



Achieving Higher Education in Albury-Wodonga

Portia Dilena

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Charles Sturt
University



Acknowledgements

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Foreword



This history of the early years of higher education in Albury-Wodonga was prepared well ahead of the 50th anniversary, which is being commemorated with an exhibition at the Albury Library Museum in March 2022.

Before this book went to print and appeared online, the world was racked by a pandemic that brought major changes to the way we live – worldwide, nation-wide and in regional Australia.

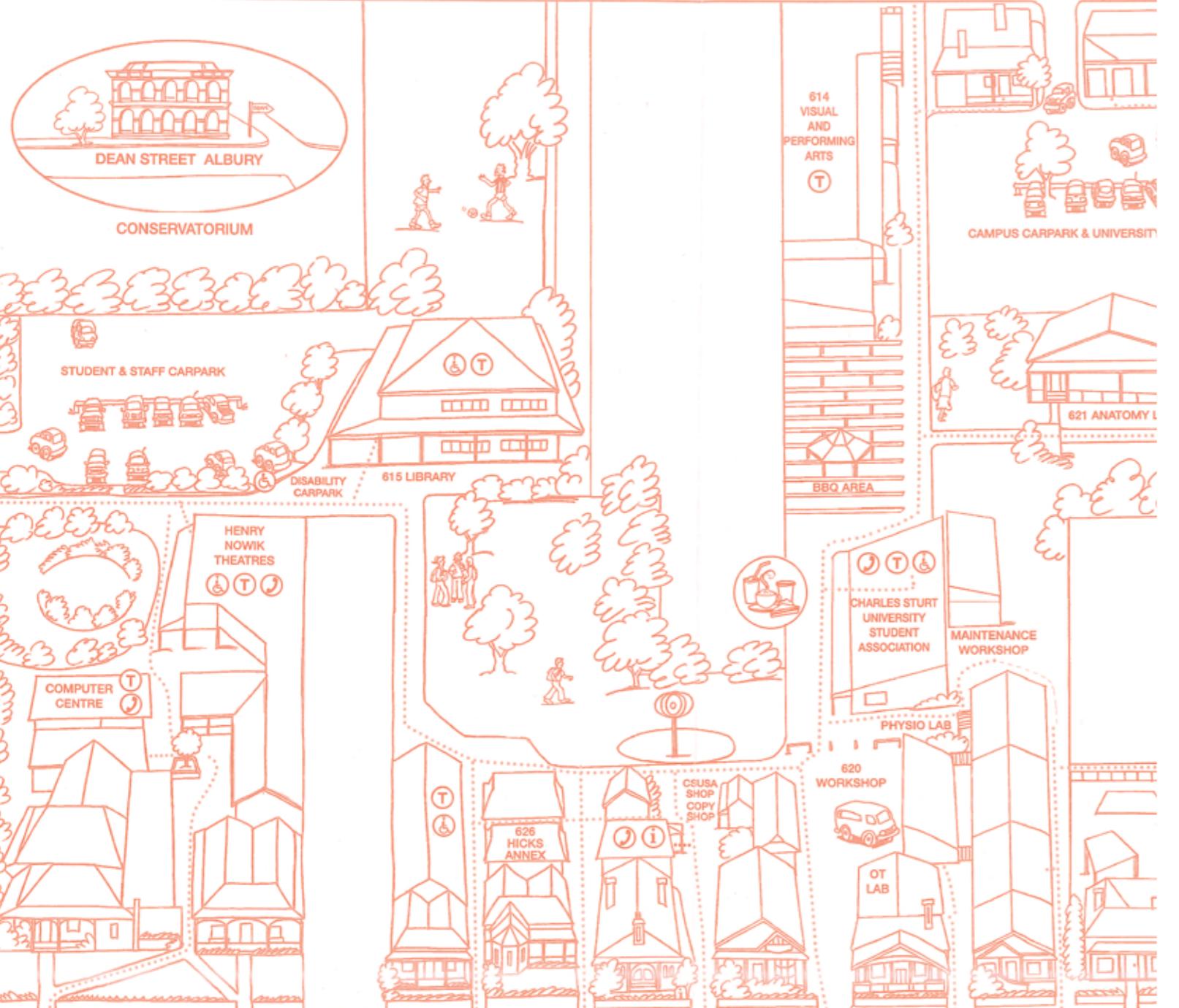
COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the university sector in Australia, on Charles Sturt University and its Albury-Wodonga campus. Our university has emerged with optimism for its future in regional New South Wales, focusing on its students, research, people and social responsibility. The challenges of these

times have heightened our awareness that ongoing change is our landscape. Like its predecessor institutions, Charles Sturt University has remained resilient in the face of change and adapted flexibly.

This history shows the resilience of our institution and that of the community it serves. It affirms the value and commitment of Charles Sturt University to the Albury-Wodonga region as a leading anchor institution.

I thank Portia Dilena for writing the history and the team that helped produce it. I commend it to you as an engaging narrative that explains how higher education came about in Albury-Wodonga.

Renée Leon
Professor Renée Leon PSM
Vice-Chancellor and President



Preface

In 2019, Charles Sturt University commissioned me to 'secure the Albury-Wodonga campus historical landscape'. This project consisted of several tasks, one of which was this short written history. I accepted the project, which I understood to be driven by a desire to preserve the historical artefacts, memories and stories of higher education in Albury-Wodonga. A written history would ensure that their significance was made clear to the institution, but also to the wider border district community.

Over the eight months this project has taken, I have conducted extensive archival research at Charles Sturt's archives in Wagga Wagga and at the Victorian State Library. I have sifted through the multitude of items collected by dedicated staff and students over the past 50 years. More significantly, I have conducted 25 oral history interviews with key individuals who were/are integral to this history. I am incredibly grateful to these interviewees, as it is often the individual stories that make a history and yet are most readily overlooked. Recorded for future researchers and interested listeners, the interviews attest to the importance of individuals in the Albury-Wodonga community in advocating for and developing higher education on the border.

This history may have been commissioned, yet it does not negate a critical analysis of it. As part of Charles Sturt University's 30th anniversary in 2019, a university-wide celebration of its history is occurring, complemented by an official history of the university compiled by Margaret Van Heekeren and published in 2015. The year 2022 will mark 50 years since the opening of the Albury Study Centre. *Achieving Higher Education in Albury-Wodonga* traces the often-challenging journey of higher education on the border and the study centre's growth into a regional university.



Introduction

In 1984, E.A.B. (Sam) Phillips, ex-principal of the Mitchell College of Advanced Education, was commissioned by the Riverina College of Advanced Education's principal, Clifford Douglas Blake, to devise an education plan to improve the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre of the Riverina College. On the release of his report the same year, Phillips remarked that he was heavily criticised for focusing on the 'political, [and] not the academic issues'.¹ Yet, he argued, it was impossible not to do so. The context, he contended, was not as simple as some had made it out to be.

The story of higher education on the border is a tale defined by Albury-Wodonga's location: its location in regional Australia, on the Murray River in the rich, agricultural region of the Riverine; its location on the border between New South Wales and Victoria, which accounts for some of its 'unique' or 'peculiar' qualities; its place relative to Wagga Wagga, in terms of

its geopolitical importance in New South Wales and position on the institutional hierarchy; and its place in the nation's imagination, at one stage a utopian project by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam to build a new growth centre in a regional area. Albury-Wodonga's location has arguably been the determining factor of its history.² There is no greater demonstration of this than in the history of its higher education. Drawing on archival research and interviews with key individuals, this history recounts the unique journey of Charles Sturt University in Albury-Wodonga. From the first significant push for a rural university in the Riverine in 1952, to the university's re-branding in early 2019, this history explores some of the forces, local and national, that shaped the face of higher education on the border.

Chapter 1 tells the story of William Merrylees and the Riverine University League; the first concentrated effort to bring first-class university education to regional and rural Australia. While

Merrylees and the League never achieved their immediate goal, they centred the argument on the importance of a university for regional development, community cohesion, and equality of services between the cities and the country. Chapter 2 examines the major shift that took place in tertiary education in the years following the Second World War, and the federal government policies that shaped it. Focusing on the Martin and Murray reports, the chapter looks at the creation of the binary system that sought to provide cheaper, vocational-focused tertiary education that aimed to reach a wider audience of students through the creation of colleges of advanced education. Chapter 3 explores the reforms that followed the developments in the identified in the previous chapter, focusing on the local politics that led to the establishment of the Riverina College of Advanced Education in Wagga Wagga in 1969. The chapter introduces the theme of regional rivalry between Wagga and Albury-Wodonga, which is a constant for the rest of this history.

The opening of the Albury Study Centre of the Riverina College of Advanced Education in March 1972 is the focus of Chapter 4. The study centre originally serviced mature age students looking to upgrade their qualifications. Chapter 5 introduces the Growth Centre Project and Whitlam's promise of an Albury-Wodonga University. The Growth Centre Project changed Albury-Wodonga's place in Australia, while also diversifying its community

through rapid growth. This growth and the promise of a university worried the Riverina College of Advanced Education, which saw its position in the region become precarious. In 1975, Whitlam's Labor Party was defeated, along with the proposed Albury-Wodonga University. Chapter 6 traces the Riverina College of Advanced Education's moves to become the primary provider of higher education on the border.

Chapter 7 focuses on the increasing unrest between Wagga and Albury-Wodonga in the early 1980s. Albury-Wodonga was desperate for a greater share of the funding and resources that were earmarked for Wagga. Wagga tried to ameliorate the situation through an amalgamation with Goulburn College of Advanced Education, and by means of rapid physical development and greater campus autonomy with its re-structuring into the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education. Chapter 8 continues to explore the struggle between the Albury-Wodonga campus and its Wagga parent, and addresses the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation's attempt to establish an independent college on the border. The chapter looks at the proposed Albury-Wodonga College of Advanced Education, and the eventual demise of the plan when cooperation across state borders proved to be too difficult despite staunch local support. In 1989, there were sweeping education reforms that sought to eliminate the costly and often blurred

binary system and removed colleges of advanced education from the higher education system. Chapter 9 follows the Riverina–Murray Institute of Higher Education's attempts to maintain independence and remain a regional institution when colleges were being forced out of the system. Chapter 10 explores the growing pains of the transformation from a college to a university with three geographically separate campuses. The chapter concludes with the creation of the 'award-winning' environmentally sustainable campus in Thurogona. Chapter 11 provides a conclusion.

The story of Charles Sturt Albury–Wodonga campus is not just the story of Charles Sturt University; rather, it is a story of a growing regional city's efforts to deliver first-class higher education to its residents. In doing so, the border region community has had to navigate the many obstacles and forces that have arisen due to the city's unique location. As relevant as they were in 1984, it is appropriate to refer again to E.A.B. Phillips's words when we describe the history of higher education in Albury–Wodonga as a tale defined by a 'mix of politics, civic pride, [and] parochial rivalries'.³





01

William Merrylees and the Riverine University League



Above: William Merrylees (Charles Sturt University Regional Archive)

On 5 January 1951, *The Age* newspaper reported a small act of protest at the Carrathool Family Hotel, located in New South Wales, that would have 'delighted Banjo Paterson'.⁴ The entire town of Carrathool (145 individuals, to be precise) had gathered outside the hotel to welcome the mock-Captain Charles Sturt expedition that was travelling through Australia as part of the jubilee celebrations for Federation. As 'Capitan Sturt' mounted the stage and read out the original commission that had announced the real Sturt's expedition in the region some 100 years earlier, a local grazier took to the stage with a message for 'Capitan Sturt' to take back to the Governor. Speaking 'only partly in jest', Dr William A. Merrylees (the grazier in question) condemned the inequality of amenities between the cities and the country towns, demanding that they receive electricity and 'decent schools'.⁵

With this small, rather comical, act of protest, Merrylees not only began the fight for tertiary education in the Riverine but dictated the arguments on which it would be fought: the inequality between rural and city services; the need for regional economic development; and the importance to the community of a university. While there had been rumblings for a rural university in the past, nothing would be as influential as this one small act of dissent.⁶

An ardent campaigner

Central to the campaign for tertiary education in the Riverina was the dissenting figure of William A. Merrylees. Dr Merrylees had relocated to Carrathool in 1953, taking on the family profession of grazier, when he was passed over for the Chair of Philosophy position at Melbourne University in a case of nepotism.⁷ Merrylees threw himself into country life, becoming an accomplished farmer and receiving recognition for his successes in water management. He employed a multitude of staff, including an overseer, which allowed him to pursue his interest in intellectual studies and local government. In fact, he became a prolific pamphleteer and joined multiple committees, including the Murrumbidgee Valley Water Users' Association (MVWUA) on whose executive committee he served for over a decade. The high esteem in which he was held by his new community, and his awareness of the services lacking in rural Australia, saw Merrylees become one of the most ardent campaigners for tertiary education in rural Australia.

In February 1952, along with F.T. Satterthwaite, Ron W. Prunster and J. Alan Gibson, Merrylees established the Riverine University League (RUL) with the aim of effectively petitioning state and federal governments for the creation of a regionally located university in the Riverina.⁸ All four men were tertiary educated, had worked in government or state institutions, and had a vested interest in the agricultural development of the region. According to Don Boadle, the primary writer on Merrylees and the League, the RUL envisioned 'regional development based on the planned management of natural resources and

Poet's Dream – Professor Meets Sturt's Party

From the Special Representative of "The Age"

HAY, Thursday.—In a scene which would have delighted Banjo Paterson, a former Melbourne University professor walked out of the Carrathool Family Hotel to greet the Sturt Jubilee expedition.

Carrathool is a tiny wool town in the Riverina, between Narrandera and Hay—the last place on earth one would expect to find a retired University professor.

The former Professor was Dr. W. A. Merrylees, born in Charlton, Victoria, Rhodes scholar in 1921, and Professor of Philosophy at Melbourne University from 1925 to 1935.

Dr. Merrylees had to aban-

don his professorship through bad health.

He came to Carrathool, where he now owns Coonara, a 15,000-acre sheep station.

In this semi-arid region the land blossoms with irrigation.

Dr. Merrylees got the irrigation area extended, and on 2000 acres of his property, now watered, he breeds prize-winning Dorset Horn, Border Leicester and Suffolk sheep.

P.M.G. engineers rigged up a platform and microphone so that the 145 population of Carrathool could hear Captain Sturt, acted by Grant Taylor, present a copy of the famous

Above: Report on Dr William A. Merrylees's speech, 1951 ('Poet's dream – professor meets Sturt's party', *The Age*, 5 January 1951, p. 3)

through community-initiated action, sought to persuade state and federal policy'.⁹ Central to this policy was the establishment of a rural university, which would produce individuals who were intellectually, physically, socially and culturally aligned with rural Australia.

