leavers - apart from the applicants for veterinary studies who required a high matriculation aggregate. Some of the local high schools falling within Murdoch's catchment area were dubious or even antagonistic about the academic philosophy of the new university, and it may be that more attention should have been given to understanding and overcoming their reservations. Murdoch's laboratory facilities could not yet match those offered to science students at U.W.A. or W.A.I.T. On the other hand Murdoch's arts courses attracted a number who, if not all radical, were thoroughly disaffected with conventional educational methods and saw hope of a new dispensation in such programmes as Peace and Conflict Studies, Human Development, and Communication Studies.

Of 684 students who eventually took up places in Murdoch's first year only 46.7% were under 23 years of age compared with the national average of 70.7%. On the other hand 33.9% of Murdoch's students were 30 years old or more, as against a national average of 10.2%, and 47% were women by contrast with a national average of 34%. Older students and women were especially strongly represented among the 130 part-time and 155 external enrolments. None could deny that in meeting one of its aims Murdoch was an unqualified success. Murdoch provided the means of bringing university education to many mature students, particularly women, who might otherwise never have experienced the opportunity. Not only was this a marked characteristic of Murdoch's early years but it probably had the effect of encouraging the older tertiary institutions in Perth to liberalise their policies.

But the price, which had to be paid, was that Murdoch was not taken seriously according to the only conventional criterion, and this was its capacity to recruit seventeen-year-old achievers direct from secondary schools. Nor was the situation helped by the unwillingness of the older tertiary institutions, U.W.A. and W.A.I.T., to surrender claims to new areas of teaching and scholarship, which might have been of value in building up Murdoch.

The six Schools were all affected in various degrees. Veterinary Studies and Education, the two professional schools, were relatively unworried. Both secured a satisfactory intake of well-motivated students. Veterinary Studies, despite the lingering personal commitment of Bob Dunlop, was unabashedly

skeptical about the ethos. Within a year its students would be demanding exemption from the Part I trunk course so that they could concentrate on their vocational skills; and from the start it was impossible to impose the rubric that only half the Part I content should consist of compulsory units.

The School of Education staff, on the contrary, were among the staunchest advocates of trunk courses, showing a healthy innovativeness in their use of caravans to bring teaching technology to schools and also in the appointment for three-year terms of tutor-supervisors, experienced teachers who were seconded from their schools to Murdoch in order that their practical experience could be placed at the disposal of the trainees undertaking Murdoch degrees. Environmental and Life Sciences also proved a success from its earliest days.

Where other institutions taught biology in separate components Murdoch met a demand by developing a broad biology degree carefully planned to make maximum use of available resources. Its staff, notably Roger Lethbridge, put a lot of effort into cultivating school leavers. On the environmental side there was fruitful co-operation between Peter Newman and a group of likeminded practical idealists in Mathematical and Physical Sciences such as Keith Roby, Phil Jennings, and John Cornish. This led to a very active and sustained interest in community science and in the Population and World Resources programme. In all these respects Murdoch's first year was well on target.

Mathematical and Physical Sciences was troubled by low student enrolments. It was simply impossible to compete with the more ample facilities of larger institutions. In compensation several members of the school - Mainsbridge and the physicists set a vigorous example - worked hard at devising service courses for non-specialists, and there was some satisfying postgraduate work but the future remained worrying.

Poor numbers also affected two of the four programmes in Human Communication, Chinese Studies and Southeast Asian Studies. The situation was not improved by dissension as to whether classical Chinese civilisation or an understanding of the post-imperial 20th century should have higher priority in Chinese Studies. Nor was it helped by the decision of W.A.I.T. to push Indonesian Studies at the same time as Murdoch was embarking on Malay; but the problem was not merely a local one. Contrary to the expectations of most educational pundits Australian students were not showing widespread interest in neighbouring Asian countries. Instead they were increasingly excited by Australian studies.

At this time the School of Human Communication placed Australian literature very low on its list of priorities, thus losing an opportunity to its

competitors. However, it was important to establish Murdoch's interest in world literature as distinct from what was seen as the narrowly Leavisite emphasis of many English departments. Postgraduates were working on fields such as African literature and science fiction, which were nowhere previously available. Human Communication's largest recruitment came in Communication Studies, but despite many interviews it seemed impossible to agree on a satisfactory professor (at one desperate moment an expert on birdsong was under consideration) or to give any direction to the programme without an excessive quantity of costly equipment.

Social Inquiry's numbers were good - the school benefited considerably from external teaching - but of its four programmes, Economics, History, Human Development, and Peace and Conflict Studies, the two latter were under some strain as portmanteaus into which many diverse and even contradictory approaches to learning were thrust. Some seemed a little exotic for Perth. Dream therapy was offered in a few seminars, and the Social Inquiry common-room contained a large cardboard packing-case which was dubbed a Reichian orgone box. In a large university such things might have been accepted as harmless eccentricities, but with a new institution struggling to establish its name it was easy for the unfriendly to allege that Murdoch University was full of trendy unorthodoxies.

It was in vain that the Vice-Chancellor exhorted Academic Council to take a firm grip on programming. Murdoch had never spelt out the limits of its commitments to participatory democracy, with the result that junior staff and students understandably expected to have as much say in decision-making as their seniors.

Coming into being at the end of a decade when university administrations throughout Australia spent much time and energy conceding representation to new elements on campus, Murdoch sought to move with the times by a flexible anticipation of likely demands. The result was a proliferation of consultative groups, each of which needed administrative servicing and threw responsibility on the bureaucracy which Murdoch's founding fathers had been so ready to decry. Each School of Study not only possessed a board comprising representative staff and students but also a forum following the procedure of a Quaker meeting which all might attend. In addition each programme had a committee responsible for the devising of course offerings and the acceptance of honours and postgraduate students.

The intention was that the programmes should look after purely academic matters and the Schools should administer what Brian Hill termed 'rum and rations' - material and financial resources and the allocation of teaching time and part-time staff. In practice the roles of Schools and programmes were soon muddled together. Programmes put up submissions without adequate

awareness of resource implications and School Boards accepted, compromised, or less often rejected. Schools were then expected to report to Academic Council, but a new hurdle was created in the form of a Board of Part II Studies which was meant to report upon and rationalise course proposals; however its role became superfluous as dissatisfied applicants got into the habit of appealing to Academic Council and fighting the battle anew.

