

1966 and All That: the 60th anniversary of the incorporation of University Colleges Australia

Dr Ian Walker, President 2014-2016 and Life Member

This year marks the incorporation in 1966 of the *Association of Heads of Australian University Colleges and Halls* (AHAUCHI), renamed *University Colleges Australia* (UCA) in 2010.¹ In Australia's six universities prior to World War II (Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia) heads of colleges met from time to time, and then, from 1948 to 1966, there were heads' conferences held every few years or so at each of the six Universities and at the Australian National University.

“No Commonwealth organisation of university college heads”:

At the ‘Australasian Universities Conference’ held in Adelaide in February 1937 there was discussion about the place and role of affiliated university colleges.² The conference was attended by a number of heads of the faith-based/church colleges and the women's colleges such as **D. K. Picken** (Ormond), **J. M. Murphy** (Newman), **A. H. Garnsey** (St. Paul's), and **A. F. (Freda) Bage** (Women's UQ), who “made a strong plea for women students to enter Women's University Colleges.”³

The Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University, Raymond Priestly, quoted from Cardinal Newman's ‘The Idea of a University’: “A university is an Alma Mater knowing her children one by one, not a foundry, or a mint, or a treadmill.” The foundation Master of St Mark's College, Adelaide (1925-1957) Dr (later Sir) **Archibald Grenfell Price** noted that while the (then) Australian universities must remain secular institutions “they can never draw together, organise, train, discipline, and instruct a widely scattered collection of day, evening and night students as effectively as can colleges their residents.” In outlining a range of issues about residential colleges he expressed concern that “unhappily, we have at present no Commonwealth organisation of university college heads on the lines of the Vice-Chancellors or the public school⁴ headmasters, and it is impossible to secure complete statistics as to the services rendered by the members of the colleges to the universities and to the community.”⁵

¹ Other conference names were used prior to the mid-60s, and Rob Nethercote, a former Vice-Master of Queen's College Melbourne, notes in his EdD thesis (Melbourne 1998) that when first incorporated the title was **the ‘Australian Association of Heads of Colleges and Halls Incorporated (AAHCHI)’** which was changed to the Association of Heads of Australian University Colleges and Halls Incorporated (**AHAUCHI**) in 1996. The annual conference in 1994, attended by the author, at Dunmore Lang College and Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, was under the AAHCHI title.

² *The Mercury* Hobart 18 February 1937 p.11

³ *The Advertiser* Adelaide 17 February 1937 p.14

⁴ No doubt then meaning the Australian GPS (‘Great Public Schools’) type independent schools

⁵ *The Advertiser* Adelaide *op.cit.*

The Hobart *Mercury* in 1948 reported a conference of 'Principals' at Trinity College Melbourne ⁶:



“A landmark in the history of Australian university colleges”:

A “Biennial Conference of Heads” at Sydney University in 1950 included heads of both men’s and women’s colleges, with *The West Australian*⁷ referring to the “first conference of university colleges” at which “a secretariat and a standing committee were formed and it was decided to meet biennially in future.”⁸ One attendee was **Malvena Evalyn Wood**, Warden of the Women’s College UWA which was opened in 1946 in temporary accommodation until 1960 when the College, re-named St Catherine’s, moved to its permanent buildings. The Warden of St George’s College UWA (1940-1971), **John Heywood (‘Josh’) Reynolds**, commented that “the conference was a landmark in the history of Australian university colleges of all denominations and a further sign of the vital place which residency must play in Australian universities.”⁹ There was an Association in the making.

In 1953, a reported “second conference of the heads of Australian University Colleges” was held at the University of Adelaide, with five Heads of Women’s Colleges attending. The women were “all staying at St Ann’s College, North Adelaide, where the Principal (**Miss L. Bush**) is enjoying her first opportunity of meeting the heads of other University

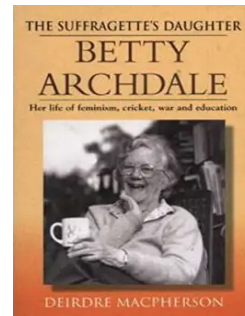
⁶ *The Mercury* Hobart 29 May 1948 p.4

⁷ Interesting to note that a former proprietor and editor of *The West Australian* was Irish-born Sir John Winthrop Hackett who was Sub-warden (Vice Warden) to Alexander Leeper at Trinity College Melbourne (1876-1882) prior to leaving for Perth. He was a founder of UWA. The Canberra suburb of Hackett is named after him in recognition of his role in the federation of Australia.