The Case for an Australian Rural University

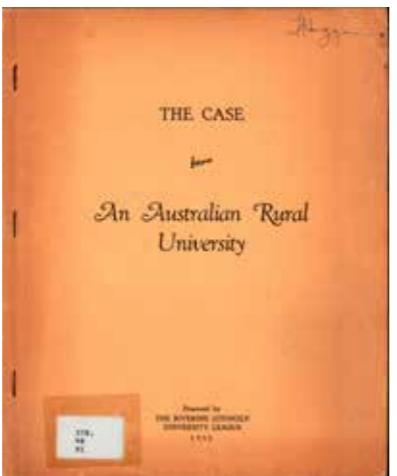
On 27 August 1952, in a deputation sent by the MVWUA, Merrylees met with Prime Minister Robert Menzies to discuss the future of tertiary education in Australia, and the case for its location in regional Australia.¹⁰ The *Murrumbidgee Irrigator* restated Merrylees's three driving arguments: the inequality in forcing rural students to move to the city for university education in their most 'impressionable years'; that this was in turn 'robbing the country of its most gifted youths'; and, most importantly, that it was 'retarding rural development'.¹¹ If the federal government was to provide tertiary education for the predicted 20,000 new students seeking tertiary education in 1965, and if it was to address the imbalance of services and development in rural Australia, then a rural university must be established, the grazier argued.¹² Reported in newspapers across Victoria and New South Wales, the meeting was said to have been well received by the Prime Minister, who then asked Merrylees and the RUL to write up a detailed proposal for such a university.¹³ Merrylees took this task almost entirely upon himself, and in 1953 released a 60-page document entitled *The Case for an Australian Rural University*. The proposal, which Merrylees would be told was too detailed to serve

its purpose, again stressed the three foundational arguments for tertiary education in the Riverina: inequality between city and rural services, economic development, and community importance.

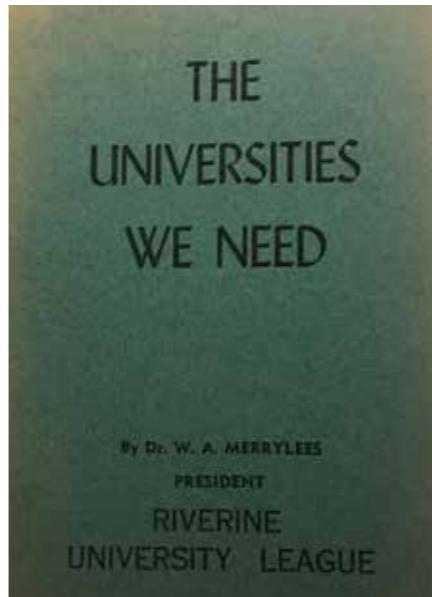
In *The Case*, Merrylees described the downturn that had occurred in Australia's rural population in

the preceding 15 years, from 36 per cent of the total population to just 31 per cent, and the 'depressing effect [it had] on our economic and cultural standards of living'.¹⁴ If rural towns were to grow economically, they needed not only to prevent people from moving away from the country, but also to attract people from the cities. Merrylees called for the development of regional cities that would provide an alternative to the already congested cities.¹⁵ To achieve this, he argued for the need 'to make country life attractive to educated and cultured people

[through the provision of] cultural facilities in the country'.¹⁶ This would be achieved through the creation of a rural university that would not only have all the facilities and accreditation of the city universities, but also the aspects that would make it suited to the rural environment. This included student accommodation for all students, farmland so that the university could cultivate its own food, and working relations with the surrounding communities.



Above: Merrylees's *The Case for an Australian University* (Charles Sturt University Library)



Above: Merrylees's writings (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives RW198.43)

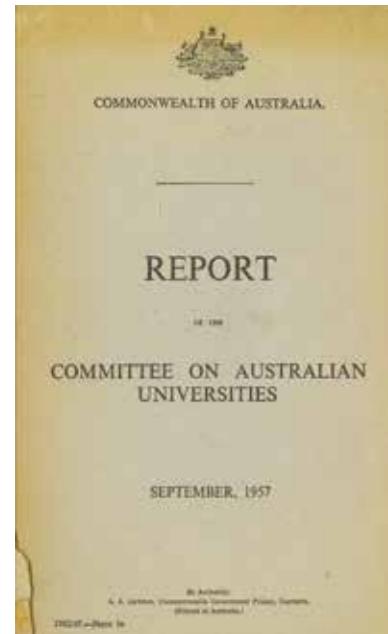
For Merrylees, the most important aspect of the proposed university was that it would serve its community, and no community was more deserving of this than the rural community, he argued. The university should be there to provide cultural activities, specialists and researchers to promote economic growth and to give further opportunities to the local community. To Merrylees, the university 'should ensure that the people of the area look upon it as their university, interested in their welfare and ready to help solve their problems'.¹⁷ He believed that if the university was fully integrated into the local community, unlike the city universities, it would work to create a well-rounded 'man on the land', who would uphold rural values and be dedicated to his community and the Commonwealth.¹⁸ This 'country-mindedness', as defined by Nancy Blacklow, would stop the 'drift' of individuals to the city and promote economic growth through new technologies, skills and intellect.¹⁹

A rural university of the kind Merrylees had envisioned was rejected in May 1954, when the federal government turned down his proposal, stating that it was 'fiscally and constitutionally unworkable'.²⁰ It was the first of many setbacks, but Merrylees refused to alter his vision. He continued to campaign actively for a rural university, publishing multiple pamphlets and even maintaining a correspondence with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education. As the following chapters will show, changes to Australia's tertiary education sector meant that a university that conformed to Merrylees's vision was impractical. Yet, Merrylees was successful in setting the scene. Through his prolific and determined campaigning, he defined the three arguments for tertiary education in rural Australia that would persist for the next 60 years: equality, development and community.



O2

Tertiary education for the masses



Above: Murray Report, 1957

Education reforms of the 1950s and 1960s dramatically altered tertiary education in regional and rural Australia. Released to address the steep rise in the number of students accessing tertiary education in the post-war years, the *Murray Report* of 1957 and the *Martin Report* of 1964 were to define tertiary education in the Riverina for the next three decades.

Increase in student numbers

In 1947, 46,000 students, or 6.3 per cent of the 'student population' (those aged 17 to 22), accessed tertiary education; by 1963, this number had risen to 117,900 students, or 12.1 per cent of the student population.²¹ The increase was thought to have occurred for a number of reasons. First, in the years following the Second World War, more students were remaining in high school. This meant not only that more teachers were required, but also that more students had the ability to progress to tertiary education. Second, changes in the workforce meant there was an increasing reliance on skilled workers. The 'phenomenal growth' of Australian industry created a need for tertiary-educated workers at all levels of business.²² Lastly, there was an increased desire by individuals to

Enrolments in Australia Schools 1939, 1946, 1953–1956

	1939	1946	1953	1954	1955	1956
Government						
Primary	747,709	691,930	948,281	997,173	1,045,179	1,091,436
Secondary	134,279	158,204	213,273	230,729	240,578	263,840
Total	881,988	850,134	1,161,554	1,227,902	1,285,757	1,355,276
Non Government						
	222,418	261,423	368,423	384,296	409,910	432,240
Total all Schools	1,103,406	1,111,557	1,529,997	1,612,198	1,695,667	1,787,516

Source: Commonwealth Office of Education

Above: Increase in student numbers in schools, 1939–56 (Murray Report, 1957, p. 21)

University Foundation and 1957 enrolments

University	Date of Foundation	1957 Enrolments	
		Total	Full course Equivalent (i)
University of Sydney	1850	8,318	7,407
University of Melbourne	1853	7,908	6,341
University of Adelaide	1874	(ii) 4,317	(ii) 3,331
University of Tasmania	1890	1,004	750
University of Queensland	1909	5,709	3,519
University of Western Australia	1911	2,356	1,661
Australian National University	1946	67	67
New South Wales University of Technology	1949	5,041	4,288
New England (originally established as a University College in 1938)	1954	1,149	591
Canberra University College	1930	396	216
Newcastle University College	1951	(iii)	(iii)

Source: Preliminary University Statistics, Australia, 1957 (Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra.)

Above: University student numbers, 1957 (Murray Report, 1957, p. 23)

improve their lot, and further education opened opportunities into new and often better-paid work. By 1957, the number of students now choosing to remain on the 'educational escalator', as Treyvaud and McLaren termed it, was putting a strain on Australia's 11 universities.²³

The Murray Report

On 19 September 1957, the *Report of the Committee on Australian Universities* was released. It would come to be known as the *Murray Report*, after the committee's chairman, Keith A.H. Murray. The report had been commissioned to address the rise in numbers of students accessing tertiary education and the difficulties facing current institutions. It found that while the purpose of a university prior to 1957 had been to acquire knowledge for the sake of knowledge, that view was now changing. There was now a greater reliance on universities for education and technology to ensure the 'progress not only of industry but of the nation'.²⁴ Treyvaud and McLaren, in their analysis of colleges of advanced education, argued that this shift from universities being 'guardians of knowledge' to 'degree factories' resulted in students now seeing tertiary education as a 'means to a vocational end'.²⁵

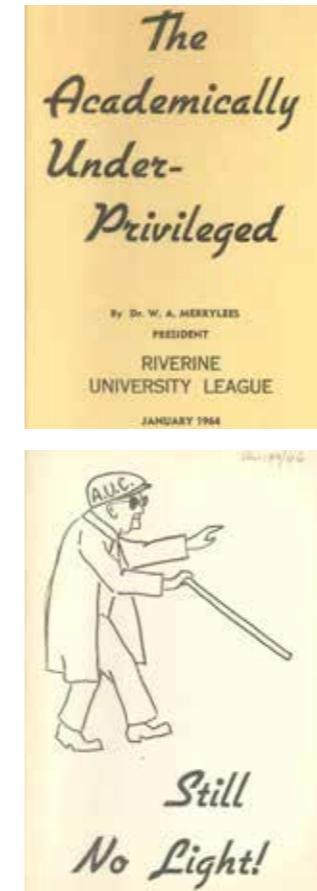
William Merrylees celebrated the similarities in concerns between the Riverine University League and the *Murray Report* – namely, the increase in student numbers and inability of the current facilities to cater for them – but he also bemoaned the report's failure to recommend that additional universities should be established.²⁶ Instead, it argued that the high failure rate at

current universities, especially among part-time students, suggested that not all students were capable of benefiting from a university education.²⁷ This view anticipated the rapid expansion of the vocational-focused college sector, rather than the university sector, that would take place in the 1960s and 1970s. The report finished on a seemingly quiet note, simply calling for the establishment of an Australian University Grants Committee, which would place university funding and coordination under Commonwealth control.

The Martin Report

Tertiary Education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities Commission was published in three parts by Leslie H. Martin, chairman of the Australian Universities Commission (AUC), in August 1964 and August 1965. Commonly known as the *Martin Report*, it was to change the face of tertiary education in Australia for the next 20 years, producing a proliferation of colleges to meet the increase in student numbers and the necessity for vocational training in the workforce.

Just like the Murray Report before it, the Martin Report placed the importance of tertiary education in the marketplace, concluding that 'education should be regarded as an investment which yields direct and significant economic benefits'.²⁸ What was not economically viable, however, was the high rate of failure among university students, with only 66 per cent of full-time students passing their first year and only 10 per cent of part-timers completing their degree.²⁹ The *Martin Report* saw the numbers as painting a rather 'gloomy picture'.³⁰



Above: Student numbers, 1946–1963 (Martin Report, 1964) Merrylees's response to the reports ((Charles Sturt University Regional Archives RW198.44 & RW198.46)

University enrolments and population aged 17–22 years, Australia, 1946–63

Year	Population aged 17–22 years	Students enrolled (excluding CRTS(1) students 1946–59)	% of enrolments to 17–22 population
1946	742	17,066	2·3
1950	719	23,394	3·3
1951	708	27,009	3·8
1952	700	27,348	3·9
1953	692	27,716	4·0
1954	688	28,918	4·2
1955	706	30,644	4·3
1956	731	34,353	4·7
1957	755	36,585	4·8
1958	779	41,515	5·3
1959	813	47,219	5·8
1960	842	53,342	6·3
1961	887	57,672	6·5
1962	929	63,317	6·8
1963	972	69,074	7·1

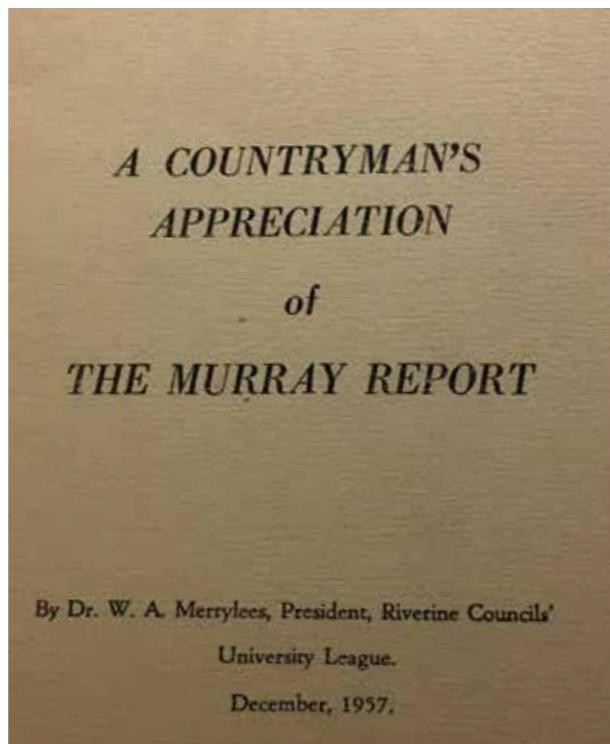
Source: Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, Canberra, University Statistics and Demography Bulletins



In order to address these failings, the report recommended that a number of far-reaching changes be made to the tertiary sector. Some of the proposed changes were considered to be muddled and impractical.³¹ However, two of the main recommendations were adopted: first, that there be three tiers of tertiary education in Australia (universities, colleges of advanced education and teachers colleges); and second, that all three tiers should be equally funded by the federal government. The federal government rejected the second of these recommendations and chose to fund only universities and colleges.³² Further reflecting its desire to minimise costs, the federal government gave preference to the creation of new colleges of advanced education (CAEs) in place of universities, as they were seen to be 'equal but cheaper'.³³

A countryman's response

William Merrylees had remained hopeful that a rural university would finally eventuate, despite the federal government's rejection of the proposal put forward in *The Case* in 1954. But the *Murray* and *Martin* reports, both of which argued for colleges of advanced education as a cheaper, more practical response to the increase in student demand for tertiary education, all but destroyed his chances. Merrylees responded to the *Murray Report* in 1957 in his *A Countryman's Appreciation of the Murray Report*, by again restating the three reasons for a rural university: equality, development and community. Shouldn't the almost 50 per cent of Australia's population that live in regional and rural Australia have access to a university education, he asked? Shouldn't the agricultural industry,



Above: Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (RW2889.3.99)

crucial to Australia's economy, be supported by local research? And, shouldn't the community have access to a university that will help to promote community health and cohesion?³⁴ Merrylees saw the AUC and the federal government as being blinded to the plight of regional and rural Australians by 'city sorcery'.³⁵

O3 Federal policy at a local level

The implementation of the recommendations of the *Martin* and *Murray* reports at a local level were to prove difficult for Prime Minister John Gorton and the Australian Universities Commission. Merrylees and the Riverine University League had made it clear that they would settle for nothing less than a university in the Riverine, rejecting all proposals for a federally preferred CAE. Central to this 'fight', labelled as such by Merrylees, was Wal Fife, a Liberal Party member who had been re-elected in May 1965. A member of the RUL and the representative for Wagga Wagga, Fife was to prove integral to Albury-Wodonga's tertiary future.