The Vice-Chancellor found Academic Council too large and amorphous (particularly after the admission of student members) to act as a privy council, so he created two informal consultative bodies. One was a committee of chairmen of Schools (later committee of Deans, and including the Director of External Studies and the University Librarian) and the other a resources allocation advisory committee deliberately selected from among senior academics who were not on the committee of Deans and hence might be seen as disinterested parties. This was certainly true but R.A.A.C. (Frodsham's acronym, soon popular currency) was both powerful and constitutionally irresponsible, so it was very difficult to appeal against its decisions.

Thus within its first year of operations Murdoch saddled itself with a fragmented and piecemeal administrative partly giving lip service to the participatory ethos, partly enabling the Vice-Chancellor to take ad hoc advice from whatever source suited the needs of the moment, and in few respects affording a clear allocation of responsibility enabling decisions at any level to be taken confidently and conclusively. The buck stopped nowhere. The professional schools which could draw on external codes of standards were least affected by these inadequacies, but many students were understandably confused and came to believe that the success or failure of Murdoch depended on staying participatory.

This view found a voice in the student newspaper *Metior* (a name formed from the acronym Murdoch Empire Telegraph and Indian Ocean Review. Like so much in that turbulent first year it indefinably lacked class). As early as July 1975, *Metior* was editorialising with heavy sarcasm about the decay of Murdoch's youthful idealism, largely because it was already evident that student demands for a stronger voice in University government would not be met.

The Planning Board had insisted that the Act establishing Murdoch University should entrench provision for a Guild of Students. This was a deliberate attempt to discourage either government intervention on the one hand or a takeover by Maoist mass meetings as had occurred to the weak Student Representative Council at Monash. The first generation of Murdoch students considered a Guild too bureaucratic. They strongly preferred some

form of community government, which included academic and administrative staff, and which, as well as ministering to student clubs and societies and managing on-campus facilities (all traditional Guild functions) should have a voice in assessment, work loads, course content, staff selection, admissions procedures, and similar academic matters. On 11 June, 1975, a well-attended forum resolved that two-thirds of the Senate should be members of the Murdoch community, at least one-third being students, and that students should make up at least one-third of Academic Council. Predictably the request got nowhere.

Such demands were not at all what Griew and the Contacio meeting meant by the Murdoch ethos, but with the dismal precedents of unrest at Monash and Flinders before them the senior echelons were unwilling to provoke campus unrest by negative confrontation. Murdoch lacked a trusted and effective system of decision-making: neither open consultation resulting in accepted agreements nor a unified Praetorian Guard of seniors secure in the exercise of their responsibilities. Griew's earlier emphasis on consensus was giving way to a tendency to play his cards close to the vest. Neither the Chancellor nor the Secretary was enabled to make the contribution appropriate to their positions.

The Secretary's position was in fact diminished by the creation of the co-equal post of Business Manager, overseeing all financial, building, and personnel matters. The appointee, Ray Campbell, a tall, shrewd, totally unflappable executive, gave excellent service. But more was required beyond administrative adjustments and in any case Griew's style of leadership, so effective in small groups, was coping less happily with the problems of a functioning university.

This was more the pity because Murdoch was making a substantial achievement in teaching, research, and the fulfilment of its original academic aims. The quality of pastoral care between teachers and students drew something from relatively small numbers but more from a sense of shared involvement in a pioneering enterprise where the contributions of each individual counted. But a malaise persisted. Faced with tightening finances, with rising demands from students and junior staff whose expectations had been kindled by the university's own rhetoric, and with a cool public reaction to its early self-promotion, Murdoch began to look to the difficult compromises which would make for survival and prosperity in the days ahead.

## **Survival**

Late in 1975 Henry Schoenheimer, a Monash University educationist of high ideals, visited Murdoch and wrote up his impressions for the *National Times*

under the headline: 'Head for the West for liberated learning before it is too late'. Claiming that too many Australian universities gave research priority over teaching, he praised Murdoch for its student-centred approach and readiness to experiment. He admired such courses as Great Ideas (a survey course of the world's seminal thinkers), women's studies, and the trunk courses; and he was especially impressed with the device of independent study contracts under which a student could study a subject not in the regular curriculum provided he or she could find a suitably-qualified supervisor able and willing to act as a resource person to give guidance and assessment. He also noted with approval the flexibility of structure, which enabled more than 30 per cent of students to change their originally-planned courses during first year, though he may not have appreciated the administrative burden. But, he wondered:

...how long will it be before the present cross-campus enthusiasm declines? It is a common phenomenon in conceptually new and exciting institutions, particularly when they are small. How long before the arteries harden, the routine settles down, the machine men take over? How long before the infighting and backbiting and empire building that characterises tertiary institutions becomes endemic?

Foremost among 'the machine men' for many of Murdoch's disappointed idealists would have been the Deputy-Vice Chancellor, Arthur Beacham, who had been Vice-Chancellor of Otago when Griew was there and owed his Murdoch appointment largely to Griew. A stocky, combative Welshman with a distinguished career in economics, Beacham at sixty-one came with his wife from Liverpool to Perth in 1975 when the Turkish invasion of Cyprus put paid to his original plans of retirement to a warm climate. His provocatively common-sense manner drove some to assert that Beacham was brought in to steer Murdoch away from its brave innovations into conformist orthodoxy. In reality, he was a shrewd old professional who relished the challenge of ensuring Murdoch's survival in adverse times.

Although cutbacks in funding were foreshadowed during the last months of the Whitlam government, they were associated by many with the coming to power of Malcolm Fraser's Liberal-National Country Party administration at the end of 1975. It gave rise to a certain amount of public and private acrimony when many Murdoch academics protested against the manner of Whitlam's dismissal. Although Murdoch staff were no more vocal than many other academics, the controversy fuelled the fears of those who expected that Murdoch would be punished for its educational radicalism. Despite often-repeated allegations, it cannot be too strongly stressed that there is no evidence of government pressure against any aspect of Murdoch's teaching. On the other hand, if cuts were looming in the tertiary



sector on financial grounds, new universities such as Murdoch and Griffith were particularly vulnerable because they were so recently established. Once this possibility was hinted at schools were understandably shy of advising their students to enrol at Murdoch and private sources were reluctant to extend financial credit.