⁸ *The West Australian* 5 September 1950 p.9

⁹ *Ibid.*

women's colleges in Australia.”¹⁰ One of the women Heads and a speaker at the conference was the Principal of the Women's College Sydney University (1946-1956), **Betty Archdale**. A former Captain of the English women's cricket team that toured Australia 1934-5, she was appointed Principal following service with the WRENS in Singapore during World War II.¹¹ She later was Headmistress of 'Abbotsleigh' girls' school at Wahroonga, Sydney (1958-1970), often on radio and TV and, in 1970, elected as a 'living national treasure'. The Heads' conference in 1953 would no doubt have been stirred and entertained!



Another report in *The West Australian* referred to the 1953 conference in Adelaide as “the third biennial conference” at which the Warden of St George's College UWA noted that there were then “about 2,500 men and women students living in university colleges.”¹² The report, which was headed “Colleges Grow at Universities” further noted that “there were now 27 colleges of all denominations, of which 23 were represented at the conference.”¹³

“A main founder of the Conference of Australian University College Principals” 1953:

In 1956 Dr Grenfell Price wrote a paper titled ‘Notes on University Residential Systems’ for his Council at St Mark's Adelaide and for “the Australian University College Principals” who had formed a “committee on residential problems.”¹⁴ As well as being Master of St Mark's College, he is noted as “Chairman, Australian Conference of University College Principals, 1953-1955.” He expressed delight in hearing that “Mr J. H. Reynolds MA, Warden of St George's College” had been given support from the Carnegie Foundation to study university residences overseas, and acknowledged him as a St Mark's alumnus, a Rhodes Scholar, and “a main founder of the Conference of Australian University College Principals.” The paper notes that “the maintenance of discipline and of some formality is

¹⁰ *The Advertiser* Adelaide 25 August 1953 p.9

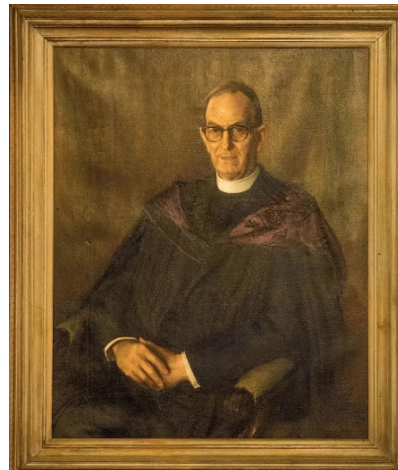
¹¹ The story is told that when Betty Archdale arrived at the College “Betty, in full uniform, suggested to her naval driver, ‘Look, we’ve got to do this properly. When we get there, you open the door and we’ll salute and all this sort of nonsense.’ She knew that the assembled council would see her arrival from the windows above. From that day on, Betty was called the ‘Ad’, short for Admiral, at Women's College.” (James Franklin Quadrant 47 (9) (Sept 2003): 82-3.)

¹² *The West Australian* Perth 2 September 1953 p.3

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ ANU Noel Butlin Archives ANUA 43/53

essential to residential life ... alcohol remains a problem in spite of its growing cost ... (however) one was frequently reminded of the remarks of an Adelaide University officer when St Mark's was leased to the R.A.A.F. during the War and undergraduate theft from and damage to Union property made it's appearance, "Oh to have the College back to restore decent standards of student life".¹⁵



A. G. Price (St Mark's Adelaide), J. H. Reynolds (St George's College, UWA) , B. R. Wyllie (Wesley College, Sydney)

At the 1964 heads' conference in Perth¹⁶, The **Reverend B. R. Wyllie**, Master of Wesley College at Sydney University (1943-1964), in his final year as Master, spoke about increasing concerns in relation to student behaviour. He noted that "many students had no knowledge of the arts and little interest in general university and community life." He said that "no single feature of college life had done more harm than juvenile behaviour which, although it had improved in the past few years, often still bordered on more serious offences against the community." He felt that "time-consuming inter-collegiate sport also contributed, taking up a great deal of time and turning the colleges in on themselves, to exclusion of interests outside their immediate environment."¹⁷ He was not the first and nor would he be the last Head to express concern about student behaviour! Of course, the mid-sixties ushered in a particular focus on 'student power' and activism.