Fife takes up the fight

Following publication of the *Martin* and *Murray* reports, prospects looked bleak for a university to be established in the Riverina. Gorton and the AUC still believed that the proposed Riverine University would be too expensive and was unsuited to the needs of the region. Yet, Merrylees remained hopeful, and placed his trust in the Country-Liberal Party Coalition, which had won the 1965 NSW state election on an education platform. Merrylees wrote that a Riverine university was a 'pre-election promise of the government parties and on coming to power they agreed to honour it'.³⁶ Wal



Above: Walter Fife opening the SRCC building Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (RW3370/00/9)

Fife, then assistant to Education Minister Charles Cutler, had told the RUL to leave it all up to him, Merrylees said.

Within weeks of entering government, Cutler and Fife had rejected the federal government's offer of a joint-funded CAE in the Riverina, and instead insisted on a university institution of some form.³⁷ This outright rejection of a CAE was a direct challenge to Gorton and the AUC's 'equal but different' university and CAE binary system.³⁸ The extent to which Cutler and Fife became troublesome for the AUC and the federal government is made clear in the *Third Report of the Australian Universities Commission* of 1966. The report stated that when the NSW state government was offered a CAE, it showed no interest and seemed to 'confuse the need for higher education in the Riverina area with an immediate creation of a university'.³⁹ The report warned: 'There is a danger in the belief that a university degree is the single symbol of intellectual attainment'.⁴⁰

Hopes fade

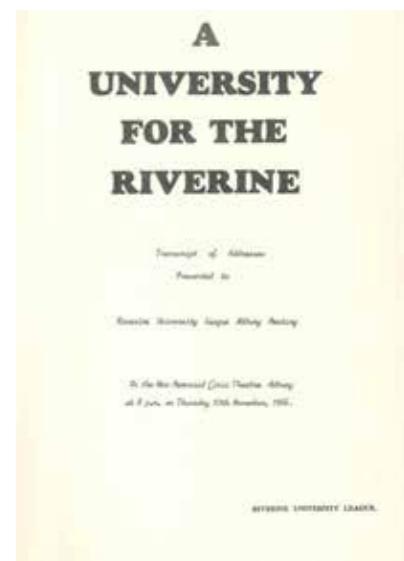
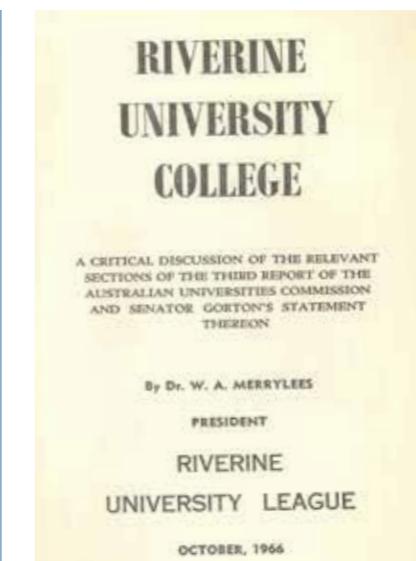
As their term progressed, Cutler and Fife's hopes of obtaining a university for the Riverina faded further. A proposed university college connected to the University of New South Wales had been rejected by both the AUC and the State Government in 1964. In November 1965, Cutler and Fife had submitted a proposal for a university college now connected to the University of New England. The AUC's chairman, L.H. Martin, rejected it in March 1966 for being 'unwarrantably extravagant'.⁴¹ The following month, in a final bid to have any type of university institution,

Cutler and Fife proposed a two-year 'junior university college' connected to the University of Newcastle.⁴² While the proposal was initially accepted by the AUC, it failed to receive AUC funding and status in June 1966 and was relegated instead to the care of the Committee of Advanced Education, the federal body that controlled the CAEs. Cutler and Fife dropped the proposal when it was clear it would be outside of the university system.

Almost two years had passed since the 'promising' state elections and the Riverina was no closer to obtaining the university it so desperately craved. Instead, Cutler and Fife had tried to undersell the region by applying for a junior university college. Furious, Merrylees wrote: '[T]he Junior College is a conception quite alien to the Australian university system, is not suited to the Riverina area, is not wanted, and would not work'.⁴³ Having followed Fife's request to stay out of the campaign since the election, Merrylees re-entered the ring and invited Martin on a personal tour of the Riverina region in a last-bid effort to convince him of the need for a university.

Martin's tour of the Riverina

William Merrylees and Leslie Martin toured the region from 6 to 11 November 1966, concluding with a community meeting hosted by the RUL in Albury. The meeting was attended by 800 locals and filled the local Civic Centre.⁴⁴ Multiple speakers presented on a range of topics ranging from irrigation, to forestry and agriculture, to industry and commerce, and culture. Reminiscent of Merrylees's *The Case*, the meeting presented a holistic argument for the need for a Riverine



Above: William Merrylees (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives) William Merrylees (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives) RUL Albury meeting minutes Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (L to R: RW198.45; RW2889.3.108 & CSU3394)

university. The RUL vice-president A.A.B. Martin argued, '[W]e are fighting for our own University not as a theoretical education activity to satisfy a few, but as a vital issue affecting this whole region'.⁴⁵

Leslie Martin was impressed, acknowledging that the case was put forward 'strongly and often emotionally'.⁴⁶ He conceded to support a two-year 'transfer university college' linked to the Australian National University School of General Studies, even meeting with Victoria's premier, Henry Bolte, on 30 November to discuss the possibility of a border institution.⁴⁷ Merrylees had in fact been campaigning for a cross-border institution for many years, seeing tertiary education as a rural issue rather than a state one.⁴⁸ However, this

success was short lived: in December 1966, Martin resigned as chairman of the AUC, taking with him the final bastion of support for a Riverine university.

Wagga Wagga College of Advanced Education

In December 1966, the AUC released the report *Tertiary Facilities in the Riverina*. A re-hash of Martin's final report as chairman of the AUC (*University College in the Riverina*), it removed the prospect of a university institution, and instead again recommended matching Commonwealth to state funding for a CAE. The NSW state government accepted the recommendation, which may be partly explained by the RUL's inability to

compromise, and by the loss of support through Martin's resignation. As historian Donald Boadle points out, the re-release of the report just one month later in January 1967 sheds some light on the apparent backflip. The report was edited by the AUC to remove 'any unnecessary embarrassment' that might arise from its prior knowledge of Wal Fife's intentions to place the proposed CAE in his electorate of Wagga Wagga, before the report and its recommendations were even released.⁴⁹ As Fife stated in his autobiography, federal duties permitting, he made sure that he serviced his electorate.⁵⁰

The belief that Wagga was placed prematurely ahead of Albury in the race for a tertiary institution is not unfounded. In October 1967, the *Manson Report* signalled to the Victorian government that Wodonga, if paired up with Albury, was the best site for promoting regional development.⁵¹ It saw Wodonga-Albury as the fastest-growing regional town, in a prime position, both geographically and economically, to become a decentralisation growth centre.

The growth potential of Albury-Wodonga was again recognised by the very committee that had been appointed to investigate the setting up of the CAE in Wagga. The Heath Committee, as it was known, conducted an expansive study of the

demographics of the region, which saw Wagga nominated as the preferred location for the new CAE. While at first glance the report appears to demonstrate that Wagga had the largest demand for a CAE in terms of population size, workforce and rate of growth, this was in fact due to the way the report was written. Initially, when establishing the four main regions (groupings of towns in the Riverine), Albury and Wodonga were separated into Upper Murray Region and Victoria, while

Wagga was included in an almost 'super region' of the whole Murrumbidgee. The denial of the existence of a cross-border region distorted the resulting numbers, making the Murrumbidgee region seem densely populated when compared to Albury and Wodonga.

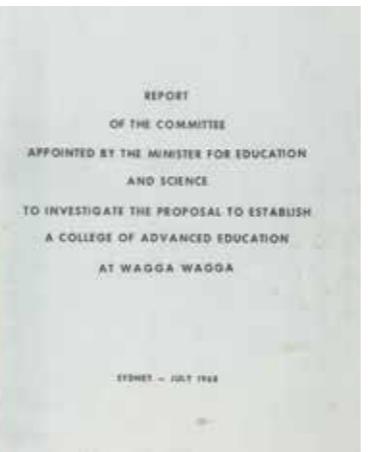
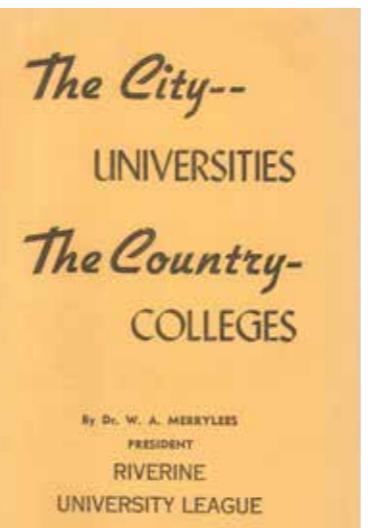
Although region allotment may have been used to distort the size and importance of Wagga, when grouped together, the cities of Albury and

Wodonga were shown to be a more logical location. Albury-Wodonga had a larger combined population size in 1966 than Wagga (37,079, compared to 29,811), including the wider region population size (47,179 for Albury-Wodonga, compared to 41,918 for Wagga).⁵² In terms of the economy and employment, Albury-Wodonga had more factories than Wagga, and was better suited to industry due to its location between Sydney



'A problem with Albury was there was no tertiary education for our kids, so they all had to go away. Now some of them started going to Wagga, but a huge lot went to Melbourne. So as the Study Centre expanded, it became really beneficial to Albury. Before that, its main purpose was upgrading teachers – and that really suited Albury's education system here.'

Jan Hunter, student at the RCAE



Above top: William Merrylees, 'City universities, country colleges' (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives RW2889.3.102)

Above: Heath Committee Report (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (CSU3394.109)

and Melbourne.⁵³ In fact, Albury alone employed a larger number of people in commerce than Wagga did.⁵⁴ Most importantly, the report demonstrated that Albury-Wodonga had experienced the highest levels of growth, and would continue to do so. In later years, the author of the report, Harry Fredrick Heath, disclosed that Wagga had already been selected as the site for the CAE, prior to his undertaking of the report.⁵⁵

Interim Council of the Riverina College of Advanced Education

On 27 October 1969, the Interim Council of the Riverina College of Advanced Education (RCAE) gathered for the first time at Wagga Wagga Teachers College. Tasked with setting up the RCAE, the council established four subcommittees that would be integral to the successful establishment of the institution: the Education Committee, Site and Buildings Committee, Executive Committee, and an Other Centres (or Study Centres) Committee.⁵⁶ The fact that an Other Centres Committee was identified as crucial to the burgeoning RCAE demonstrates the importance placed on tertiary education for the whole Riverina. By the second meeting, on 1 December, the council had already identified Albury as a top-priority area, with the retiring Minister for Mines, Torrington Blatchford, stating that the CAE was 'to serve the Riverina, and not only Wagga'.⁵⁷

William Merrylees did not live to see the RCAE established in Wagga, having died on 17 August 1969.⁵⁸ In 'appreciation of his work', Wal Fife suggested to the Interim Council that a building be named after the late scholar.⁵⁹ Council member M.E. Hale stated that, while remembering Merrylees was important, to name a building after him was 'quite inappropriate'.⁶⁰ It was common knowledge that Merrylees had never supported a CAE, and in fact had campaigned right up until his death for a university. He had even travelled to the University of New South Wales in 1968, where he spoke to the student union on the need for a rural university.⁶¹ Rejecting Fife's proposal, the council agreed that an appropriate



	Riverine area as defined	Restricted Riverine area	Riverina (NSW sector of defined area)	Restricted Riverina	Commission's area
Population	639,151	500,000	292,648	250,000	192,000
University students as .8% of population	5,112	4,000	2,336	2,000	1,536
17 - 22 age group*	53,120	1,600	25,163	21,500	15,729
University students as 7.8% of 17-22 age group	4,132	3,200	1,960	1,677	1,226
Riverina university college students as 87% of total university students					
a) as .8% of population	4,447	3,480	2,032	1,740	1,336
b) as 7.8% of 17-22 age group	3,443	2,822	1,626	1,459	1,069
Commission's (and State's) estimate of Riverina university college students (344) as a % of the Commonwealth average taken					
a) as .8% of population	7.8	10	17.2	19.8	26
b) as 7.8% of 17-22 age group	10	12.2	21.5	23.6	32

*as 1966 figures for the 17-22 age group not yet available, these have been calculated by increasing the 1961 figures by the percentage by which the population increased between 1961 and 1966

memorial should be established for Merrylees in due course.

By the end of the 1960s, the Riverine had not yet acquired the university it had campaigned so hard for; instead, Wagga had obtained a new CAE in rather questionable circumstances. Yet, this did not deter the new institution from acknowledging its beginnings. At the inaugural meeting of the Rcae's Other Centres Committee on 17

November 1969, a Mrs Joyce Aynsley of Albury 'stressed that it was important that people in other centres did not feel that it was a Wagga College'.⁶² Instead, just as Merrylees had intended from the very beginning, tertiary education should be there to 'serve the needs of the whole of the Riverina area'.⁶³

04 The opening of Albury Study Centre of the Riverina College of Advanced Education

On the warm early autumn afternoon of 27 March 1972, David Fairbairn, Member for Farrer and the Federal Minister for Defence, addressed members of the local community in front of a recently renovated concrete building on Swift Street, in the centre of Albury. Those gathered had all, in one way or another, contributed to what Fairbairn described as 'a milestone in the history of Albury and a step which would encourage decentralisation'.⁶⁴ Fairbairn was on hand to open the new study centre of the Riverina College of Advanced Education, which had been operating temporarily out of the St Matthews Parish Centre for the past two weeks. Hopeful for the future of the border city, Fairbairn asked that the community support the fledgling institution so that it could grow and have a lasting presence. Highlighting the vocational outcomes of the study centre, he argued that there was 'no real difference between the standard of a university and a college', just the students' 'ultimate objective[s]'.⁶⁵ The centre was then opened to allow the general public to wander through the six lecture rooms, library and modern 'audio-visual study room'.⁶⁶

Setting up in Albury

Two years prior, on 9 February 1970, members of the RCAE's Other Centres Committee had visited Albury to conduct a survey of the town and to meet with members of the community to discuss what they wanted from the new institution. Those who attended included representatives from the *Border Morning Mail*, the Teachers Federation, the technical college and some local businessmen. Opening the discussion, the chairman, Dr E.S. Swinbourne, 'stressed that the Interim Council was firm in its resolve to make the College a truly regional institution to serve the needs of the whole of the Riverina'. Yet, the students would still need to 'identify' with their Wagga parent; the study centre was not to be outside the control of Wagga.

While acknowledging that the study centre was 'evolutionary rather than revolutionary', Dr Hogan, the medical superintendent of the Albury Base Hospital, voiced his concern that, for the centre to be successful, the Albury students would need to feel a 'sense of belonging'.⁶⁷ This, he argued, could only be achieved through the provision of adequate services and strong student-teacher contact. Could this be achieved 128 kilometres away from Wagga, he asked? Other community members

also wondered what kind of degrees would be awarded, and what the eligibility requirements would be for students.