Beacham knew that among educational policy-makers in Canberra the future of Murdoch was an open question. He would not excite more consternation by publicising this factor but it was seldom absent from his mind as he sought to chivvy staff and students into more businesslike habits. Having launched twenty programmes in the expectation that staffing would grow quickly, Murdoch found that with financial constraints there were simply not enough academics to service all the initiatives, which had been started. As early as December 1975, it was reported that three courses were in risk of cancellation because of lack of funds and, although this was only the first of a series of inconvenient press speculations about Murdoch's future, it was clear that a number of bright ideas would drop by the wayside in 1976.

The Human Development programme was superseded in 1976 by a professionally oriented set of courses in psychology, with R.D. Savage as professor. At John Raser's request he was relieved of the responsibility for a programme in Peace and Conflict Studies, and in its place there was a more broadly based programme in Social and Political Theory in which peace and conflict studies could be one component. To some extent this marked a move away from Raser's open-ended Californian teaching methods in favour of a coalition of liberals, conservatives, and Marxists who preferred approaches to scholarship more compatible with Australian practice, but it had been clear for months that the spectrum of social sciences could not be accommodated sensibly under the 'peace and conflict studies' umbrella. It was not, as has been alleged, a case of 'the University administration losing its nerve'.

Communication Studies caused most furore. Despite its popularity in terms of student enrolment the programme lacked direction, largely because it was impossible to secure agreement on the qualities sought in senior staff and the task of designing and presenting an academically sound programme proved beyond the capacity of the junior staff first recruited. Faced with the call for retrenchment, and encouraged by Griew, the Board of Part II Studies recommended closure of the programme. After a large meeting of protest by students early in June 1976, the media reported erroneously that Murdoch was in such financial trouble that at least five major study programmes would have to close down and the students currently enrolled in Communication Studies would not receive valid degrees. This nonsense was of course no help to morale, but Academic Council accepted that in 1977 no new students should be allowed to nominate Communication Studies as a

Part II major and set up a committee to review the future of the subject.

In December, 1976, this committee reported to Academic Council that Communication Studies should be retained as a full undergraduate programme 'but with a radically-changed direction and orientation so that its thrust should be principally social science oriented and its objective substantially more theoretical than at present'. So Communication Studies survived, but the fuss over its future fed the disillusion of those such as the editor of *Metior* who, at the beginning of 1977, described Murdoch as "A University in which those in power have almost destroyed the ideals, where most of the staff are either scared, disappointed, or not concerned about the original ideals, and where the only hope lies with the students and a few staff".

This was unfair comment, and in fact the myth of the Murdoch ethos betrayed probably inhibited the students from addressing themselves vigorously to the task of forming a Guild. It was not that student activity on campus lacked liveliness, at least during daylight hours. Within the first year numerous clubs and societies were formed, and although sporting activities were limited by paucity of numbers at least a start was made in September, 1976, when the Murdoch club brought home the University's first trophy, the Perth Friendly Soccer Association Cup. But the notion persisted that a Guild structure must lead to all the evils of paperwork and bureaucracy, and leading students continued to yearn for a complex system of direct democracy based on open meetings.

Eventually, in September 1976, legislation setting up a Guild of Students was submitted to the State government, whose ministers as it happened were at that time contemplating measures to reduce the authority of student guilds which they saw as imposing a form of compulsory unionism. Once this was understood the students were galvanised into action. On 20 October 1976, five hundred students resolved to set up a caretaker guild re-dedicated 'towards the original innovative goals on which the University was founded'.

But the sequel was disappointing. The core group charged with drafting regulations over the summer failed to achieve much. Even the decision to impose parking fees from the start of 1977, an issue which generated large quantities of vocal indignation, failed to materialise into a crisis. When in March 1977, the State government at last approved the Murdoch Guild legislation a secretariat was elected with Mark Ames, a veteran American student spokesman, as president. Within six months he and all but three of the members were foreshadowing resignation in a mood of frustration. It had been too hopeful to imagine that the majority of students had the stamina or interest for attending community meetings. Of course the administration was

blamed, but in a period of slow growth and rising unemployment the conditions were no longer favourable for student activism.

The staff also faced change. As early as October 1975, Griew appointed Beacham to chair a committee of review on academic decision-making processes. This committee was serviced by the Deputy-Secretary (Academic) Bob Tapsell, whose previous experience with the University of Essex led him to suggest that interdisciplinary experiments should be limited to a comparatively-small proportion of Murdoch's resources. 'Agreed - with nobs on!' Beacham minuted; and the Beacham Committee duly recommended stronger links between the responsibility for resource allocation and responsibility for adopting academic proposals. Some reforms accordingly followed during 1976 and 1977, none of them without encountering opposition. The Board of Part II Studies was abolished and its functions distributed between Academic Council and the School Boards.

Following a basic decision taken in 1974 Media Services and Learning Skills were brought under the umbrella of E.S.T.R. Unfortunately, the opportunity was missed of bring R.A.A.C. or the Committee of Deans more formally into the consultative process.

Beacham struck more controversy through his view that 'there seems to be widespread belief that our standards are not as high as they should be. This may or may not be true but such views are difficult to contest'. His idea of appointing external examiners, although not without Australian precedent, ran into too much resistance to be tried, but some changes were made. Whereas Part I subjects were graded simply as 'pass' or 'fail', Part II assessment from its beginning in 1976 was graded with the proviso that students could opt for pass/fail if they preferred.

While some saw this as a move towards encouraging self-seeking competitiveness among students the plain fact was that Murdoch graduates would be applying for jobs and national awards in a community where grades were used as a convenient guide to student quality so that it would have been unjust to handicap their chances. The great majority of students chose grading and in 1979 it was extended to Part I, still with the escape clause that those who disliked the practice could be exempted on giving notice of this when they enrolled in a course.

Intellectually Murdoch was thriving. External Studies courses were developed at a remarkable rate. In 1975 only six were offered. The number grew to forty-seven in 1977 and doubled to ninety-four in 1980. During the same period the number of fully-external students grew from 110 in 1975 to 488 in 1977 and 800 in 1980; the numbers could have been enlarged by thirty per cent if those studying in a mixed internal/external mode were

added. External students from the University of Western Australia were integrated into the Murdoch system. Between 1975 and 1978 three education officers were appointed to collaborate with academic staff on the design of course materials. All this called for great effort on the part of those concerned, and work of high quality was produced with comparatively little recognition. Murdoch's External Studies sector showed a high order of professionalism and drive. Tertiary education came to many who had never previously enjoyed the opportunity, and Murdoch was the instrument of this achievement.