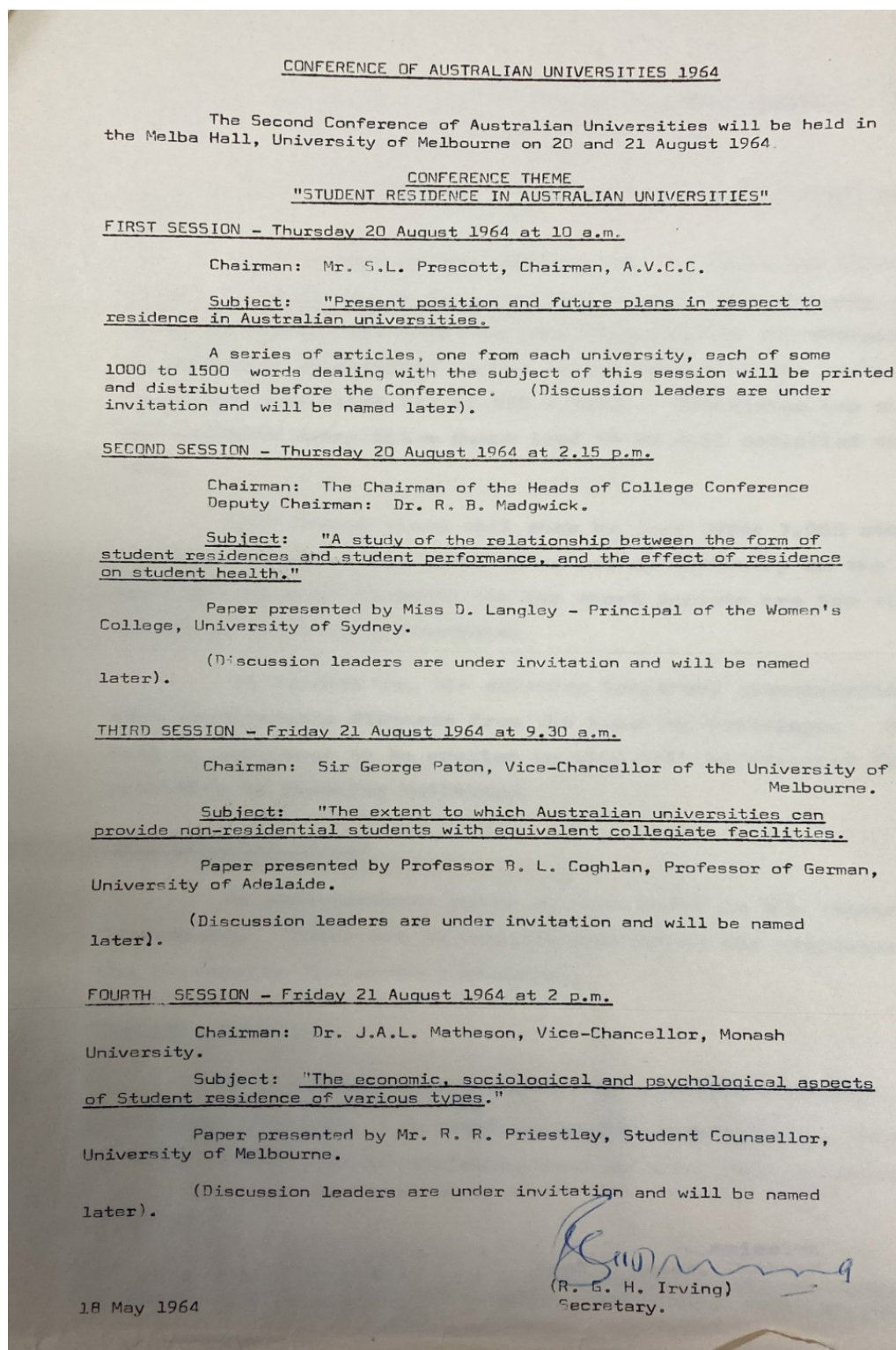
The Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (now Universities Australia) in August 1964 held a conference at Melba Hall, Melbourne University, on the topic of "Student Residences in Australian universities". The First Session of the conference was chaired by Mr. **S. L. Prescott** (Sir Stanley Prescott 1965) Vice-Chancellor of UWA (1953-1970) and previously Warden of Ormond College, Melbourne (1946-1953); the Second Session was chaired by "The Chairman of the Heads of College Conference". The "conference of the

¹⁵ *The West Australian op.cit.*

¹⁶ Referred to as a conference of the **Association of Heads of University Colleges and Halls of Residence**

¹⁷ *The Canberra Times* 15 August 1964 p.20

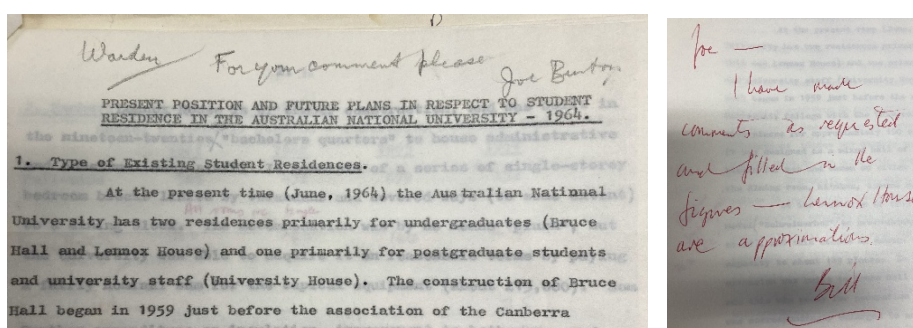
Association of Heads of University Colleges and Halls of Residence" had met the previous week in Perth.¹⁸ Though not named, it is likely the Chairman was **J. H. Reynolds**.