These were valid concerns. While the Martin Report had tried to sell the colleges of advanced education as being equal to a university, people were still not convinced. In a 1970 survey conducted by the Interim Council in the proposed

study centre locations, a questionnaire was sent out to prospective students at local businesses and schools. The results demonstrated that school leavers who were interested in tertiary education 'were aiming towards university'.⁶⁸ One school principal explained that this attitude was due to ignorance regarding CAEs, and not due to an aversion to them. To combat this view, the Other Centres Committee drafted a brochure that outlined

for prospective students the study centre's basic aims and purpose.

Acknowledging the questions raised during the Albury visit and the survey, the brochure outlined the admission requirement: full completion of secondary college or demonstration of academic competence for adult learners. The courses that were under consideration included applied

science, accountancy, business management and, most importantly, teacher education. The brochure assured those outside Wagga that the students at the study centres would feel a 'true sense of belonging' through face-to-face instruction from visiting lecturers, supported by tutorial material and modern learning techniques utilising television and radio.⁶⁹ The committee argued that the college provided the same standard of education as a university, but with a vocational focus. This would enable prospective students to walk straight into employment in their chosen industry upon completion of their studies.

The Albury visit was a success. The first classes, held on 14 March in St Matthews Parish Centre, comprised 65 students in five classes: three in teacher education, one in accountancy, and one in administration.⁷⁰ Dr Lemen, the Director of External Studies at Albury, boasted to the *Border Morning Mail* that 'with very little advertising the centre had received more students than it could handle'.⁷¹ By spring semester, 86 students had enrolled in eight courses.⁷²

Part-timers

While school leavers seemed to be disinterested in the Albury Study Centre, school teachers were not. The 1970 survey noted an enthusiastic response to the prospective study centre by primary school teachers, with many showing an interest in upgrading their two-year qualification to a three-year one. The support was so strong that of the three recommendations the research officer, Judith Walker, made, the primary one was that the teacher extension course be offered and that it also be applicable to Victorian teachers.⁷³



'I ran into mums of the other kids going to school and they said, "Why don't you come to Riverina College and do some study?" I said, "Well, I don't have time and I don't really want to." They said, "You will meet some nice people and you will enjoy the interaction and the social activities." So, I wrote a letter to the Riverina College and offered to be a pupil [laughs] and said that I would probably like to be a social worker. They wrote back and said they had no places in social work, but there were two places in librarianship, and I could have one of those if I wanted. I said, "Yes, please!" I'd always dreamed of being a librarian!'

Ann Brennan, past student at the RCAE

The desire of adult learners to upgrade their qualifications shaped the newly opened study centre. All the classes offered were night classes, held on Tuesdays between 4.30 and 9.30 pm.⁷⁴ The study centre was located centrally in town so that students were able to arrive straight from work. The subjects on offer – teacher education, accountancy, business administration, and a planned computer course – catered to an adult market.⁷⁵ In fact, at the Other Centres Committee meeting held on 1 July 1972, Wayne Hooper of



ABOVE: Principal of the Riverina College of Advanced Education Dr. C. D. Blake, explains the uses of special equipment at the study centre to the Minister for Defence and Member for Farrer, Mr. Fairbairn.

NOW, IT'S OFFICIAL

Tertiary education officially came to Albury yesterday with the opening of the Albury Study Centre of the Riverina College of Advanced Education. The ceremony was performed by the Minister for Defence and Member for Farrer, Mr. Fairbairn. It described the opening of the centre once between the standard of a university and a college of advanced education, but just a difference in the student's ultimate objective.

The ceremony was performed by the Minister for Defence and Member for Farrer, Mr. Fairbairn. The Albury man of the college interim council, Mr. W. Kru

Above: 'Now it's official', Border Morning Mail, 28 March 1972



"The students were made up of various people, including a batch of housewives, some of whom were falling in the door, really frazzled, because their husbands weren't cooperative, so they had to leave meals and fix kids and do all that sort of thing before you came through the door at half-past six. That wasn't my experience."

Jan Hunter, student at the RCAE

Sydney University and promoter of continuing education programs gave a presentation on adult learning, describing its unique characteristics and emphasising the idea that an individual never stops learning.⁷⁶ By the end of 1972, there were 33 part-time students enrolled in teaching, with 36 predicted for semester one in 1973, while business studies had 18 in semester two, rising to 22 in 1973.⁷⁷

Sign of the times

A profile of the typical first students to attend the Albury Study Centre is provided by former student Eileen Clark, who enrolled in 1972 after seeing it advertised in the *Border Morning Mail*. After leaving work as a laboratory technologist to have her first child, Clark was looking to re-enter the workforce in a different role. Many of her friends were enrolled at the study centre, 'upskilling' their teaching degrees from a two-year certification to a three-year one, and Clark decided to join them. Her motivation to study fit in with the wider student population at the study centre, who saw it as an opportunity to qualify themselves for employment in a changing labour force.

The high demand for tertiary education by mature age students can be seen to reflect changes that were occurring globally. The 1960s and 1970s saw a rise in New Left ideas, including feminism, civil rights, gay rights and drug reforms. Nationally, the Whitlam Labor government was elected, bringing in a raft of progressive policies, including the abolition of conscription and eventually free tertiary education in 1974. Locally, this saw a rise in mature age students, especially women, accessing tertiary education for the first time, no longer constrained by finances or society's expectations of women as homemakers. Female enrolments at Australian universities increased from 25 per cent of total student numbers in 1961 to 34 per cent in 1974, while at colleges of advanced education, women made up the largest proportion of students in areas such as teacher education, the creative arts and paramedical studies.⁷⁸ For Eileen Clark, seeing all these women who had once been excluded from further education because it was considered a 'waste of time', was 'very inspiring. Women who had lived on the farm for 20 years were now doing something.... It was the beginning of feminism.'⁷⁹ On a more personal level, entry into tertiary education at the study centre provided Clark with an important opportunity to leave the house and exercise her brain, she says, 'rather than wiping up food from the floor – all of the things you do with kids [laughs]!'⁸⁰

In seemingly a sign of the times, at the first meeting for 1972 of the Interim Council of the RCAE at Wagga, the council passed the motion that any student caught receiving, dealing or 'believed to be on' drugs would receive no support from the college in their 'encounters'



'So, the reason I could go – perhaps this wasn't quite true, but I think it was – was because of the Whitlam free education. [It] was also part of the Women's Movement, so there was really no obstacle in my way. I had left school at 15 and I had always regretted it – so here was an opportunity to catch up.'

Jan Hunter, student at the RCAE

with the authorities'.⁸¹ With a majority adult learner student cohort in Albury, this resolution seemed somewhat out of place. Yet, Australian society was changing, the student protest movement was in full swing, and the opposition Labor Party was making grand gestures involving tertiary education and the border towns of Albury and Wodonga. Reflecting on this, C.D. Blake, principal of the RCAE, stated at an Other Centres Committee meeting that 'the reputation of the Riverina College will be made or broken by the success of the venture into Study Centres'.⁸²



05

The sky is the limit: Gough Whitlam and the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation



Above: Gough Whitlam in Albury-Wodonga, (National Archives Australia)

Radical changes that were occurring internationally reached Australian shores in the 1970s with the election of the Labor government, breaking 23 years of Coalition rule. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam implemented a range of progressive policies that were to have a large impact on tertiary education in Australia. Central to Albury was the creation of the visionary Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre Project, which sought to create a city in the country. With national decisions being played out at the local level, change occurred rapidly and it seemed that the sky was the limit.

 ‘The Development Corporation did a great job of planning, planning roads, planning parks and encouraging and supporting people who moved here. It was great. It was excellent.’

Andree Pender, Occupational Therapy secretary

Decentralisation

Interest in decentralisation as a government policy peaked under the Whitlam government in the early 1970s, when the Labor Party made it one of its major platforms in the 1972 federal election. By 1964, the ‘long boom’ of post-war prosperity was coming to an end, resulting in almost 40 per cent of Australia’s population living in

Melbourne and Sydney alone.⁸³ The government was looking to find ways to alleviate congestion in the cities by promoting growth in regional centres, many of which had experienced stagnation or decreasing populations.

Albury-Wodonga as a site for regional development was recognised initially in 1967 when the Victorian government, adopting the findings of the *Manson Report*, identified it as a possible growth city. The NSW government accepted the Victorian government’s proposal to jointly develop the two towns, yet reversed the name to Albury-Wodonga.⁸⁴ The Liberal federal government was reluctant to support the project, financially and ideologically, and left regional development to the state governments. In opposition, Labor Party leader Gough Whitlam capitalised on the federal government’s wariness, announcing Albury-Wodonga as a site for regional development during an election campaign in August 1969.⁸⁵

On 2 December 1972, Whitlam’s Labor Party won the federal election – although the seats of Farrer (Albury) and Indi (Wodonga) remained National and Liberal, respectively. Staying true to his campaign, Whitlam met with the NSW and Victorian state premiers on 11 December

to discuss the Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre Project. On 25 January of the following year, both states agreed to the project. Whitlam established the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation in May 1974, which had offices in both New South Wales and Victoria.⁸⁶ The corporation sought to promote growth through a range of avenues, including new industry, land development and a university.



‘Albury was continuing to develop, but it was slow and it wasn’t particularly well coordinated. There was no coordination between Albury and Wodonga, for example. But then with the Development Corporation, they had the funds to do it, and they brought in very competent and experienced staff. And that was the other rub-off: those staff members became active in community activities. Because they were people who were into the arts; the Historical Society is an example.’

Doug Hunter, student at the RMIHE

Proposal for an Albury-Wodonga cross-border university

William Merrylees had often referred in his writings for the Riverine University League to the need for a university to be established outside of the metropolitan areas in order to help promote decentralisation. He not only saw the forced relocation of country students to the city to access university education as contributing to congestion in the cities,

but also appreciated the potential for a rural university to attract students from the city to study, and eventually work, in rural communities. In his paper ‘Universities as the Basis of Balanced Development’, delivered at the 1962 Wagga Conference of the National Council for Balanced Development, Merrylees argued that there could not be successful regional development without

the provision of university facilities. 'If we fail in [providing university education], development will inevitably be curtailed,' he warned.⁸⁷

The importance of a university in promoting growth was not lost on Whitlam. He believed that the establishment of a cross-border NSW and Victorian university, and the relocation of some public service departments, were central to fostering regional development.⁸⁸ When he visited Albury in October 1971 to open the new Travelodge Motel, he announced to the crowd that he had already been pressing Education Minister Malcolm Fraser for a university in Albury-Wodonga. Staying true to his word, just 11 days after his election win, Whitlam had already tasked the Australian Universities Commission with investigating establishing a new university in Melbourne, Sydney and Albury-Wodonga.⁸⁹

The AUC's report, known as the *Swanson and Bull Report*, was released early the following year, with many of its recommendations tied in with the wider Growth Centre Project. It saw the 'setting up of a tertiary institution... itself a factor in stimulating the growth envisaged [of Albury-Wodonga]'.⁹⁰ Reminiscent of Merrylees's writings, the proposed university was predicted to attract researchers who could address local issues, to develop the educational and cultural life of the wider Riverine community, and to attract a large number of students from the metropolitan areas.⁹¹ Most importantly, it would open up new opportunities. While the proposed university would complement the ambitious growth of the region, the authors of the report warned that unless all governments



 It [Albury Study Centre] was a main impetus to get Albury firing. And, of course, there were others who came to take up a job here – some from overseas, in fact – and there was some difference to the voting patterns in the area.'

Ann Brennan, past student and librarian at the RCAE

WE'RE TOP PRIORITY FOR A UNIVERSITY

Above: 'We're top priority for a university', Border Morning Mail, 4 May 1973

involved in the Growth Centre Project committed to developing Albury-Wodonga to the predicted 300,000 population by the year 2000, then a new university would not be sustainable.⁹²

Despite the proposed Albury-Wodonga University being dependent on development, the news was exciting. On 4 May 1973, the *Border Morning Mail* expressed its excitement with a bold front-page headline: 'We're Top Priority for a University'.⁹³ Later that year, it announced that Albury-Wodonga would have a 'high-rise university by 1978', and that the institution would be located in the centre of town for the community as a whole to utilise, with planning beginning in 1974.⁹⁴ Even C.D. Blake, principal of the Riverina College of Advanced Education, seemed enthusiastic, stating in an article in the *Border Morning Mail* that Albury-Wodonga would, like Canberra, have a CAE and a university existing in harmony. He believed that the proposed university would in fact 'strengthen his college's position'.⁹⁵

Yet, Blake's apparent enthusiasm in the press in Albury met with opposition back in Wagga. A highly ambitious man, Blake tied the success of the RCAE

at Wagga with the success of the study centres located in Albury and Griffith. The RCAE had become incredibly protective of the Albury Study Centre, and Blake was not prepared to give up everything they had achieved in their first year and hand it over to a larger and academically superior university. Swanson and Bull had mentioned in their report that they had been made aware of the RCAE's 'anxiety' at the prospect of 'the establishment of a newer (and ultimately bigger) institution and its effects in Albury and Wagga'.⁹⁶ Yet, the authors stated that they had given the RCAE five years to 'consolidate' itself and its place in the Riverine community before the university was scheduled to open.⁹⁷

On 29 May 1973, Blake sent a rushed memo to the Director of External Engagement outlining his plan of attack against the proposed Albury-Wodonga

University in dot-point form and attaching a copy of the *Swanson and Bull Report*. They had five years to develop the Albury Study Centre to a state where the opening of the university would not signal its death, Blake warned. He ordered the creation of an ad-hoc committee tasked with devising a detailed five-year plan that would investigate new vocational-focused courses to be offered at Albury and the move out of the rented Swift Street premises to permanent facilities. Blake had set an ambitious target: the Albury Study Centre of the RCAE was to 'pursue vigorously' its educational role in the Albury-Wodonga community. It would be full steam ahead.⁹⁸



06

A sobering reality



After the release of the *Swanson and Bull Report*, which promised a university for Albury-Wodonga, the RCAE considered that its position in the growth centre had become precarious. In 1974, determined that the RCAE would remain an educational leader in the region, Blake commissioned a detailed development strategy for the next ten years. The committee appointed found that key to the expansion of the Albury Study Centre was the rapid expansion of facilities and services, which were reported as being 'strained'.⁹⁹ Speaking to the importance of the community, it warned that 'if this situation worsens it is likely to undermine local acceptance of and confidence in courses offered by the College'.¹⁰⁰ With the looming prospect of an Albury-Wodonga University, the committee recommended that the Council act 'aggressively' in developing new courses and new permanent facilities so that the RCAE can 'lay claim as quickly as possible' to tertiary education on 'both sides of the river'.¹⁰¹

Border Morning Mail 21,085 COPIES DAILY ALBURY-WODONGA, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1975 PRICE 10c

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"WELL, IF IT isn't Doug Anthony."

Silent on heading the traditional Christmas shopping rush, this woman paused for a moment yesterday to meet the National Country Party Leader.

Mr Anthony was in Albury to support the NCP candidate for Far Far North, Mr Kevin Beattie. They took to the streets to chat to shopkeepers and retailers.