Another way in which Murdoch took a fresh path was in the establishment of a unit concerned with promoting and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the university. The Educational Services and Teaching Resources Unit (E.S.T.R.) was established in 1975 with Rod McDonald at its head, Irma Whitford in charge of media services, and Lorraine Marshall with learning skills. Murdoch was one of the first universities to set up such a unit. Its staff were soon heavily involved in the evaluation of teaching, courses, and programmes in every School.

Their research covered not only advice on teaching techniques but also more general aspects of staff development such as committee work, time management, and use of the news media. Among student services particular attention was given to numeracy skills and to the needs of students whose first language was not English. Media services provided all Murdoch's photographic, graphics, and technical needs as well as the audio material required for External Studies - a demand which eventually ran at 30,000 cassettes per year.

Many innovatory courses succeeded. For example in 1976 Murdoch introduced the first full course in women's studies in Western Australia (and one of the first in Australia) under a tutor in Social Inquiry, Frances Rowland. Consisting of an introductory Part I course 'Woman in society' and a Part II course 'Sex, psyche and class', women's studies deliberately refrained from establishing a separate programme in an effort to provide an integrated interdisciplinary approach.

Despite some opposition the interdisciplinary team included a male tutor and about twenty per cent of the students were male. The Library built up a specialist interest in women's studies, acquiring the Pankhurst collection in 1978, a considerable amount of material from the veteran Perth feminist Irene Greenwood, and also the Gerritsen and Women in History Collections. Similarly the interdisciplinary programme in Population and World Resources brought together a committed team of environmental, physical, and social scientists. In a number of single-discipline subjects such as physics, literature, and history innovative teaching methods were pioneered

at Murdoch and later imitated elsewhere.

Not that Murdoch's achievements were confined to the undergraduate level. Its research effort in many fields was gauged by success in winning from the Australian Research Grants Scheme and elsewhere a higher amount of support in relation to staff numbers than most other Australian universities. As early as 1975 the biologists Mike Dilworth, Jenny McComb, and Jan Elliot reported an important breakthrough about nitrogen fixation in the root systems of legumes.

Also in Environmental and Life Sciences Marilyn Renfree embarked on an impressive career of research on marsupial reproduction, gaining substantial grants from a number of sources and concluding in 1980 when she became the first woman ever to receive the Gottschalk Medal awarded by the Australian Academy of Science for the most outstanding young scientist in the medical and biological fields. The Veterinary School was also early into research, gaining support from the turf and farming organisations as well as official grant-giving bodies. In Social Inquiry Jim Macbeth and Dave Hitchins were commissioned in 1976 to undertake a pioneering survey of information needs and provisions in Region 12, the consortium of local authorities surrounding Murdoch.

Masters' degrees by coursework were initiated in 1977 by the School of Education and followed in 1978 in applied psychology and environmental science. Education also set up an Institute for Social Programme Evaluation in 1977 and an Institute for Environmental Science soon followed. Perhaps the greatest community impact was made by Jim Parker's Mineral Chemistry Research Unit which won strong support from the State government and which contributed a number of important improvements to the technology of Western.

Australia's major export industries. Concurrently with these research efforts Murdoch continued to expand its postgraduate sector despite some rather discouraging noises from the A.U.C. Beacham and R.A.A.C. made a practice of allocating considerable resources to postgraduate work in the belief that Murdoch's standing and capacity to attract outside support would be enhanced. This policy paid off handsomely and the postgraduate students were a rewarding element in Murdoch's early years.

One of the surest ways of securing the future for Murdoch was to invest so substantially in buildings and plant that the University's closure would be seen as a waste of resources. In April, 1976, Griew commissioned the firm of Liewellyn Davies Kinhill Pty. Ltd. to advise on campus planning, particularly the location of buildings, roads, and services. Their report simply confirmed the earlier work of Stephenson and Ferguson in proposing

a series of custom-built blocks linked by garden courtyards. Even before the survey was commissioned Murdoch had gained the A.U.C.'s permission to build a second West Academic block, and after some modifications to reduce the expense funds came through.

There was a valuable spinoff from this building. Ever since Murdoch opened to students a child-care centre had been one of the highest priorities for a university with so many mature students. The various contractors engaged on the West Academic 2 project combined to present the University with a full day-care centre, so that from 1979 it was considerably easier for married women and single parents to attend classes. The arrangements were the responsibility of Ray Campbell whose careful husbanding of Murdoch's resources and investments, although little publicised, enabled a number of hopeful schemes to come to fruition in those years.

Enterprise took various forms. The School of Veterinary Studies, learning that the old police stables at Herdsman Lake were in danger of demolition, put in a bid to have these buildings dismantled and reassembled on the Murdoch campus for their historic interest, and this was accordingly done in May-June, 1976. During the early months of 1977 a large party of students and staff devoted themselves to digging out an amphitheatre on the western side of the campus, which could be used for open-air performances. At the end of November it was used for the first time for a staging of *Toad of Toad Hall*.

Meanwhile in March 1977, Alcoa announced a gift of ten thousand trees to be planted on the Murdoch campus. Other donors with faith in Murdoch's future included the Perth Building Society who endowed a research fellowship in finance and Sir Frank Ledger's family trust who made up a grant for the purpose of creating a loan fund for needy students. All these were promising portents.

Yet the future was still cloudy. This impression was deepened and partly created by the grizzling of some of Murdoch's own staff and students, who were so engrossed in lamenting lost ideals that they did not give nearly enough publicity to the University's not unimpressive record of achievement. Objectively, however, times were harder. The Fraser ministry suspended the triennial funding of universities. From May 1976, rumours abounded that fees for tertiary education would be reintroduced, perhaps coupled with a scheme for student loans. Both were likely to discourage enrolments at Murdoch. In September 1976, P.P. McGuiness, writing in the *Australian Financial Review*, nominated Murdoch among a number of minor universities which could be closed down and their staff redeployed.