¹⁸ *Ibid.*

“The educational value of residential halls and colleges”:

In a paper prepared for the conference, Professor Herbert ‘Joe’ Burton, Principal of the ANU School of General Studies (formed when ANU took in undergraduate students in 1960), and a former undergraduate resident of St John’s College UQ and a Queensland Rhodes Scholar, wrote that “the University (ANU) believes in the educational value of residential halls and colleges. It believes that they should be more than ‘dormitories’ and should be a microcosm of the larger academic community. This means that they need a Warden and tutors, and also adequate managerial and secretarial assistance. The Warden should not be expected to be a hotel manager.” He also noted that “it is generally felt that a hall of 200-250 is large enough and that beyond this point it is difficult for the Warden and tutors to know their students and to give them the maximum assistance possible.”¹⁹



Professor Burton requests Warden Bill Packard (Bruce Hall) to comment on his draft paper

Incorporation - the context of the mid-60s:

At the ANU in 1965 the “executive of the Association of Heads of Halls and Colleges” met with representatives of the Australian Universities Commission “to discuss minimum standards for halls and colleges in Australian universities.”²⁰ This meeting might have coincided with a broader gathering or conference of heads, but there is reference to a constitution being formalised for the Association of Heads of Colleges and Halls. It seems that by or in 1966 the Association was registered and incorporated.²¹

The incorporation of the Association was at a time when there was no internet, albeit on the cusp of its development from the later 1960s. There were no mobile phones as we now know them, no email communication or text messaging; no WiFi, no ZOOM or TEAMS meetings, no webinars or regular online conversations!

¹⁹ ANUA *Op.cit.* Professor Burton had been Principal of Canberra University College until it merged with the ANU in 1960. He became one of the founders of the Canberra College of Advanced Education, later the University of Canberra. The top UC undergraduate award is the Burton Medal.

²⁰ *The Canberra Times* 19 August 1965 p.15

²¹ The Association is listed on a Victorian NGO site as a charity established on 13 March 1965 [University Colleges Australia Incorporated – Registered NGO in Victoria | NGO Details](#)

Face-to-face meetings and conferences brought colleagues together; general communication was by dialled and/or operator-assisted telephone and overseas ‘trunk’ calls, and by posted letters. Fast messaging was by telegram not ‘Instagram’. In colleges and halls, students might share a floor or group telephone; getting high was often on the smell from a stencil method spirit duplicator! Information was distributed by ‘roneo’ newsletter. Mainstream TV was just 10 years old and in black and white. There was much discussion around the introduction of decimal currency on 14 February 1966!²²

A computer occupied a room. *Woroni* (ANU) included this cartoon related to the Vietnam War on 11 May 1967 (p.3) in a large article headed: ‘On Gorton and Grants and Things’:



Incorporation of an Association that represented the heads of university colleges and halls in older and new universities, affiliated or university-managed, no doubt promoted a greater sense of belonging, purpose and value. Albeit having retired in 1957, and nearly thirty years after his remarks at the universities conference in Adelaide in 1937, it would certainly have pleased ‘Archie’ Grenfell Price.

Commonwealth funding – more universities and residential colleges and halls:

With significant Commonwealth funding following the Federal Government’s *Murray Report* (1958), by the end of 1966 eight more universities had been established in Australia since the end of World War II (ANU 1946, UNSW 1949, UNE 1954, Monash 1958, Macquarie 1964, La Trobe 1964, Newcastle 1965, and Flinders 1966). UNE and Newcastle had previously been University Colleges.

The immediate post-War decades were certainly a period of challenge, change and opportunity with demand for more universities and for more university residences. Enrolments in Australian universities totalled approximately 14,000 in 1939 and 69,000 in 1963. By 1957 some 2,000 students had come from countries in Asia under the

²² The jingle still rings: “In come the dollars, in come the cents; out go the pounds, the shillings and the pence..”!

Colombo Plan. The *Murray Report* included recognition of the contribution that had been made by university residential colleges, and paid tribute “to the founders, and also to the universities which have provided sites for many of them, and which had the foresight to see the importance of residence if university life is to attain full richness.”

The first university established and managed colleges and halls:

To meet increasing demand, universities saw the need to set up their own colleges and halls such as, by 1966, Wright²³, Mary White, Duval, Robb and Earle Page Colleges (UNE); Basser, Goldstein and Philip Baxter Colleges (UNSW – The Kensington Colleges); Bruce, Burton and Garran Halls (ANU); Deakin, Farrer and Howitt Halls (Monash); and Glenn, Menzies and Chisholm Colleges (La Trobe). Currie Hall (UWA) began as a university hostel for men in 1946 and later developed into University Hall which this year therefore marks its 80th anniversary, as does St Catherine’s College (UWA) which opened as a women’s college in temporary accommodation in 1946; Wright College (UNE) marks its 70th; and Philip Baxter College (UNSW) and Howitt Hall (Monash) their 60th anniversaries.