ANTHONY: OPEN UNI. FOR BORDER IN 1978

Albury - Wodonga would have an open university in 1978-79 under a Liberal-National Country Party government, the NCP Leader, Mr Anthony, said in Albury yesterday.

Mr Anthony said the university would provide correspondence and other special study courses.

He said the open university concept was new to Australia, but was a real possibility for the growth centre. It would cost less, initially, to build than a traditional university.

'Hogwash'

Mr Anthony described an offer of a university immediately by the former Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Mr

TRAVEL BY RAIL - ROAD - SEA - AIR
Border 21 1555
 PRIVATE SERVICE, off Creek Street, Albury.
 PHONE 21 1555

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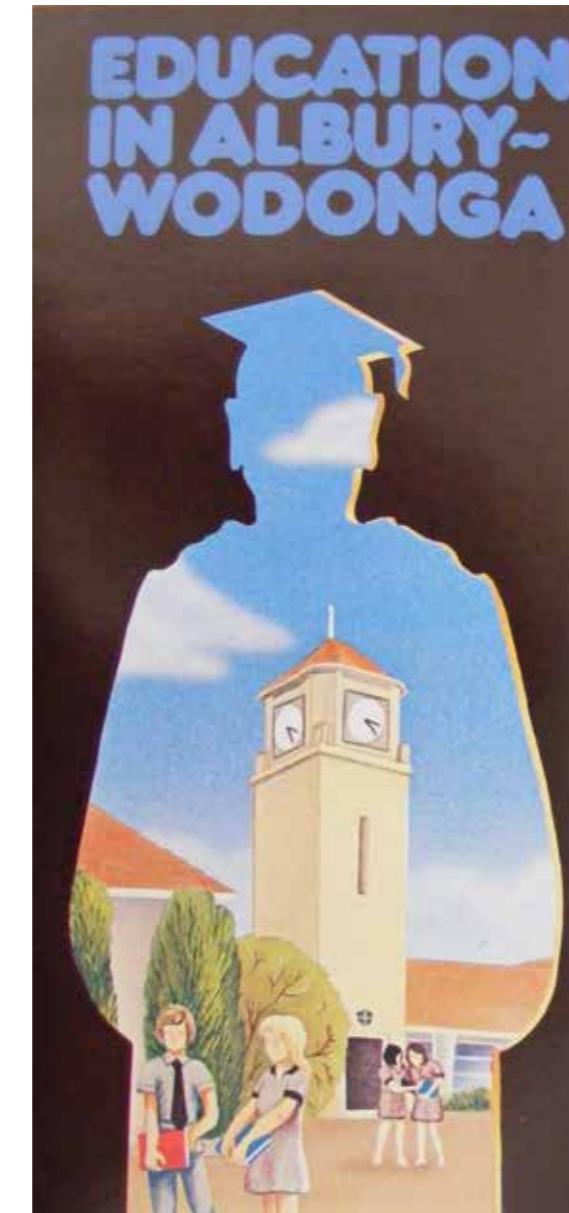
Left: Anthony: Open uni for border in 1978', Border Morning Mail, 2 December 1975

Below: Uren promises uni next year', Border Morning Mail, 1 December 1975

The precarious Albury-Wodonga University

By 1974, work had not yet begun on the Albury-Wodonga University, but there was nothing to indicate that it would not eventuate. The AUC had rejected the Victorian government's plans to open a new multi-campus regional university in 1974, instead arguing that the Albury-Wodonga University would work towards providing university education to regional Victorian and NSW students.¹⁰² In 1975, endeavouring to make tertiary education more accessible, the AUC's chairman, Peter Henry Karmel, released a report titled *Open Tertiary Education in Australia*. Drawing on the concept of open universities as developed in the United Kingdom, the 'radical new approach' to tertiary education, as described by the *Border Morning Mail*, would use the 'latest techniques in electronic education' to provide tertiary education to those unable to access the institution itself.¹⁰³ It would open up tertiary education to those who had been traditionally barred through geography, work commitments or, in the case of many women, child-rearing responsibilities.¹⁰⁴ Karmel saw the proposed Albury-Wodonga University playing a leading role in developing this new approach. On 4 March 1974, he spoke at the Albury City Hall on 'Universities of the 1980s' and held meetings with the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation.¹⁰⁵

On 11 November 1975, the Whitlam government was dismissed by the governor-general, Sir John Kerr. The Liberal leader, Malcolm Fraser, was put in the role of caretaker until the federal election scheduled for December. The dismissal threw many of the Whitlam government's proposals into limbo, including the Albury-Wodonga University,



which had missed out on AUC funding in the 1976–78 triennium.¹⁰⁶ In the ensuing election, the promised university became a political 'football'. The Coalition claimed that all tertiary education planning was 'in a state of disrupted chaos' due to the actions of the Labor government.¹⁰⁷ At an Albury Labor Party dinner, the deputy leader Tom Uren promised that construction of the Albury-Wodonga University would begin in 1976 if Labor were re-elected,¹⁰⁸ while the National-Country Party leader, Doug Anthony, claimed there would be an open university in Albury-Wodonga by 1978 if the Coalition were elected.¹⁰⁹ The Albury-Wodonga Study Centre did not know where it stood. In January 1976, the director of the study centre, Geoff Fairhall, was placed in the self-described 'awkward' position of travelling to Canberra with local businessman Henry Nowik and Albury mayor Les Muir to petition Karmel for an Albury-Wodonga University.¹¹⁰ This, he felt, put him at odds with the RCAE, which was relieved that the proposed university had again missed out on AUC funding for the 1977–79 triennium.¹¹¹

Townsend Street premises

By 1975, the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre was growing rapidly. Student enrolments had increased from 70 in 1972 to 253 in May 1975.¹¹² The study centre offered 30 subjects in teacher education, business studies and applied

arts (which offered vocational-focused subjects in design and aesthetics); teacher education was the most popular course, with 134 students. Harvey Mendham, the first full-time academic staff member at the study centre, recalls working long nights and having packed classrooms: 'My classes were full. I sometimes had to double up, as we dealt with, from both sides of the border, teachers who were upgrading to become three-year trained.'¹¹³ The study centre had quickly outgrown its rented Swift Street premises and wanted to show the Albury-Wodonga community its commitment to the region through the construction of permanent, purpose-built facilities. In 1975, Blake secured \$300,000 in funding from the Australian Education Board to build permanent facilities.¹¹⁴



'There was this great hunger – it's a funny word to use, but there was an aspiration that "I would like to study at this higher level" – and the Riverina-Murray provided it. And I think the people that came had left school early, but still had this aspiration for tertiary studies.'

Doug Hunter, student at the RMIHE

part-time, evening students. It was designed as a 'warehouse-type structure', increasing its appeal for resale in 1980.¹¹⁵ And it was cheap.

The RCAE's desire for rapid expansion of the study centre was offset by its unwillingness to invest too much capital, for fear of losing out to another institution or university. Construction of the Townsend Street premises as a sellable shell demonstrates its hesitancy to commit to costly



investment in the region. Ann Brennan, a student and librarian at the study centre in 1979, recalls supplementing the outdated library materials with boxes of photocopied journal articles – a more cost-effective initiative than purchasing original materials.¹¹⁶ In 1977, Blake offered to compromise with the study centre's calls for full-time courses by suggesting that courses be offered in 'mixed-mode' – part distance education from Wagga, part face-to-face teaching – in an effort to save on teaching costs.¹¹⁷ Fairhall warned that this mode could deceive prospective students, who should be informed of the exact proportions of instructional methods in the mixed-mode subjects.

RCAE the principal teacher education provider

By 1977 the writing was on the wall. Two months after the federal election, the plan for an Albury-Wodonga University had been 'shelved indefinitely as part of the Federal Government's economy drive',¹¹⁸ despite Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony's pre-election promise, as noted by the *Border Morning Mail*. While wary of what the future might hold in relation to tertiary education on the border, Blake, too, had concluded that an Albury-Wodonga University was unlikely in the

'foreseeable future'.¹¹⁹ In a memo sent to members of the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre on 10 May 1977, Blake announced that as of the preceding 29 April, the council had adopted the resolution that the RCAE would be the 'principal provider of tertiary education' in Albury-Wodonga.¹²⁰ To demonstrate its commitment to this resolution, the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre dropped the name 'Study Centre' in November 1977, becoming the more substantial RCAE Albury-Wodonga campus.¹²¹ Then, in 1979, it cemented its presence in the community by taking over the old Albury Technical College building in the centre of town on the corner of Dean and Olive streets.

The Albury-Wodonga University was finally axed with the release of the *Williams Report* in 1979. The report, entitled *Education, Training and Employment*, voiced concern over the increasing costs, for both the state and federal governments, of tertiary education, and the declining student numbers and student graduations. To combat this, the report recommended the increased cooperation of services and facilities between universities, colleges of advanced education, and technical and further education (TAFE) colleges, and 'against the creation of a university at Albury-Wodonga'.¹²² The Albury-Wodonga community was disheartened. In an article published by the *Border Morning Mail*, Peter Kranz lamented that 'promises do not build institutions'.¹²³ Regional Australia was still largely ignored by the capital cities. Albury-Wodonga would need to take charge and look to its current institutions for the future.¹²⁴



• Mrs Eileen Clark... to receive top award.

Student mum wins college's highest award

SEVEN years after taking up a degree course 'just for an interest,' a Lavington woman is about to receive Riverina College's highest undergraduate honor.

Mrs Eileen Clark, 37, will be awarded the Gold Medal during Friday's graduation ceremony at the Workmen Civic Centre.

The medal is awarded to the student who has performed with distinction throughout their studies.

After diagnosis coping with breast cancer, raising a family and voluntary community work, Mrs Clark gained the highest possible grade in all her subjects in a Bachelor of Arts (Labour Studies) course.

Mrs Clark, of Maitland St., said yesterday she had never set out with any determination to finish the course. "I had 17 of my 22 students tell they have to sit along with a course to improve their qualifications," she said.

"But that didn't matter to me at all — I did it just to satisfy myself."

A qualified medical technician, Mrs Clark had left the paid workforce on the birth of her son more than eight years ago.

She has also national president of the Parent Australia organisation, a voluntary group which promotes education and support for families.

"Something did get hard at times," she said.

"But I found that being at home with my son, I had time to think about my studies while I was doing the washing and the other housework."

Then when my son was asleep in the afternoon or the evening, I could sit down and do a couple of hours of extra study, which was really productive."

Mrs Clark intends keeping on with her studies. She has enrolled for a correspondence honors degree at the University of New England, Armidale and will study women and community involvement.

There will be 37 students graduating at Friday's ceremony, which begins at 10am.

The guest speaker at the ceremony will be the Anglican Bishop of Bendigo, Bishop Oliver.

Above: Eileen Clark Charles Sturt UniversityRegional Archives (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394.62)



07

Growth at whose cost?



Ian Hume developing the gardens at the Olive Street Campus (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394.38)

When asked about his most memorable moment at the Albury-Wodonga campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education, Harvey Mendham recalled a graduation ceremony in 1981. In the ‘early days’, he said, Albury-Wodonga was often felt to be an ‘outpost’ of Wagga Wagga, where the majority of staff, resources and administration were located. This dislocation between the campuses also applied to graduation ceremonies, with Albury-Wodonga students forced to travel the 128 kilometres to Wagga to mark the rite of passage. Many of them were of a mature age and the first in their family to complete tertiary education, Mendham recalled, and they considered the arrangement unacceptable. ‘They wanted to graduate here, in front of family and friends.’¹¹⁹ Yet, requests for a local graduation ceremony fell on deaf ears. ‘They decided that they would go ahead anyway,’ he said.¹²⁰ Held at the Commercial Club, the students organised an unofficial ceremony with a social event to follow. Labelled a ‘mock graduation’, it was in fact ‘their real graduation’.¹²¹

The desire for growth

The ‘mock graduation’ was reflective of a larger story of dissonance that was developing between the two campuses. By 1980, the Albury-Wodonga staff had reported experiencing ‘frontier-style isolation’ from Wagga, yet with substantial growth in student numbers (from 78 in 1972, to 450 in 1980). They considered that a review of the campus development strategy was needed.¹²² Acknowledging the need for development, C.D. Blake released a series of position papers that outlined his intentions for the campus. He still saw the RCAE as the primary provider of tertiary education in the region, but conceded that this was only achievable through an increase in administrative autonomy, expansion of the range of courses offered, and the involvement of the community in the college.¹²³ While the Albury-Wodonga staff welcomed the report, the wider RCAE community was not as accepting. The Dean of Business, Dr Edwin Brooks, queried how a multi-campus institution would be funded and whether the ‘dependency relationship’ was ‘doomed to failure’.¹²⁴ State representative Harold Mair stated that the superior attitude of Wagga towards Albury-Wodonga resulted in less funding and only two Albury-Wodonga representatives out of 25 on the College Council.¹²⁵



‘You would have graduation, and you would have everyone in their robes, you know. It didn’t look like Oxford, but it certainly looked like a university town, when everyone was there in their robes walking to the Town Hall to have their graduation.’

Sally Denshire, lecturer in Occupational Therapy

‘College in the street’

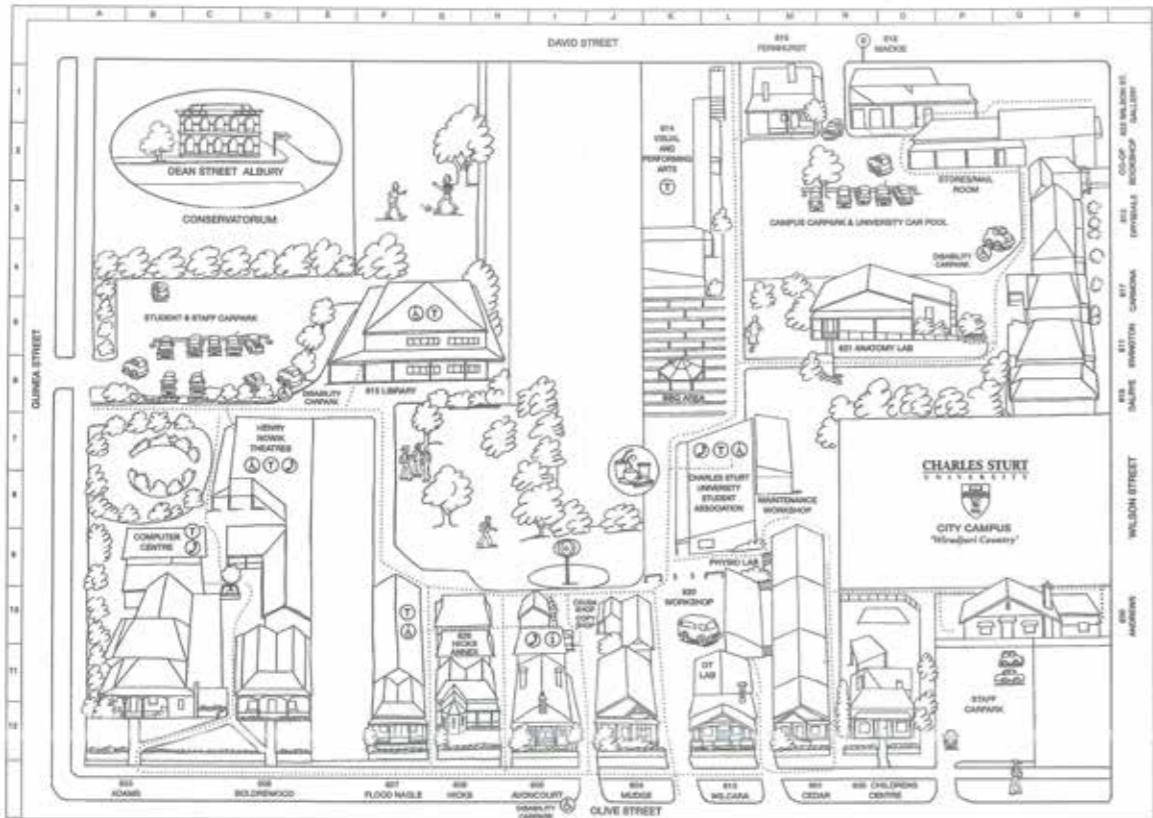
Central to Blake’s vision for the future of the Albury-Wodonga campus was its physical growth. Since 1977, the college had been debating whether or not to move out to a large ‘green-fields’ site, or to remain in town based on the concept of a ‘college in the street’. The Development Corporation had offered the RCAE large allotments of land in Baranduda and Thургона, but Blake wasn’t convinced that a decentralised location was the most practical option for the college. He argued that a central location ‘emphasised the essentially part-time character of the student population, and provided for interaction between staff and the city in a range of professional activities’.¹²⁶ It also allowed for flexibility, as the college could rent and sell properties, depending on its changing needs.