Throughout 1977 Murdoch students shared in protests against changes in

educational policy. On the weekend of 9-10 July when the Liberal Party held its annual conference at Murdoch the Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and the State Premier, Sir Charles Court, were confronted at their arrival by forceful heckling by a large crowd including a proportion of Murdoch staff and students. The press carried reports of 'ugly clashes'. Given the embattled mood of many on campus it was easy to doubt the continuance of government support.

The cutbacks would have a perceptible influence on Murdoch's rate of growth. An energetic and capable schools liaison officer was appointed in 1976, but Rob Osborn was starting behind scratch in the endeavour to promote Murdoch. By 1977 Murdoch's enrolments had grown to 1900, of whom 935 were full-time including the bulk of school-leavers. During the next three years the number of full-time students would drop to 867 in 1980, and although an influx of external and part-time enrolments would boost the total to 2440 it was still a problem to attract the seventeen-year-olds.

In these circumstances Stephen Griew announced his resignation in July 1977. He was moving to the University of Toronto to become head of the psychology section in its faculty of medicine, and would later be president of a university devoted to external tuition, Athabasca. If his original dreams for Murdoch fell short of fulfilment he could still see much to repay the efforts of the past five years and could reflect that if Murdoch had not begun by aiming high it might not have achieved the many innovations which survived. The Senate confirmed Arthur Beacham as Deputy-Vice-Chancellor until the end of 1979 with the intention that he should be in charge of Murdoch until a successor to Griew was carefully chosen. But who would throw in his fortunes with a university whose future was still obscure?

Some comfort could be derived from the federal government's decision to restore triennial funding of universities as from 1978, while at the same time the old A.U.C. was remodelled as the Universities Council, one of the three agencies of a new Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (C.T.E.C.). The Council's visit in May 1978 was a somewhat tense experience for Murdoch staff because it was known that the real growth rate for Australian universities was to be reduced by one-third.

Beacham found it necessary to issue a press statement to the effect that there was no foundation for believing Murdoch to be under threat. After searching scrutiny the Council's strictures went no further than a recommendation that Murdoch should look critically at its courses and programmes, as they were rather numerous for a small university. Accordingly, the acting-Vice-Chancellor and deans resolved that, except in Veterinary Studies, there should be no expansion and that a new course could be mounted only by discarding one of equal weight in credit points.

This caused only muted grumbling because many were aware of another potential source of critical comment. In October 1976, the Federal Department of Education had appointed a strong committee under the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney (Sir) Bruce Williams to conduct a major inquiry into education and teaching. The Williams Committee visited Murdoch in July 1977. As 1978 wore on without any word of its findings speculation arose that changes might be contemplated which would affect Murdoch's future.

Perhaps this delay was beneficial. During this period the first Murdoch graduates were completing their degrees and finding that they could compete as successfully on the job market as the products of U.W.A. and W.A.I.T. Some who came to Murdoch with partially-completed degrees were given their bachelors' hoods at a conferring in June, 1977, and the first award of completely Murdoch-grown degrees took place in the Perth Concert Hall on 5 April, 1978.

Before a crowded audience the Chancellor conferred three PhDs, two MPhils, seventy-three BAs, sixty BScs, forty-five education qualifications, and one Diploma of Mineral Science. Five students were awarded certificates of honour and the address was given by the former Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck. It was at this ceremony that the custom originated of including an interlude by Murdoch's own choir, but it was not until 1980 that the choir introduced its most popular innovation, a cantata based on the wording of the Murdoch parking regulations.

The graduation ceremony was the best possible advertisement for Murdoch's continued viability. Another hit was scored at the end of the year when a Murdoch graduate, Wendy Carlin, became the University's first Rhodes Scholar and the second Western Australian woman to win this distinction. Meanwhile in September the second vice-chancellor's name was announced. He was F.M.G. (Glenn) Willson, a fifty-three-year-old British political scientist with professorial experience at the University of Rhodesia and professorial and senior executive experience at Santa Cruz in California.

More recently he had served as head of Goldsmiths College in London and for three years as Principal of the University of London. Willson had no previous Australian experience except that his name was under serious consideration when Murdoch was seeking its first vice-chancellor, but his seven years at Santa Cruz had acquainted him with the problems and opportunities of innovative new universities. With a style, which combined British phlegm and British polish, he was a solidly defensive strategist. It turned out that this was what the times demanded at Murdoch.



When Willson arrived at the end of 1978 he 'had a notion of everyone sitting on the edge of their chairs'. It surprised him that Perth people saw Murdoch as uniquely way-out and radical, 'but', he said, 'the plain brutal truth, and one perhaps not altogether welcome to some people, is that it's nothing of the kind'. He had been hardly three months in office when the report of the Williams' Committee arrived - all three volumes and 1800 pages of it. One sentence was electrifying: 'We have come to the conclusion that Murdoch University does not have a promising future as an independent institution'. Its student numbers would always be too small for viability, and its functions should be integrated with those of the University of Western Australia.

Clearly, the Williams Committee did not intend the complete elimination of Murdoch. What its members had in mind was some kind of federal solution, marrying the decision-making processes of the two universities so that unnecessary duplication could be avoided and small units amalgamated. This medicine, however, was far too strong for a small campus many of whose members were already shaken in confidence, and reactions were traumatic. Patrick Guiton, isolated in the Pilbara where he was about to meet a group of external students, heard a truncated report on the radio and wondered how he should face the students. Assistant Secretary, Richard MacWilliam, telephoning his office from outside the campus, was confronted by a secretary dissolving into tears because she believed the University would be shut. Once again the tradesmen began to harry the administration for their cheques.

Promptly to the rescue came the State Premier, Sir Charles Court. It was ironic that the politician who received such a stormy heckling on his previous visit to campus should now figure as Murdoch's saviour, but the opportunity was tailor-made for him. On 23 March 1979, the day following the publication of the Williams Report, he presided over the formal opening of the Veterinary School. 'The State government would not have a bar of any amalgamation or merger of Murdoch University with the University of Western Australia', he told his hearers. 'We have fought hard to get Murdoch University. We will fight just as hard to maintain it... We realise that Murdoch will have its problems but institutions become great because of the way they are able to surmount adversity. I am convinced that Murdoch University will do this.'

He was supported editorially by *The West Australian*: '... the major reason for preservation with Murdoch is to ensure that West Australians have the choice of a less formal institution than Crawley.' The vice-president of the Australian Union of Students weighed in with a forecast that Murdoch 'would be overrun by sheep if it merged with the University of Western Australia' and Willson told a meeting of five hundred students that he saw

Murdoch continuing indefinitely as a university. The merger was a non-starter.