Robb College UNE 1964



Philip Baxter College UNSW 1966



Burton Hall and Garran Hall ANU 1966

In the 60th year of UCA since incorporation, it should also be noted that Christ College (UTAS), now a university-managed residence, marks its 180th anniversary as what is recognised as Australia’s first tertiary institution, and St Paul’s College (Sydney) its 170th anniversary as Australia’s first university residential college. Janet Clarke Hall (Melbourne) marks the 140th anniversary of its foundation as the Trinity College Women’s Hostel in 1886.

“New church colleges are detrimental to a student’s development”:

The setting up by universities of their own colleges and halls after World War II re-ignited the issues that were very much involved in the foundation of the University of Sydney in 1850 and of St Paul’s College in 1856 and the other early church colleges in Australia’s

²³ A later Master of Wright Hall, **Joe Massingham**, influenced by his attendance at an ACUHO-I conference, set up the Australian Association of College and University Housing Officers (AACUHO) in 1991, now APSAA.

first universities, which were established as secular institutions. Particularly across the new post-War universities there were various expressions of opposition and concern that faith-based colleges would compromise the secular nature of the universities and impose religious requirements on their students, such as at the ANU in 1966:

The new church colleges are detrimental to a student's development, not only because they are religious sub-institutions within a secular campus, but also because separate colleges are being established for men and women.

The University Committee on the affiliation of colleges, and the university council, should act to ensure that attendance at the religious activities of these church colleges, will not be either compulsory or expected.

It is regrettable that lack of finance has contributed so substantially to the downfall of an enlightened approach by the administration — which has been shown to be even more so in that it has worked well — our secular, mixed halls of residence.

— KEITH BAKER,
President.

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Some Vice-Chancellors of new universities wrote to each other about how to respond to approaches from church leaders to establish affiliated colleges, and there were expressions of staff and student concerns about such colleges taking Commonwealth funding away from university established and managed colleges and halls. In 1965 the first Vice-Chancellor of UNE, Robert Madgwick (Sir Robert 1966), having been approached by the Dominicans to establish St Albert's College, wrote to the University of NSW Vice-Chancellor, Sir Philip Baxter: "... there is a good deal of opposition here to affiliated colleges and it would help me considerably if I could be sure of my ground when I have to steer a legal document through the Council. I am not particularly animated about the affiliated colleges myself but there seems little point in opposing the inevitable."²⁵

"The world is full of talent. Not quite so full of character":

Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, who retired as Australia's longest-serving Prime Minister at the end of January 1966, had made it clear that the government would distribute funding through the newly established Australian Universities Commission (AUC) on an equal basis to both university-owned and managed colleges and halls and to affiliated faith-based residential colleges. Nevertheless, he very much valued the 'traditional' type colleges, noting, for example, in 1964: "I have always been a tremendous believer in schools and in colleges at universities which have a background in religion ... I would get no satisfaction in thinking that we had pledged ourselves to a highly intellectual ... but highly pagan future. The world is full of talent. Not quite so full of character."²⁶

²⁴ Keith Baker, President of ANU Students' Association, *Woroni* Friday 7 October 1966 p.2

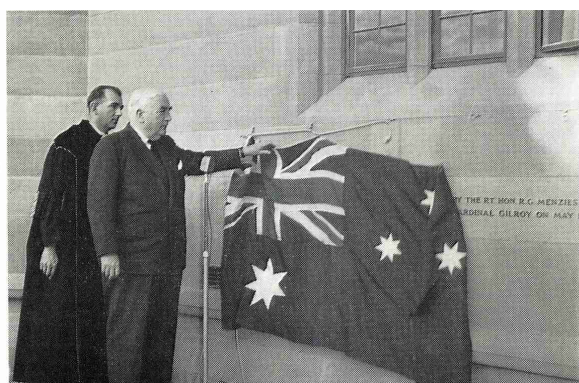
²⁵ UNSW Archives, R. B. Madgwick to Sir Philip Baxter 3 November 1965

²⁶ Speech at the Cardinal's Dinner, Sydney NSW, 30 July 1964.

Senator John Gorton (later Prime Minister following the disappearance of Harold Holt at the end of 1967) as Minister for Education strongly affirmed the view that funding was to be treated on an equal basis across university-managed and independent affiliated colleges and halls.