When a substantial parcel of Crown land became available in the town centre

in 1982, the RCAE seized on the opportunity to develop its ‘college in the street’. Originally used by the Police Department, the Teaching Housing Authority and, most recently, the NSW Department of Health, the land, bounded by Olive, Guinea and David streets, was to be expanded through the purchase of two properties at 620 and 624 Olive Street.¹²⁷ The college planned to slowly take over the central block through the gradual acquisition of properties as they



Above: Several of the residential buildings acquired to form a college in the street.
Following page: Olive Street campus and graduation (Bruce Pennay personal collection)



Above: Future plans for development, Development Plan for the Murray Campus (Roger Johnson)

 ‘When it was in Olive Street it was a community. Everybody knew everybody. There was no difference between an academic and the garden staff... We had social clubs and we went to people’s houses. Everyone was on a first name basis.’
Ian Hume, groundsman

were placed on the market. In 1984, after it had acquired more properties, and \$1.5 million in capital works funds became available from the Commonwealth Advanced Education Council, the college commissioned a development plan from architect Robert Johnson. Published in November 1984, Johnson’s plan stated that if the college were to acquire all the properties on the block

(which it never achieved), it would be possible to accommodate 1,250 equivalent full-time students (EFTS), with student accommodation for 100. Through the renovation of the late Victorian period properties, the college would be able to continue the ‘current accent on integrating educational and community facilities’ while also allowing ‘flexibility for changing needs’.¹²⁸

Goulburn amalgamation

The demand for school teachers in the 1960s to meet the post-war baby boom resulted in a proliferation of CAEs and teachers colleges, yet by the early 1980s this demand had fallen away. Colleges that had originally relied on training teachers were now seen as superfluous, especially in a time of government funding cuts. Such was the case for the Goulburn CAE (GCAE), which had seen a 37 per cent reduction in pre-service teacher

enrolments and the migration of students off campus to external study mode.¹²⁹ The 1980 Pratt Committee, established to devise the best solution to the nearly empty GCAE, considered a range of options, with over 130 submissions made by institutions and individuals, including Blake.¹³⁰ While the eventual report supported the

consensus of the GCAE to diversify its courses, it was Blake’s submission that was accepted by the NSW Education Minister, Paul Landa. Announced in December 1980, the amalgamation would see the creation of a new college headed by Blake with three campuses in Wagga, Goulburn and Albury-Wodonga.¹³¹ Central to this amalgamation was the development of the Albury-Wodonga campus through the transfer of courses,

resources and the doubling of academic staff within the following triennium.¹³²

However, by 1982 cracks were beginning to appear. Early that year, the name ‘Riverina’ was removed from the Goulburn campus’s sign. The deletion was seen as an act of defiance and as an expression of the campus’s determination to retain its own identity. The former chairman of the GCAE explained to the local paper that, ‘in this so-called amalgamation, there was no disturbance of

Wagga, only a strengthening of its campus’.¹³³ This sentiment would be expressed again almost 40 years later, when Jim Birckhead, who moved from the GCAE to Albury-Wodonga with the parks and wildlife management course, likened the amalgamation to that between a lettuce and a rabbit.¹³⁴ Yet, while the initial proposal and

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CITY CAMPUS 'MILKED DRY'

Sign of anger at C.A.E.



* The altered sign — "Riverina" has been removed at top and "Campus" on the bottom.

A new sign at the entrance to the former Goulburn College of Advanced Education apparently has irritated many people.

Now someone has used spray paint to alter the sign.

During the long weekend, someone painted out the Riverina section of the sign.

An unsigned letter was received this morning at the "Evening Post". It read—

We write this letter with regards to the sign at the Teachers' College, previously marked "Riverina College of Advanced Education Goulburn Campus", which now reads "College of Advanced Education, Goulburn", following the deletion of the Riverina section.

"We hope that this will not be regarded as an act of senseless vandalism, but rather as an indication of frustration at losing the identity of Goulburn college."

Former chairman of the Goulburn C.A.E. council, Mr Ernie McDermott, said he could not understand why someone would do such a thing. He said people were demonstrating what many people in Goulburn felt.

"The man who must say he had disliked the sign which read 'Riverina C.A.E.' and had taken photos of it to send to the Minister for Education and to the Premier, congratulating them on the decision to merge the two colleges and to move Goulburn to improve its image and in decentralisation.

"For all destroyed by that sign is a heartbreak," he said.

"No wonder there is a strong feeling. It is an insult to the people of Goulburn. The council I worked with in setting up the college."

"The distressing thing was that, in this so-called amalgamation, there was no disturbance of Wagga Wagga staff or students."

"All lecturers who were displaced at Goulburn had to apply for positions at Wagga."

"This manipulation must go down as one of the darkest days of Labor administration in N.S.W."

POWER BATTLE ON THE CAMPUS

Above: 'Power battle on campus', Border Morning Mail, 2 June 1984, 'Sign of anger at CAE', Evening Post, 27 January 1982, 'City campus milked dry', Border Morning Mail, 22 December 1984

the Hagan Committee had intended for many of GCAE's resources to be transferred to Albury-Wodonga to bolster its development, by 1983 Albury-Wodonga was still waiting. In a 1983 article entitled 'A Raw Deal', the *Border Morning Mail* reported that, by 1982, Albury-Wodonga had received only three of the staff from Goulburn, while Wagga had nine, and had only 16 of the promised 21.5 full-time academic staff.¹³⁵ The accusations of 'empire building' by the Wagga campus were strenuously denied by college officials, who blamed the slow development in Albury-Wodonga on the education minister and the lack of educational demand.¹³⁶

Politics, civic pride and parochial rivalries

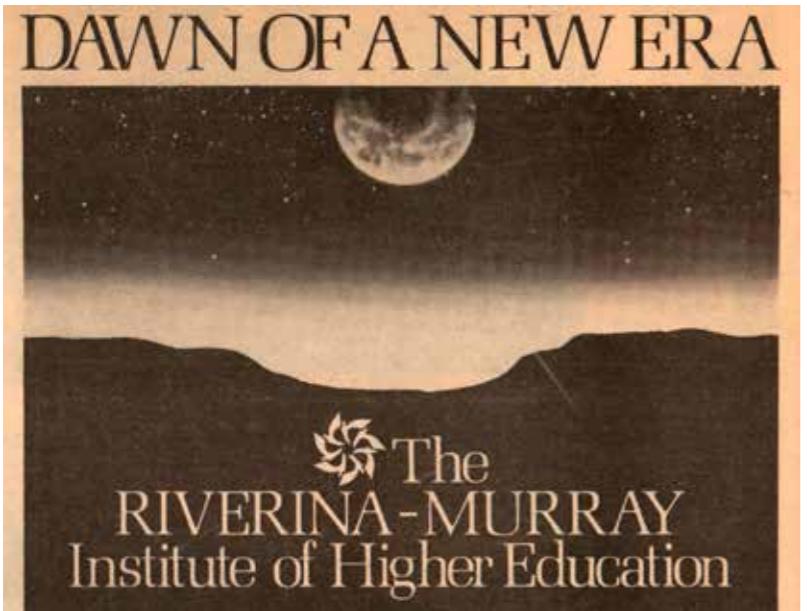
In response to continued calls for campus development, and the apparent shambles of the Goulburn amalgamation, the Albury-Wodonga Advisory Committee put forward a mission statement, tabled at the committee's meeting of 23 September 1983.¹³⁷ With the first three points focusing on their relationship with Wagga and the wider local community, the committee called for an 'increased devolution of responsibility to the campus leading to a semi-autonomous... independence by 1986', and for 'special fields of study' to be developed that related directly to the region and were distinct from those courses offered at Wagga.¹³⁸ Blake agreed that developments at Albury-Wodonga should 'receive priority', that the Albury-Wodonga campus should gain more autonomy

(as long as it did not negatively affect Wagga), and that more courses should be developed.¹³⁹ In fact, he commissioned a report into the feasibility of a river/water management course, based in Albury-Wodonga at the Development Corporation's Peter Till Laboratory.¹⁴⁰ Setting aside \$20,000 to fund a development strategy, Blake stated that he was 'confident that the Campus in Albury-Wodonga [was] now in a position to plan its future energetically and with confidence'.¹⁴¹

The Phillips Report

Tasked with providing advice to the RCAE so that the Albury-Wodonga campus might reach 1,000 EFTS by 1995, the former principal of Mitchell College in Bathurst, Sam Phillips, delivered a divisive report in May 1984. Commenting on the developments to date, Phillips stated that 'the fact that there is no clear-cut

policy ... on how to provide higher education in Albury-Wodonga ... shows that the issue is a mix of politics, civic pride, [and] parochial rivalries'.¹⁴² In light of this, Phillips recommended that the campus provide more full-time courses so as to tap into the nationally large percentage of young adults in the region, 48.38 per cent of whom were attending other institutions.¹⁴³ The campus was to develop a wider range of courses to be based in Albury-Wodonga, even if that meant the relocation or duplication of courses from Wagga. Finally, to foster greater autonomy in Albury-Wodonga, Phillips recommended that the college be renamed the Riverina-Murray Institute



Above: 'Dawn of a new era – RMIHE' (advertisement), Border Morning Mail

of Higher Education (RMIHE), containing two semi-autonomous campuses: the Riverina campus in Wagga, and the Murray campus in Albury-Wodonga. The report was celebrated in Albury-Wodonga, with the *Border Morning Mail* stating that it was 'the biggest confidence-boost [for tertiary education in Albury-Wodonga] in its history', while Harold Mair simply stated it was 'a fair go for Albury'.¹⁴⁴

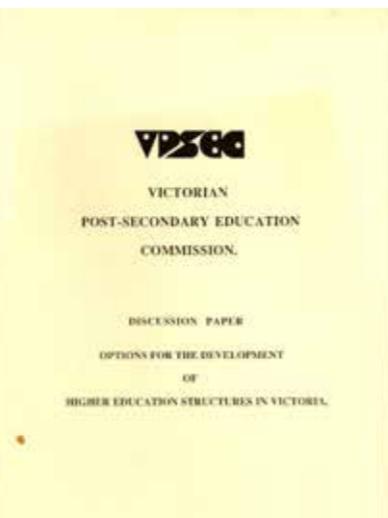
Speaking to the many comments he had received on his report, Phillips stated that not all were as welcoming as Albury-Wodonga was of his recommendations. Due to the 'politics' of the situation, he said, 'it was inevitable that where one group saw opportunity, the other saw threat'.¹⁴⁵ The high levels of criticism from Wagga, he argued, were due to its 'reluctance to see any transfer of power away from their campus', and to a disbelief that Albury-Wodonga had the

capacity for growth.¹⁴⁶ Blake, aware that development had to occur, had 'warmly endorsed' the proposed course developments and name change, but due to his tendency to micro-manage (which Phillips stated was at the heart of many of the issues in the college), he was reluctant to let go of any control over the administration. Yet, despite the criticism and pressure to revise his recommendations, Phillips could see no other alternative. Albury-Wodonga, he argued, was set to outgrow Wagga, even with the Development Corporation halving its population target. Development of tertiary education on the border was going to happen, regardless of Wagga's attempts to maintain control. Phillips thought 'it worth mentioning [that some] of those who commented ... said that in hindsight the College that was established at Wagga should have in fact been established at Albury'.¹⁴⁷

08 Albury-Wodonga College of Advanced Education

With the collapse of the proposed Albury-Wodonga University and the federal government's increasing lack of interest in the Growth Centre Project, the Development Corporation sought an alternative to provide joint tertiary education on the border. Albury-Wodonga was growing rapidly. In 1978, it was the only city of 50,000 people that did not have its own tertiary institution, forcing 20 per cent of all school leavers to undertake post-school education outside the region.¹⁴⁸ The Albury-Wodonga Murray campus was wrestling with its Wagga parent, trying to break free and deliver the growth the community desperately craved. Campus director Geoff Fairhall stated in a discussion paper that the centralised administration policy, 'although designed to strengthen and protect [the] RCAE, may succeed only in alienating the Albury-Wodonga community'.¹⁴⁹

A two-state, multi-sector, post-school, regional college



Above: Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education, Educational Specification, 1980 (Charles Sturt University – Thurogoona Library)