Cynics have suggested that in Western Australia's 150th anniversary year it would have been damaging for the Court government to admit that the State could not sustain two universities. Like many Western Australians Court must have remembered that when the University of Western Australia of the late 1940s had no more students than modern Murdoch it had produced students of the calibre of Bob Hawke, John Stone, Randolph Stow, and Ralph Slatyer and there was no reason to suppose that Murdoch could not become the alma mater of equally-distinguished graduates.

Besides, the Williams Committee took its evidence from the disheartened Murdoch of mid-1977; by 1979 the signs of recovery were readily discernible for those with eyes to see. In a happy stroke of timing Jim Parker received early in April, 1979, a fellowship of the Australian Academy of Science for his research in mineral extraction, ion solvation and reaction mechanisms. He commented pointedly that 'it was good that some people in Canberra recognised one of the many worthwhile activities at Murdoch University'.

The State government followed up its strong stand by appointing a three-man committee under the chairmanship of Michael Birt, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, with instructions to recommend means of securing the future of Murdoch as a separate institution. In the Queen's birthday honours Bayliss, as founding chairman of the Murdoch Planning Board, was advanced to a knighthood and Philip Adams, the vice-chairman, was also honoured - surely a significant coincidence. Gradually confidence returned to Murdoch. The bogey of abolition had been confronted and overcome.

By the time Arthur Beacham took, what he called, his retirement at the end of 1979 - in fact he was devoting himself to the preparation of a national academic superannuation scheme to which Murdoch is now a party - he could be sure that Murdoch was steering into quieter waters. He was replaced as Deputy-Vice Chancellor on a halftime basis by Alex Kerr, the Foundation Professor of Economics. At the same time Mr Justice Wickham resigned as Chancellor, having served two terms. He was succeeded by another humane and thoughtful jurist, Sir Ronald Wilson of the High Court of Australia. Another of the founding fathers to depart in this year was Bob Dunlop who returned to North America. He was succeeded by Mal Nairn, who with John Howell, Ray Wales, Bill Clark, and Ralph Swan comprised a professorial team who were firmly consolidating the reputation of the School of Veterinary Studies.

In November, 1979, the Birt Committee tabled its report. It was a document designed for reassurance. Most of its recommendations gathered up ideas, which had been floated around Murdoch during the last year or two. Murdoch was advised to limit its undergraduate load in 1982-84 to the same level as 1981 but to increase its postgraduate intake to 18 or 19 per cent of the student total. Working parties should investigate the feasibility of forming institutes for teaching and research in energy science, mineral science, and marine studies.

External studies should be developed further. More courses should be provided in Asian languages and cultural studies. Education was a promising growth area. Pre-service teacher education courses should be increased, perhaps including an eighteen-month primary teaching programme for graduates. And Murdoch was exhorted to launch no major activities unless it was certain that they could be adequately funded and attract enough students. This advice sounded wryly to those who remembered that in early years the most contentious of Murdoch's programmes were often those, which attracted all too many students.

The most controversial issue arising from the Birt report came when the State government set up an inquiry into the possibility of removing pre-school teacher education and control of the Muresk Agricultural College from W.A.I.T. and transferring them to Murdoch. The Muresk idea was intriguing because from Murdoch's earliest years there had been those who argued that the University of Western Australia should give up its Institute of Agriculture from its cramped quarters at Crawley and allow its transfer to Murdoch where space was ample and the School of Veterinary Studies would provide congenial neighbours. To couple such a move with the acquisition of Muresk would have been rational. As usual institutional inertia proved too strong and to this day the study of rural sciences continues to be scattered between Western Australia's three major tertiary institutions.

Nor did the next five years see many important examples of co-operation or rationalisation as between Murdoch and its peers. At least the University of Western Australia liberalised its practices considerably so as to facilitate transfer of student credits between the two universities. But despite some growth in cordiality between Murdoch, U.W.A. and W.A.I.T. and despite the existence of a coordinating body in the Western Australian Post Secondary Education Commission (W.A.P.S.E.C.), which was intended to encourage, rationalisation Murdoch was given few favours by its bigger neighbours.

Nothing followed, for instance, from the idea that Murdoch should take over all responsibility in Western Australia for Asian studies or at least for Asian languages. This meant that Murdoch's programmes in Chinese Studies and Southeast Asian Studies encountered difficulties with numbers (and in the

former case with personnel) so that ultimately, after an internal inquiry, the Asian studies programmes were merged. In this as in many other areas Murdoch had to plan on the expectation of going it alone.

Quite suddenly any talk of merging Murdoch with its neighbours seemed a dead issue. Controversies still rippled the University but they ceased to blow up into headline news. For instance, in mid-1979 the old issue of Communication Studies surfaced once more as the administration, reacting to the lack of progress in defining the programme's direction, proposed afresh that students should not be enrolled in it at Part II level in the following year. Strong protest ensued but on this occasion there was no public controversy before the issue was resolved by deciding to make one more attempt to fill the chair.

Again, some discontent was felt when the Vice-Chancellor, acting in response to a directive from Canberra, halved the entitlement of academic staff to study leave (rechristened in deference to political sensitivities as 'outside studies programmes'). One lecturer petitioned the State Governor, Sir Wallace Kyle, in his capacity as Visitor to Murdoch University, to set aside the administration's decision. Kyle, finding no suggestion that the Vice-Chancellor had acted in any way improperly or beyond his powers, disallowed the appeal in March 1980. The dispute was settled without massive repercussions.

Increasingly Murdoch looked a place where the students enjoyed campus life. As early as September 1978, the Guild of Students ran a highly successful spring fair. The same year saw the first running of the Great Race, now an annual event, at which teams of fantastically-dressed competitors bent the rules mercilessly in attempting to become the fastest team propelling a one-wheeled vehicle to complete an obstacle course around Bush Court. While numbers still told against Murdoch's chances of exhibiting great prowess in more conventional forms of sport the University could field a cricket team, which by 1982-83 could become champions of the Suburban League in two successive years.