“We will always be most deeply grateful”:

Funding was provided for the further development of existing or the building of new residential colleges associated with church/religious organisations, such as Kingswood College (UWA) opened in 1963 (later joining with St Columba’s College and both then forming Trinity College), and St Hilda’s College, University of Melbourne, opened in 1964. The Warden of St George’s College (UWA) was effusive in his letter to Senator Gorton in November 1964: “The aid given to the Colleges by the Federal Government after their 100 years’ fight for the residential principle has been something so wonderful and stimulating that we will always be most deeply grateful for it ...”²⁷



PM Sir Robert Menzies opening the Menzies Wing at St Johns College, Sydney, 1961 (Rector Dr **John Burnheim** 1958-1968), and opening St Hilda’s College, Melbourne, 1964 (Principal **Marjorie Smart** 1964-1975)

With Commonwealth capital funds available and the ever-increasing demand for residence, universities were open to approaches about establishing affiliated colleges in addition to their own colleges and halls. At the Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee Conference in Melbourne in October 1964, Sir Philip Baxter acknowledged the “admirable job” that had been performed by the small colleges of the traditional collegiate system but he felt it would be “inappropriate to require all students in need of residence to be housed in the more regimented and costly Southern Hemisphere copies of the old Oxford and Cambridge tradition.” He noted that the University of NSW looked forward to a “balanced development of colleges ... including those operated by outside

²⁷ Australian National Archives (AA1969/212(16) *Folders of Correspondence maintained by Senator John Grey Gorton as Minister for Education and Science*. In response to a sum of \$67,000 provided in 1967 towards a building project at St George’s, the Warden again wrote to Senator Gorton expressing deep appreciation of “the gracious generosity of your Government and the wonderful work done for us.” (18/5/67)

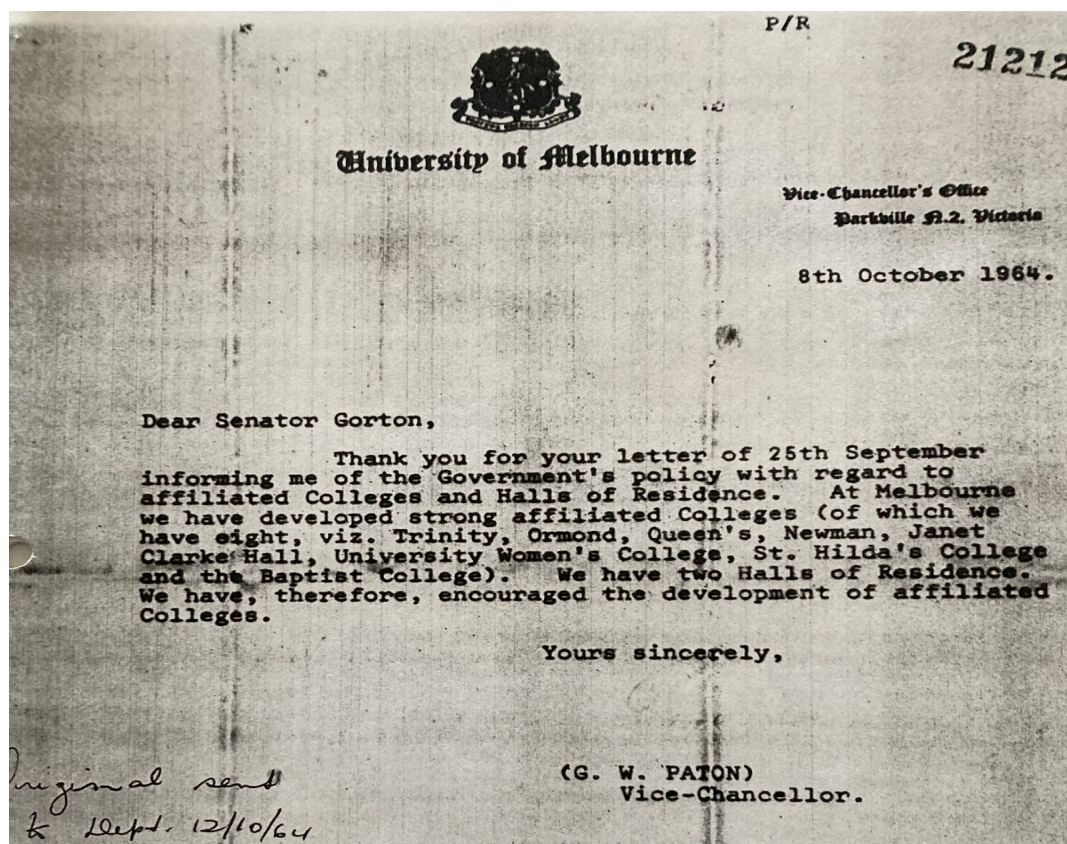
organisations, presumably in the main religious organisations, and those operated by the University itself.”²⁸

AUC grants for the 1967-1969 triennium included \$220,000 for the construction of Union College UQ and \$148,000 for a new seven floor residential block (McCaughey Court opened in 1968) at Ormond College, Melbourne. Both grants were acknowledged in December 1966.²⁹