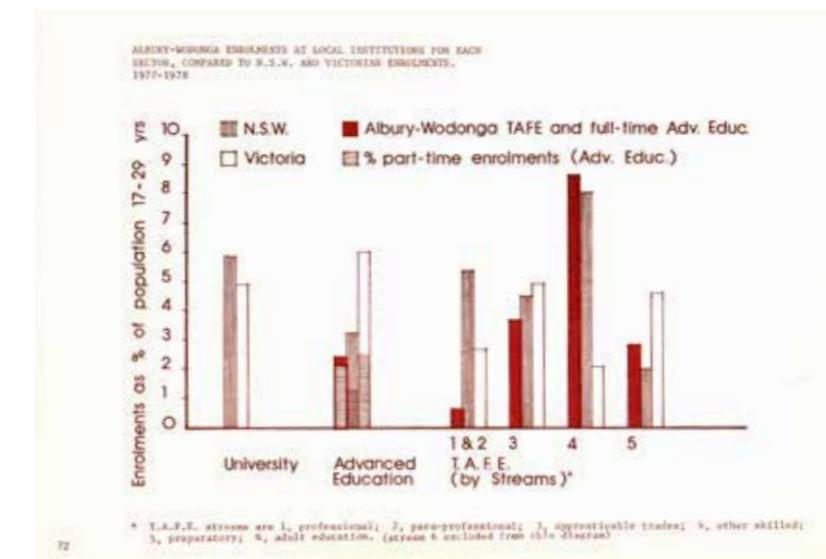
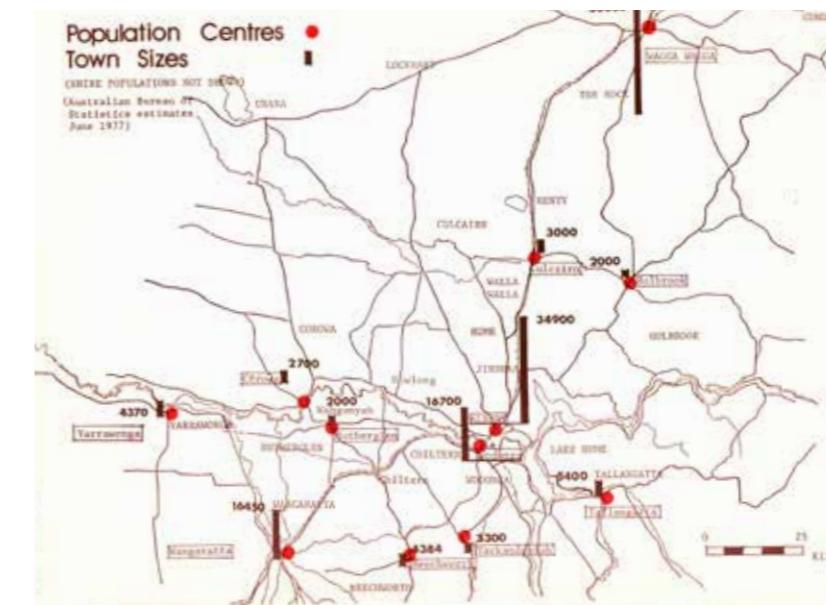
With the RCAE failing to meet the perceived demands of the local community, the Development Corporation commissioned planning consultants Buchan, Laird and Buchan to find a solution. Released in 1980, the resulting report, titled *Albury-Wodonga Post-School*

Education: Educational Specification, spoke to the economic and political climate that produced it, stating that its task was to determine 'the more immediate education demands of the community striving for a university'.¹⁵⁰ Following its survey of post-school education in the twin-cities, the report concluded that Albury-Wodonga had large levels of growth in both the population and the economy. Yet, this was let down by the 'poor provision' of higher education, with a limited range of courses, hardly any offered full-time, and 'inadequate' facilities.¹⁵¹ To solve this problem, the report proposed the creation of a 'single regional post-school college' by uniting the four institutions in Albury-Wodonga in both states and both sectors.¹⁵² The multi-sector college would coordinate new courses and facilities, while also making efficient use of the existing ones, and would avoid competition in the market by reducing duplication in courses and facilities. To achieve this aim, the report recommended breaking down the proposed amalgamation into four stages, which would seek gradually to combine the administrations of the four institutions under the control of the Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education Coordinating Committee (AWPSECC).¹⁵³

Although multi-sector institutions had been established in other states, none had crossed both sector and state boundaries. Accounting for the relatively quiet response, the revolutionary proposal was not a new idea to Albury-Wodonga. In October 1975, the newly formed Government Officials Committee (GOC) had submitted a report proposing a multi-sector community college, while Geoff Fairhall claimed that he had been pushing the same idea since 1974.¹⁵⁴ In order to conjure up support in the wider

community, in early 1980 the executive director of AWPSECC, Peter Kranz, published a three-part article on higher education on the border. In the last instalment, entitled 'A Regional College Can Do It Better', Kranz explained that a multi-sector, two-state institution was 'a way of pooling our resources so that Albury-Wodonga can have the decent post-school education facilities, courses and staff it deserves'.¹⁵⁵

On the surface, the RCAE seemed to support the proposals, with Blake sending a memo to AWPSECC on 5 September 1980 informing staff that the RCAE accepted stage one.¹⁵⁶ However, this was not reflective of the attitudes back in Wagga. Writing to the Development Corporation in April 1979, and listed as an appendix in the Educational Specification, Blake stated that the college did not in fact accept the 'concept of a single multi-levelled institution in Albury-Wodonga', nor the possibility of the Albury-Wodonga campus becoming independent of Wagga.¹⁵⁷ Either of these options would inhibit development of the RCAE, he said, which would only thrive through a centrally administrated federated model. Despite his concerns, Blake found little support from the state higher education authorities, the Higher Education Board. Replying to two letters sent by Blake in the month of June, chairman R.E. Parry restated the board's decision to support the Educational Specification and the requirement of all tertiary providers to work within it.¹⁵⁸ Reflecting back on the period some 30 years later, Blake commented that the 'water got severely muddied by the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation who were 'hell bent' on developing Albury at any cost'¹⁵⁹, irrespective of the possible cost to Wagga.



Top: Riverina population centres and town sizes, 1980 (*Educational Specification*, 1980, p. 17)

Left: Albury-Wodonga student enrolments, 1980 (*Educational Specification*, 1980, p. 72)

Three years later, progress was still slow. While stage one had been implemented rather quickly, no further steps had been taken to implement the final three stages and merge the existing institutions into one. In October 1983, reporting on the events at a meeting held in Canberra that month between state and federal education authorities, Blake reported that it had been agreed that the RCAE would remain the primary provider of tertiary education in the region for at least the next two to three triennium. This, he believed, was evidence that the multi-sector, two-state college was losing favour among those present.¹⁶⁰ In a letter sent from RCAE chairman Professor Hagan in June 1984 to NSW Education Minister Rodney Cavalier, Hagan reported that the Development Corporation was coming to the conclusion that a multi-sector college was looking more and more unattainable. Instead, the corporation was pleased by the recommendations for the development of the Albury-Wodonga campus in the *Phillips Report*.¹⁶¹



'Albury-Wodonga CAE never really got off the ground. It was pie-in-the-sky stuff. A lot of local politicians talked, but they didn't walk. [laughs] It was just talk, and when it came to the crunch they weren't prepared.'

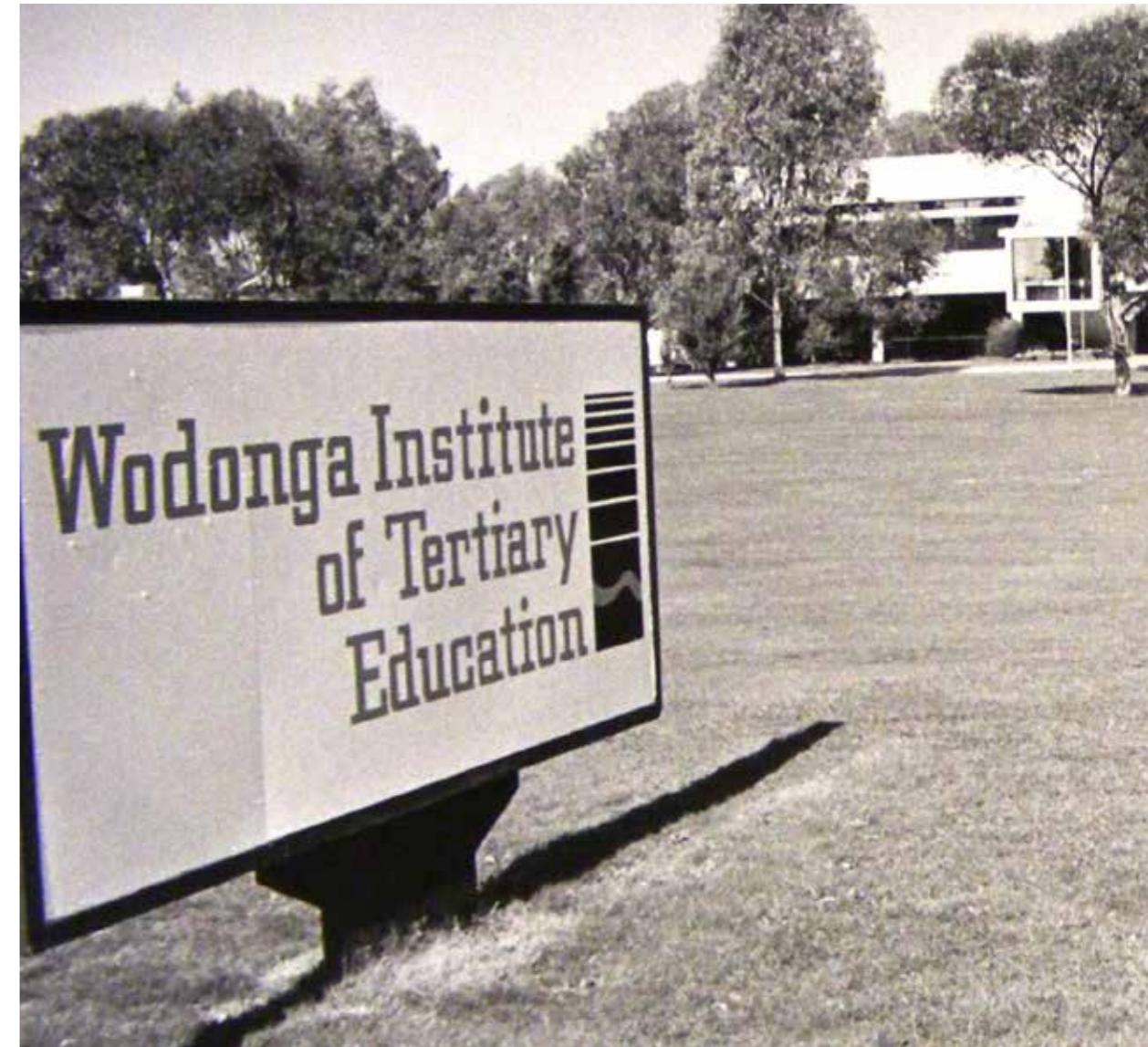
John Saw, lecturer in Business

The signatures of Mr Cavalier and Mr Fortham finalise the proposals to eliminate post secondary education in Albury Wodonga.

'States to combine education', Border Morning Mail, 9 August 1984

Albury-Wodonga College of Advanced Education

By 1986, the Development Corporation had shifted its approach and all but abandoned the concept of a multi-sector institution. Instead, looking at the proposals put forward by the Phillips Report in the previous year, it saw the potential in developing the Murray campus and making it the basis for a two-state CAE – the Albury-Wodonga College of Advanced Education (Albury-Wodonga CAE). Sent out in March 1986, in preparation for the Development Corporation's proposal to the state education ministers, a questionnaire asked interested parties and individuals whether the Murray campus should become independent so as to best serve both North-Eastern Victoria and the Southern Riverina.¹⁶² Responding on 8 April,



Above: Victoria grew impatient with the slow growth of student numbers in Albury and opened an Institute of Advanced Education to provide a wider range of courses such as nursing



Blake stated that the very nature of the letter was ‘simplistic, emotive, and its bias is strongly prejudicial to any fair reason and consideration’.¹⁶³ Yet, his views were not universally held at the RMIHE. Speaking at the May 1986 Murray campus graduations, Professor Hagan, chairman of what was now the RMIHE Council, stated that with time the Murray campus would become independent of Wagga, yet again warned about merging it with the TAFE sector.¹⁶⁴

Announced in December of that year, both state education ministers approved ‘Australia’s first interstate college of advanced education’ with campuses in both Albury and Wodonga. Unlike the previous proposals, it would remain separate from the TAFE system.¹⁶⁵ As reported in the *Border Morning Mail*, the ministers stated that the Murray campus was to finally ‘cut its apron strings with the Wagga-based RMIHE’.¹⁶⁶ While the Development Corporation was pushing for a 1990 start date, both education ministers agreed on 1993.¹⁶⁷ On 31 March 1987, they outlined their plan, stating there were to be 1,000 EFTS, compared to the 250 at the Murray campus, with the rapid expansion in student numbers supported through the acquisition of a nursing school in Wodonga. While the college was to remain separate from the TAFE system, it would make use of the Wodonga TAFE building in the old headquarters of the Development Corporation.¹⁶⁸ RMIHE Wagga academic Dr Edwin Brooks called the proposition ‘laughable’, while the Member for Albury, Harold Mair, rebutted that Wagga had to finally accept that Albury was growing, with or without them.¹⁶⁹

Just like the multi-sector, two-state college that preceded it, the Albury-Wodonga CAE was plagued by delays and confusion. By June 1987, the Victorian and NSW education ministers were forced to front the local community and respond to questions asking if they were still committed to the proposed college. The *Border Morning Mail* reported that the ministers had to ‘clear the confusion’ as to why the federal education body, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Council (CTEC), had a different design for the college than that put forward by the state ministers.¹⁷⁰ CTEC, which in an atmosphere of increasing spending cuts was hesitant to open any new institution, stated that it would only support the proposal if it included the Murray campus and the Albury and Wodonga TAFEs. While supported by Victoria, which was planning to introduce CAE degrees to the newly opened Wodonga TAFE, New South Wales was adamantly opposed.¹⁷¹ The RMIHE also had to address accusations that it had gone ‘lukewarm’ on the Albury-Wodonga college and was not developing the Murray campus to the necessary student numbers.¹⁷² While it had expected 200 full-time (FTS) and 740 part-time students (PTS) for 1987, it had reached only 178 FTS and 566 PTS, and had reduced the student target laid out in the Phillips Report of 1,000 EFTS in 1993, to just 700.¹⁷³ Justice John Nagle, the head of the *Board of Management* established to plan the new college, was reported to be puzzled as to why the federal government was not showing a greater interest in the provision of higher education in a designated growth centre.¹⁷⁴

09

An ‘unseemly scramble’: the birth of Charles Sturt University

By 1987, the Murray campus was at the tail end of a dramatic decade; it had survived being dissolved by two independent institutions; it had grown with the amalgamation with Goulburn CAE; and it had had its worth confirmed through the *Phillips Report*. In 1987, the campus enrolled 744 students across 26 courses; where Education had once being the primary enroller, the Associate Diploma in Park Management, Bachelor of Business Accountancy, and Bachelor of Business Management courses now accounted for the majority of enrolments. Although full-time classes had been offered continuously since 1984, the student cohort was still approximately 75 per cent part-time. The majority of students (306) lived in New South Wales, while 261 external students studied across all states in Australia. In fact, the Murray campus’s most successful course, the Associate Diploma in Park Management, which enrolled 159 students, was offered completely externally. Lastly, where once the student cohort consisted predominantly of mature age students, now half of the student population was under the age of 30.¹⁷⁵



Above: Olive Street campus

But the campus was not without its issues. It had still not met its student quotas as outlined in the *Phillips Report*, and consequently its funding had declined, impacting on its ability to, as Blake stated



to the Murray campus manager, A.J. Cornwell, make any 'progress towards the devolution of administrative authority'.¹⁷⁶ In June 1987, Cornwell quit, stating that his role was largely performative, with all control still based in Wagga.¹⁷⁷ Blake reasoned that this was necessary, due to higher education in Australia being in a 'state of flux' – which was partly true.¹⁷⁸ By the 1980s, Australia's economy was suffering a rise in unemployment and inflation. This was reflected in the higher education sector, which experienced falling student demand, frozen government spending and rising costs. In 1987 alone, the federal government spent \$2,488 million across 19 universities, 46 CAEs and 24 TAFEs.¹⁷⁹ As historian Stuart Macintyre described it, the 'sector had become stale'.¹⁸⁰

The 'Dawkins Revolution'

In December 1987, John Dawkins, the former and recently elected Federal Education and Youth Affairs Minister, released a discussion paper entitled *Higher Education: A Policy Statement*. Colloquially known as the *Green Paper*, it was re-released as a policy statement, or *White Paper*, in July 1988. Dawkin's reports were in response to the national economic downturn and the perceived ineffectiveness of the current higher education system in the mid-1980s. Dawkins sought to make higher education more profitable for the market without increasing the price tag. By making higher

education more efficient, with a strong vocational focus, and by introducing equity goals, Dawkins believed that he could increase yearly graduate numbers from 88,000 in 1987 to 125,000 in 2001.¹⁸¹ Historian Rob Watts wrote: 'Deeply swayed by economic rationalism, and obsessed with cutting back the public sector and achieving budget surpluses', Dawkins simply wanted to do 'more with less'.¹⁸²

To achieve this end, Dawkins introduced the Unified National System, which abolished the binary system, reworked the governing bodies of tertiary institutions and, most significantly, consolidated and amalgamated existing institutions into new or existing universities. (Between 1987 and 1991, 12 new universities would be established).¹⁸³ While Dawkins himself stated that the amalgamations were not a central factor in his reforms, they signified the 'removal of what had become an increasingly artificial divide between' CAEs and universities.¹⁸⁴

Opponents of Dawkins believed the reforms were putting quantity before quality, would promote uniformity as universities competed for funding, and would compromise the inviolability of universities as institutions of knowledge by exposing them to the competitive capitalist market. Either way, given the extent to which the reforms reshaped the face of tertiary education in Australia, with the effects still evident today, it is apt that this period has been baptised 'the Dawkins Revolution'. And it is during this



'I still think there is a very great need for a regional university here. I was at the [Development] Corporation when we campaigned for many years to have a university, and then overnight we had two – we got Charles Sturt and La Trobe [laughs].'