In alternate years Murdoch held an 'open day' at which the general public was encouraged to visit the campus and watch staff and students present samples of Murdoch's academic and extracurricular activities. The 'open days' in 1982 and 1984, held on a Sunday, were especially well patronised (each attracting more than 20,000 people), showing that Murdoch had at last learned something about good publicity. Activities ranged from computer games to the flying of Chinese kites. The veterinary farm and its animals were always a great draw but the other Schools, centred on Bush Court, also contrived to attract large numbers. Murdoch also put on displays at the Royal Show, twice in an exhibition of collaborative research with the

University of Western Australia, which was a heartening testimony to improving relations between the campuses.

In the Annual Report for 1980 Willson described the year as ‘essentially one of internal consolidation and of determined effort to ensure that the University was better known to school-leavers, other prospective students, and also to members of the general public’. This effort paid off at the beginning of 1981 when after four fairly static years numbers surged forward. Enrolment of new students increased by 18 per cent over 1980, and of school leavers by nearly 12 per cent. For the first time external enrolments topped one thousand. The recently introduced practice of mid-year enrolments proved useful in boosting numbers. Perhaps the imminent completion of the South-street extension to the Kwinana Freeway also helped by bringing Murdoch within fifteen minutes drive of the city centre. The lean years were over and Murdoch was again on the move.

The academic establishment began to grow modestly. A professor of Communication Studies was at last found in Michael O’Toole who arrived in 1981. A senior appointment was made in Chinese Studies and a programme initiated in Contemporary Asian Studies. In 1981 Alex Kerr became full-time Deputy-Vice-Chancellor following the departure of the Business Manager Ray Campbell. The Deputy Secretary (Academic) Bob Tapsell also left about this time. Meanwhile, in mid-1980, Peter Sumner was appointed Director of Computer Services. Murdoch in its early years had taken timely steps towards computerisation but with the prospect of renewed growth upgrading was needed. By the early 1980s the demand for research computing was increasing at 40 per cent annually and computer-related teaching by about 15 per cent. In 1982, not without a little controversy among the experts, a \$600,000 programme of modernisation was commenced.

Research prospered. Admittedly the Mineral Chemistry Research Unit suffered setbacks. Having won steady support from the State government the Unit applied for consideration when in 1981 the Fraser government decided to fund a number of centres for excellence in Australian universities. Unfortunately, although the Unit made the short list of about twenty from among three hundred applications, Murdoch was not selected. The awarding committee decided to place the centres only in large universities. This disappointment was followed in 1982 by the sudden and unexpected death of Jim Parker. With characteristic efficiency he had built up a team, which could carry on the work, but he was sorely missed.

Among many other research projects Andrew Thompson’s work on hydatid disease was singled out in 1982 when the World Health Organisation nominated Murdoch’s School of Veterinary Studies as a collaborating centre

for research on this problem. In the same year Alcoa and the Metropolitan Water Authority awarded the environmental scientist Goen Ho \$250,000 for a three-year project on the control and use of the red mud left over as a by-product from alumina production. In 1983 the Griffin colliery company made a grant of \$80,000 for energy policy research and an anonymous donor funded a postgraduate scholarship for research in the relationships between animals and humans. Murdoch academics' research activity detracted nothing from their steady commitment to teaching.

Students, too, achieved distinguished awards. Zoe Sofoulis was named Caltex Woman Graduate of the Year in 1979, a distinction matched by Gail Reekie in 1983 and Robyn Slarke in 1984; all three chose to undertake advanced study overseas. In 1980 Sean Foley became the first Australian to win an Italian government scholarship to attend the International School on Solar Energy Resources at Urbino, a biology student, Rosemary Gales, was awarded a Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Trust scholarship to study wildlife management in New Zealand, and physics student Graeme Cole won a Harvard University postgraduate scholarship.

Several other graduates also won awards for postgraduate work in the United States, among them a Murdoch PhD and tutor Rob Pascoe who took the Harkness Fellowship for 1981. Perhaps one of Murdoch's most characteristic moments came at the 1980 graduation ceremony when a granddaughter and grandmother, Heather Marr and Beverley Wardle, received their degrees together. Less happily, Murdoch found itself awarding a posthumous PhD to Peter Marks, who in December 1979 after completing a thesis in environmental science collapsed and died while out running. The award was presented to his widow.

In reaching out to the public Murdoch became the venue for a number of series of public lectures. Following the precedent set in the opening year the Walter Murdoch Memorial Lecture was delivered annually on a date close to Sir Walter's birthday. Its eminent speakers came from varying backgrounds and gave performances of varying quality. Most were good; one or two such as Mr Justice Michael Kirby in 1984 were excellent. The most contentious was probably the 1980 speaker, Sir Roderick Carnegie, whose presence attracted a large crowd eager to heckle and question a leading executive of the mining industry on the subject of Aboriginal land rights; but few even among his critics could deny that Carnegie handled himself well under pressure, and a tense situation stayed within bounds.

Controversy was actively encouraged in the Counterpoint debates on topics of lively contemporary interest, first introduced as a contribution to the State's 150th anniversary celebrations in 1979 and retained because of their continuing popularity. These took place two or three times a year, usually

when the presence of an attractive visiting speaker provided an opportunity. From 1983 an annual lecture was also offered on a theme related to community science. This was a memorial to Keith Roby, another of the early appointments to the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and a colleague of rare, attractive character, who after a long illness died at too early an age.

Building resumed. In 1981 the first major indoor recreational facilities on campus were completed, four squash courts. Consistent with Murdoch practice they were open to the public at large. Proceeding to bigger things, Murdoch also saw in 1981 the completion of a two-storey annexe to the main Bush Court complex housing the Senate room and smaller committee rooms as well as chambers leased by the Murdoch University branch of the Rural and Industries Bank.

The University of Western Australia presented the Senate room with a handsome table, thus further symbolising their goodwill. The next project, in Senate's view by far the most pressing, was the provision of campus student housing. Murdoch was the only Australian university lacking residential accommodation, and its suburban situation offered little in the way of cheap lodgings. The task was daunting, as federal funds had never been granted for such a purpose since the early 1970s and Murdoch was left in little doubt that despite its needs no exception would be made.