Union College UQ and McCaughey Court (Ormond)

Sir George Paton, Vice-Chancellor of Melbourne University (1951-1968), wrote to Senator Gorton:

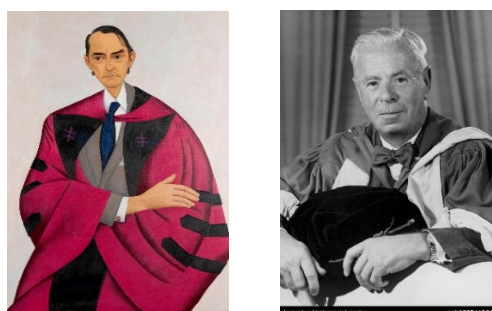


²⁸Report of Proceedings of the Conference of Australian Universities 1964, AVCC, Melbourne, 1964 p.63

²⁹ Australian National Archives op.cit.

“Signs of secular intolerance”:

In 1965, ANU Professor of Law **Robin Sharwood**, who had been Senior Tutor at Ormond College (1958) and who was about to begin his term as Warden of Trinity College Melbourne (1965–1973), was asked to write a defence of having faith-based colleges on the ANU campus. He noted that such colleges would be “free and open societies” and that they would not actively seek converts nor discriminate on religious grounds. He believed they encouraged learning and had become “an accepted part of the Australian pattern.” Professor Burton commended Professor Sharwood’s view, commenting that “it is rather sad to see signs of secular intolerance that would deny a place for denominational colleges in the life of the University.”³⁰



Professor Sharwood and Professor Burton

The system of triennial Commonwealth funding overseen and distributed by the AUC came to an end a decade after the incorporation of AHAUCHI (UCA), with growth in the number of university students to 148,000 in 1975. By then a further five universities had been established (James Cook 1970, Griffith 1971, Murdoch 1973, Deakin 1974, Wollongong 1975), making a total of thirteen new universities in Australia after World War II. Ten years after the incorporation of the Heads’ Association there were some 59 new colleges, halls and houses, with 31 owned and managed by universities (including International Houses) and 28 faith-based independent affiliated colleges and halls.

“The doyen Head”:

There had been convenors, executives and Chairs before 1966, but the first recorded President of the Association of Heads (1971-1973) was **Doreen Langley**, Principal of the Sydney University Women’s College (1957-1974) who, as an undergraduate at Melbourne University, was a resident of Janet Clarke Hall. She was followed as President (1973-1975) by **Bill Packard**, a New Zealand Rhodes Scholar and foundation Warden of Bruce Hall ANU (1961-1986). At his farewell dinner in 1986, Bill Packard, who had again been President (1977-1979), acknowledged the presence of “the doyen Head, Miss Doreen Langley ... President of the Association of Heads of Colleges and Halls over the critical

³⁰ ANUA 43/43 April 1965

period of the growth of residence in Australia, and fellow Life Member of the Association.” It could be assumed that Doreen Langley most likely had played a significant role in the Association following its incorporation, and even earlier when, for example, she had been invited to present a paper at the Universities (AVCC) conference in Melbourne in 1964.

In the early years, another head of a new university-managed Hall, Edwards Hall at the University of Newcastle, Dr **Michael Shortland**, was also twice President (1979-1981 and 1985-1987).



AHAUCHI (UCA) Presidents Doreen Langley, Bill Packard, and Michael Shortland

“Student ratbags” and “college inmates”:

The 1960s and 70s was certainly a “critical period” in university campus and residential life. It was a time of protest and change; a period, as Hannah Forsyth notes in *A History of the Modern Australian University* (2014), of “God-professors and student ratbags”! The Vietnam War, *Apartheid* in South Africa, Aboriginal rights, Gay and Women’s Liberation, demands for greater student representation on university councils and committees, and on the boards of residential colleges and halls, were among student activist causes.



UWA Student Guild ‘Peace March’ in Perth 1970, with Secretary Robert French (holding loud-hailer) – later Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia and Chancellor of UWA

Dr **Edwina Ridgway**, President (1987-1989) and Head of UNE Colleges (1973-2017), reflected on her career at the 2005 AHAUCHI Conference and that in the 70s “students often demonstrated about pretty much anything. Petitions were part of an everyday expectation for College Heads ... they *did* challenge almost anything and in the main they

had passionate views on pretty much everything.” Co-residence (co-education) was gradually and cautiously introduced, with concerns about co-habitation! In 1964, the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* reported that at the Basser College (UNSW) end of year dinner “college inmates almost rioted over a report the previous day that next year the male college will take women residents.”³¹ Bill Packard was very wary about Bruce Hall ANU being the first Australian university undergraduate residence to admit women from the start, albeit initially accommodated in a separate wing with curfews imposed on visitors. A resident depicted him in a cartoon (below) with stethoscope checking that the curfew was being observed!