Self help remained. Sketch plans were drawn up in 1980 for three apartment blocks each capable of housing thirty-two undergraduates. In addition a group of cottages would provide for married students or visiting staff and plans were also made for a function hall and related amenities. At this point the Rural and Industries Bank came to the assistance by offering a generous loan. The plunge was taken and Murdoch embarked on the building of the first two-storey apartment block on the basis of its own reserves, the loan, and the response to a fund-raising programme chaired by Sir Crawford Nalder. The decision paid off. Not only was Student House ready for opening by July, 1983, but the C.T.E.C. was sufficiently melted by this example of enterprise to find a grant of \$350,000 which enabled an immediate start to be made on the second stage of the project, though the University had to finance another large loan to supplement the Government's grant. It was probably Willson's proudest achievement at Murdoch. Further extensions to the student housing were on the drawing board in 1985.

Gradually the campus was beautified. As the trees grew the landscape softened, and birds, which had grown scarce in the suburban sprawl of Perth, began to nest in what was becoming something of a wildlife sanctuary. The courtyards were improved. A garden carefully integrated with rocks and stones was created in the East Academic 1 courtyard and named Bayliss Court in 1979 in honour of the man whom many regarded as the 'father' of Murdoch University. On the other side of the main campus block a Chinese garden with a moon gate came into being between 1980 and 1983. It owed much to gifts from the inhabitants of Hsinchu county in Taiwan. Less conventionally, the University also received a gift for the establishment of a specialist botanical garden for the study of poisonous plants. The University also became the recipient of a number of works of art, culminating in 1984 in the indefinite loan of more than a hundred works by Charles Blackman.



*Sir Noel Bayliss, Chairman of the Murdoch University Planning Board and Senate member 1975-1982, in the garden court named in his honour.*

Against this background of consolidation Murdoch planned modestly but confidently for the future. A Master's Degree in Literature and Communication was planned for 1982 and a Graduate Diploma in



Community Science - again perpetuating the ideas of Keith Roby - for 1983. The Universities Council in 1982 gave the green light for further growth during the 1985-87 triennium and proposals were advanced for the introduction of Computer Science, Horticultural Science, Philosophy, and Theatre Studies. The World Veterinary Congress, held in Perth in 1983, owed much to the organising skills of people in the School of Veterinary Studies.

During the Congress an application for the accreditation of Murdoch graduates on a worldwide basis was successfully put forward to representatives of the Royal Veterinary College of London. Diplomas in Environmental Science and Applicable Mathematics were introduced in 1984 and in 1985 an important step was taken with the foundation of a programme in Commerce - which was so sought after that immediate limits had to be imposed on enrolments - and a Master's Degree in Public Policy. A strong campaign was proceeding for the introduction of a Law programme.

At the more innovative edge of Murdoch's activities was the establishment in 1985 of a BA degree in Women's Studies, based on inter-university co-operation and exchange of external courses between Murdoch, Deakin and Queensland Universities. From 1982 the School of Human Communication hosted an Aboriginal writer-in-residence. Research was conducted in Aboriginal literature and plans were developed for the cross-disciplinary teaching of Aboriginal Studies based on the existing courses in history and literature. Chinese Studies set up an exchange scheme with the Guangzhu Institute of Foreign Languages.

A programme in Theology was planned for 1986 in conjunction with the Perth College of Divinity, thus providing a need, which had been under discussion in Western Australia for at least twenty years but for which it had never previously been possible to devise a satisfactory plan. The list could be extended lengthily, but a sample is enough. Initiative was taking many forms. Although the University had, early on, established its commitment to equal opportunity, the Senate (in 1984) strengthened that commitment by deciding to appoint an equal employment opportunity officer in 1985.

Murdoch staff were in demand for positions of public responsibility. Liz Harman from Social Inquiry, the economist Herb Thompson and the environmental scientist Peter Newman were all seconded to advise the State government on policy matters. Barry McGaw, one of the two professors of education, presided in 1983-84 over a major inquiry into assessment in upper secondary school and tertiary admissions procedures in W.A. as well as serving on a second commission on more general educational policy chaired by Murdoch's Pro-Chancellor, Kim Beazley senior.

Professor Bolton was seconded for three years to the University of London to launch an Australian Studies Centre. In 1984 Cora Baldock, of Social Inquiry, became the first woman academic appointed to the Australian Research Grants Committee, and Paige Porter, of the School of Education, was appointed to chair the Council of the W.A. College of Advanced Education.

By 1983 Murdoch had broken through the barrier of student numbers. Over three thousand students were enrolled, the equivalent of over two thousands full-timers, and in subsequent years the numbers remained healthy. In 1985 the total enrolment was 4200 - with a 19 per cent increase in school-leaver enrolments over the previous year. Glenn Willson who had presided over Murdoch as the tide turned in the University's favour decided that the moment was right for retirement and arranged to leave at the end of 1984. The management of the University now passed entirely into Western Australian hands. Alex Kerr who had been a popular Deputy-Vice-Chancellor retired at the end of 1983, being replaced by Mal Nairn from Veterinary Studies.

At the beginning of 1985 the Vice-Chancellorship was taken up by Peter Boyce, formerly Professor of Politics at the Universities of Queensland and Western Australia. In an inaugural address at a ceremony to mark the University's tenth anniversary, Professor Boyce said: 'I believe that Murdoch in only ten years has demonstrated that it is capable of acquiring an enviable reputation. A worthy university is suited to its environment, and Murdoch, more quickly than most new universities I suspect, has identified positively with its environment.'

A new phase was beginning. After all the vicissitudes of the previous ten years Murdoch University was emerging, like its emblem the banksia, all the more flourishing for having gone through the fire. If many of its activities complemented those of traditional universities, and if plans for future growth looked largely to vocational or socially relevant options, this did not mean that the original Murdoch ethos had been lost entirely. It was still at work as a leavening influence to ensure that, no matter how distinguished their research performance, Murdoch academics bore their first responsibility towards their students; no matter how unorthodox or provocative a new idea might be it deserved the respect of serious discussion and criticism and must not be discarded from sheer inertia or prejudice.

Walter Murdoch when they named the university after him demanded that it should be a good one. It is.

Geoffrey Bolton, one of Australia's foremost historians, is uniquely qualified to document the early years of Murdoch University. He was a member of the Murdoch University Planning Board (1970-73), an inaugural member of the University's governing body, the Senate (1973-76) and, in 1973, was appointed Murdoch's Foundation Professor of History.

Professor Bolton is general editor of the Oxford History of Australia and, for the past three years (to *mid-1985*), has been on secondment as inaugural head of the Australian Studies Centre at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London.