Basser College UNSW (1960s – now demolished, as was Bruce Hall ANU, both replaced by new buildings)

1966 to 2026 and beyond:

Over the decades following incorporation, the Heads’ Association has faced a range of challenges that have included the increasing domestic demands for and expectations of tertiary education and residence; the changing economic circumstances of the late 1970s; the role of the Tertiary Education Commission (1977-1988) and expenditure restraint and accountability; the end, under the Dawkins Reforms, of the ‘binary’ system of universities and colleges of advanced education in 1988; development in the later 1990s of international education as an export industry, with commercial interest in a new ‘asset class’ of student accommodation development - of villages, lodges and high-rise apartments; university-negotiated PBSA partnerships; the Australian Human Rights Commission report into sexual assault and sexual harassment on Australian university campuses (2017); and the current outworking of the Australian Universities Accord. Each challenge responded to with commitment and the contribution of heads and other leaders in the profession of care for students in both their living and their learning, and in ways that are far more than transactional but formational and even transformational.

Convinced, as leaders were at the time of growth following World War II, of the purposes and value of the best aspects of collegiate community, the theme of the 2026 UCA

³¹ *Daily Telegraph* 2 November 1964

Forum ³² speaks again of the inevitability and positivity of change and adaptation while affirming the critical continuity of what builds care and compassion, civility and character in the shared experiences of scholarly life in university residential colleges and halls. The theme of “positioning residential colleges as transformational and human in an Age of AI, influencers and constant disruption” draws together the need for balance and collaboration, for discerning and blending what is best in continuity and change, just as it did in the mid-1960s in facing the challenges of a new post-War era of tertiary education and university residence.

UCA no longer represents the majority of students in all university residences, as the Association did when it was incorporated six decades ago.³³ The number of universities, their size, their funding, and the huge growth of international education, have seen, perhaps inescapably, much of university-managed and partnered student accommodation developed along commercial lines. The Association’s conference in 2010 heard Professor Ian Hickie (Sydney University Brain and Mind Research Institute) say that “the hotel model will not suffice where we abandon a kid in room 122 ... it’s not just about bricks and mortar but about people.”³⁴ There is now a variety of PBSA and commercial developments with broader programs related to student wellbeing and care, with strong participation in conferences and webinars conducted, for example, by the Asia-Pacific Student Accommodation Association (APSAA). There is certainly an increasing focus on being more than just “bricks and mortar”.

However, UCA continues to represent much of what is best in university collegiate residential living, learning and leadership - still very much part of the academic enterprise, and representative of scholarly communities of transformation more than transaction. There are, however, in the face of change and challenge in the role of universities in Australia and beyond, opportunities for balance and collaboration, of sharing and influence in helping to meet the needs of all students in university residence. In the developing Age of AI, influencers and constant disruption, there is a critical role for collegiate community and connection, for belonging and being known, being encouraged and inspired, for the best opportunities to know self in relation to others, and for the development of leaders of character for the good of all. Places that enhance the life of the mind.

³² The term ‘Forum’ was adopted in 2015 (at the ANU) for what had been ‘mini-Conferences’ since 2011 (at St Hilda’s College, and at Broadbeach QLD 2013) occurring every two years between the larger Conferences (ANU 2012, Adelaide 2014, and ANU 2016 which was combined with the second Collegiate Way International Conference). **The conference in 2010 at Sydney and Macquarie universities adopted the change of the Association’s name to ‘University Colleges Australia’.**

³³ In terms of member colleges and halls e.g. it was noted that it represented 145 in 2008 and 54 in 2026

³⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 October 2010.

“It depends entirely on the people inside ... the best people, the keenest people ...”:

Sir Robert Menzies’ address to the annual meeting of Convocation, University of Melbourne, in April 1965, though focused on the wider university speaks to the annual Forum of UCA in Melbourne in 2026. He concluded:

“You could have the finest buildings in the world with all the greatest facilities in the world and have a third-rate university. You could have the most shocking buildings and a great university. It depends entirely on the people inside and how they look at it and the people who teach and the people who investigate and the people who work ... to have the best people, the keenest people, the most enthusiastic people doing research, doing teaching, giving leadership to their students, have them all ... and combine with them buildings in which they will be proud to work and live and surroundings which will give them happy memories in future years.”³⁵



Sydney University quadrangle cloisters in 1966 – newspapers, not phones!!!



First year students welcomed by VC Sir Fred Schonell to the University of Queensland 1966 – dresses, coats and ties!

³⁵ [ANNUAL MEETING OF CONVOCATION OF UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE. MELBOURNE 9TH APRIL 1965 SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT. HON. SIR ROBERT MENZIES](#)