Doug Hunter, student at the RMIHE

period of revolution that the present landscape of higher education in Albury-Wodonga was formed.

Turning the binary into the unitary

In response to the reforms, state and local education bodies released position papers that attempted to accommodate Dawkins's fiscal austerity while also keeping education accessible. In both papers, Dawkins had stressed the importance of access for regional students alongside that of other disadvantaged groups such as Indigenous Australians and those from a low socioeconomic background. In 1989, regional students represented only 20 per cent of the student population, even though they made up 28 per cent of Australia's overall population.¹⁸⁵ In February 1988, the Victorian Post-School Education Coordinating Committee proposed a regional Victorian University through the expansion of Deakin University into regional centres. Yet, still believing in the merit of a cross-border institution, they restated their support of the Development Corporation's Albury-Wodonga CAE.¹⁸⁶

Inspired by a trip to the United States, the NSW Higher Education Board (HEB) Director R.E. Parry proposed the concept of the 'network university' – a series of 'federated systems' between existing universities and CAEs that would serve metro and regional New South Wales. Of direct relevance to the Murray campus, the HEB proposed three options: first, a state-wide University of New South Wales Network to include the RMIHE alongside several other institutions; second, a Mitchell CAE and RMIHE amalgamation; and third,

in an attempt to address the 'ongoing tensions' between Albury-Wodonga and Wagga, the linking of the Murray campus as a university college with an established NSW university or the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Due to ANU being outside of New South Wales and Victoria, the latter option posed the possibility of a future link with the Wodonga TAFE College so that a 'joint Albury/Wodonga two-locations campus' could be a reality.¹⁸⁷ NSW Education Minister Terry Metherell saw this as the only opportunity for a university campus in the region.¹⁸⁸

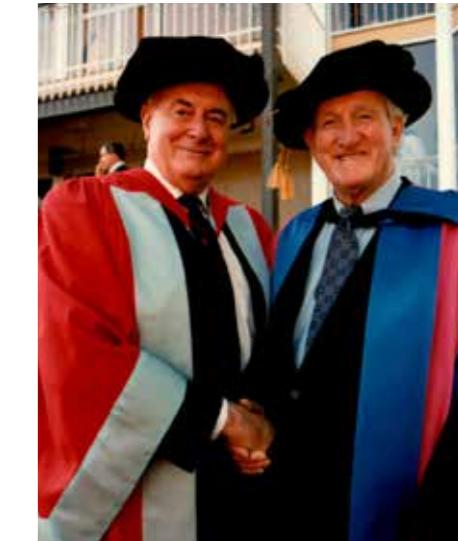
Originally formed to plan and develop the Albury-Wodonga CAE, the Board of Management sided with the HEB's third option to make the Murray campus a university college with ANU and approached ANU to propose the association.¹⁸⁹ Travelling to Canberra with the Board's chairman, John Nagle, Bruce Pennay, the Planning Secretary, recalled being met by a clearly uninterested ANU delegation, who saw themselves as being immune to the Dawkins reforms and yawned at the prospect of being associated with a regional CAE.¹⁹⁰ While both Albury and Wodonga mayors had supported the ANU college, the *Border Mail* (as it was now called) noted that the RMIHE was still including the Murray campus in all its proposals.¹⁹¹

The RMIHE plan

Reflective of the management of the RMIHE, news of the institution's possible future was noticeably absent from the Murray campus meeting minutes. Blake, who had been preparing the RMIHE for



Above: The crest for the new university included features relating to the three founding campuses at Bathurst Wagga Wagga and Albury – three rivers, three Sturt Pea pods



Above: The two political champions of the Albury Wodonga Growth Centre, Gough Whitlam and Tom Uren attended the graduation ceremony when Charles Sturt University awarded Uren an honorary doctorate.

An academic procession winds its way from the college in the street through central Albury to the Civic Centre Hall.

university status since he first became principal in 1972, saw these dramatic reforms as his opportunity to turn the college into what he believed it had always been destined to be: a university. Recalling the period, Blake noted that the reforms produced an ‘unseemly scramble’ between the 46 CAEs in Australia at the time, as they tried to figure out how they would fit into the new unitary system.¹⁹² Due to the competitive nature of the colleges (as they tried to pair-up with the most esteemed universities) and the propensity for partnerships and deals to change quickly, Blake admitted that he found it difficult to ‘meaningfully involve the Council’ and instead chose to keep his cards close to his chest.¹⁹³

Initially, the RMIHE supported the HEB’s proposal for a college of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) to be set up on the border. On 22 January 1989, a meeting between Dawkins, local parliamentary representatives and the principals of the proposed members produced a document outlining the concept of the new UNSW system. The network would be for the benefit of the whole of New South Wales, improving the ‘scope and quality’ of education in the state.¹⁹⁴ The joining institutions (RMIHE, Mitchell CAE in Bathurst, and Kuring-gai CAE in Lindfield) would retain as much autonomy and original identity as possible, with the RMIHE seeing the partnership as the ‘essential first step to the RMIHE being declared ... a free-standing university’.¹⁹⁵

Privately, Blake was apprehensive about the merger. He had heard from the RMIHE council chairman J. Hagan that a merger between UNSW

and the Wollongong University College had resulted in ‘bad blood’, with similar sentiments felt by the University of Newcastle and their past relationship with UNSW. Blake voiced his concern that if the RMIHE were to join with UNSW, it too might become the ‘poor cousins’ in the relationship.¹⁹⁶ Revealingly, the board resolved that if UNSW did not accept its initial proposal as is, it would reject it, instead restating its earlier contention to form a stand-alone Riverina-Murray University.¹⁹⁷ Luckily for Blake, the RMIHE merger into UNSW never eventuated. When the proposal was made public, there was a backlash against it; many believed it would result in a weakening of UNSW’s reputation, and that the campuses were too isolated to operate cohesively. When little progress was made, both CAEs rejected the proposal in a joint statement in April 1989. Illustrating the parochial divide between city and country, Hagan stated that ‘it is both unreasonable and demeaning to suggest that rural colleges ... should now be absorbed by a city university and have their status and autonomy reduced to that of an infant’.¹⁹⁸

The University of XYZ

When the proposed UNSW system fell out of favour, Blake proposed an alternative that built off the federated network idea of the HEB, yet allowed the regional institutions to maintain some autonomy. Explaining the reasoning behind his model, Blake stated that he had wanted to ‘develop in southern New South Wales a free standing university to balance the University of New England in the North’.¹⁹⁹ It would be made up of the RMIHE, Mitchell CAE and, possibly, the

Orange Agricultural College. The RMIHE had been in talks with Mitchell CAE since the release of the Dawkins reforms; both had seen potential in becoming one of the six national distance education centres proposed in the reforms, and had submitted separate but similar applications to the Commonwealth.²⁰⁰

Experiencing resistance from the HEB, the federal government agreed to fund Blake’s proposal as long as UNSW acted as ‘academic sponsor’. (Originally for ten years, the sponsorship ended after three.²⁰¹) Aware of the importance of Albury-Wodonga’s positioning and student load, Blake included the Murray campus in his proposal, and with the partnership with ANU now dead, the Murray campus conceded. The irony of the history of education on the border was poignantly summarised by *Border Mail* reporter Howard Jones when he wrote, ‘[I]t has always seemed easy to link centres hundreds of kilometres apart so long as they do not have the Murray River in between.’²⁰²

Introduced into the NSW Legislative Assembly, the first reading of the bill identified a nameless institution, the University of XYZ, as the state’s ninth university.²⁰³ On 2 June 1989, the bill was passed, and on 12 July the proposed university was declared Australia’s 26th such institution.

Named Charles Sturt University after the colonial explorer who travelled along the three rivers between Albury, Wagga and Bathurst, the

university would be structured on a ‘network model’ based on the University of Western Sydney and the University of New England.²⁰⁴ Encouraged by Dawkins’s reforms, the governing body of Charles Sturt University was to be minimal. To achieve this, Blake explained, they ‘de-emphasised the roles of the campus managers and principals’ and instead built a strong central administration with one academic board and one ‘strong Council’.²⁰⁵ In response to the centralised administration, the deans of the schools were split between Wagga (three) and Bathurst (two); Albury had none, and only two seats out of 20 on the board of governors. Paying homage to the goals of William Merrylees and the Riverine University League, the new university would serve the regional community, with the admission and assessment committee adopting on 12 July 1989 an ‘admission policy favouring regional applicants’.²⁰⁶



‘Cliff Blake did a very clever thing. Rather than become subordinate to one of the bigger universities, we became ourselves by joining with Mitchell CAE.’ Jennifer Munday, Lecturer in Early Childhood Education

Threatening a parochial spat between the three campuses, the decision as to the location of the headquarters of Charles Sturt University was left to the newly appointed chancellor, David Asimus. As one of his first duties, Asimus prepared a report entitled *Location of Office of the Vice Chancellor*, which concluded that, due to its central location and ‘unambiguous rural identity’, Wagga was the logical location.²⁰⁷ Asimus had stated in the report that while Albury was the most neutral of the three campuses and would demonstrate Charles Sturt University’s



ALBURY/WODONGA CAMPUS — OLIVE STREET — 1982

commitment to serving both New South Wales and Victoria, its history of education politics was too volatile. This would only continue to be a thorn in Charles Sturt University's side, since La Trobe University came to the region when it officially merged with Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education on 1 January 1991. Instead of enforcing his decision, Asimus fumbled and allowed a secret ballot between the board of governor members to determine the headquarters' location.²⁰⁸ Due to the preferences from Albury – and possibly in a final act of defiance against Wagga Wagga – Bathurst won, with ten votes to Wagga Wagga's eight.



'So my first impressions certainly wasn't [to do] with the building. It was just an ordinary building. [It was to do with the education.] It was mind-blowing, absolutely mind-blowing. And that continued through the six years that I studied there.'

Jan Hunter, student at the RCAE

10 A university in Albury-Wodonga



Above: Albury-Wodonga higher education pamphlet (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394.66)

Two years after the tumultuous Dawkins revolution, the federal government commissioned a report to evaluate the effects of the reforms. Titled *The Quality and Diversity Report*, it painted a picture of success; the participation rate had grown 15 per cent between 1988 and 1990, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolments had increased by 40 per cent, women now made up 51 per cent of total enrolments and were breaking their way into male-dominated courses such as science and business, and all of this had been achieved by the 35 higher education institutions, down in number from 72 in 1988.²⁰⁹ This growth was reflected back in Albury-Wodonga, where Charles Sturt University was flourishing; from 1987 to 1993, the student population had almost doubled, and the campus had introduced a range of new courses, including gerontology, early childhood education and occupational therapy – the first offering of the latter course in regional Australia.

Growing pains

Yet, as stated in the *Quality and Diversity Report*, the rapid 'pace and progress of change ... had [had] different impacts' – not all of them positive. The different academic cultures and institu-

tional priorities had produced tensions in the amalgamations, which were often exacerbated by 'geographical circumstances'.²¹⁰ In 1993, a Charles Sturt University Academics' Union survey on the Mitchell campus's staff perceptions of the Charles Sturt University amalgamation produced pretty damning results. Only eight out of the 145 people surveyed felt that the university had become more efficient, with the staff blaming the 'tyranny of distance' and the 'top heavy' management of the vice-chancellor for the unhappy marriage. Nearly 64 per cent believed that the university should de-amalgamate.²¹¹ Five years later, Bathurst-based historian Leonora Ritter published an article in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* evaluating the Charles Sturt University merger – and, in particular, Blake's management of it. Ritter condemned the violation of the original Charles Sturt University Act and Blake's erasure of the original principles of federation and campus autonomy. By October 1991, she wrote, Blake and the Board of Governors had 'cemented' a centralised management model in the face of the principles of 'federation' and 'network' from the Charles Sturt University Act.²¹² Ritter concluded that, despite Blake's



'At one point there was a big debate on whether there should be one university or not. The state border [prevented] this, as there was no way we were going to get one university. There was an attempt. Terry Hazelwood, he was the warden – they created this title of 'warden' – over this campus and La Trobe's campus. That was the only time there was anything really joint between them. And it just fizzled out as there was not a will by the federal government, by the two state governments, to do anything about it, really. It was too hard.'

John Saw, lecturer in Business

monopolisation of control over Charles Sturt University, the RMIHE and Mitchell CAE were now serving a larger number of students in a more unified manner, and as such, the merger was a 'model amalgamation'.²¹³

As had been predicted, the 'border wars' (as they were dubbed by *Campus Review*) were still a thorn in the side of the Murray campus.²¹⁴ Albury-Wodonga was the only city of its size to have two university campuses, involving both state and federal governments, and the two universities were unwilling to negotiate or compromise out of fear that they might lose all they had fought so hard to achieve. In 1991, Charles Sturt University-Murray and La Trobe tried to work together in delivering unified higher education on the border: they shared resources, ensured that courses didn't overlap, and had a representative on each other's advisory board.²¹⁵ They had a joint

student accommodation register, a joint Open Day (in collaboration with the TAFEs) and joint research projects, and staff from both universities could access the other's seminars, libraries and courses.²¹⁶ This initial cooperation was motivated by the staff, many of whom had been living and working in the region and had a vested interest in finally uniting education in the Albury-Wodonga community.

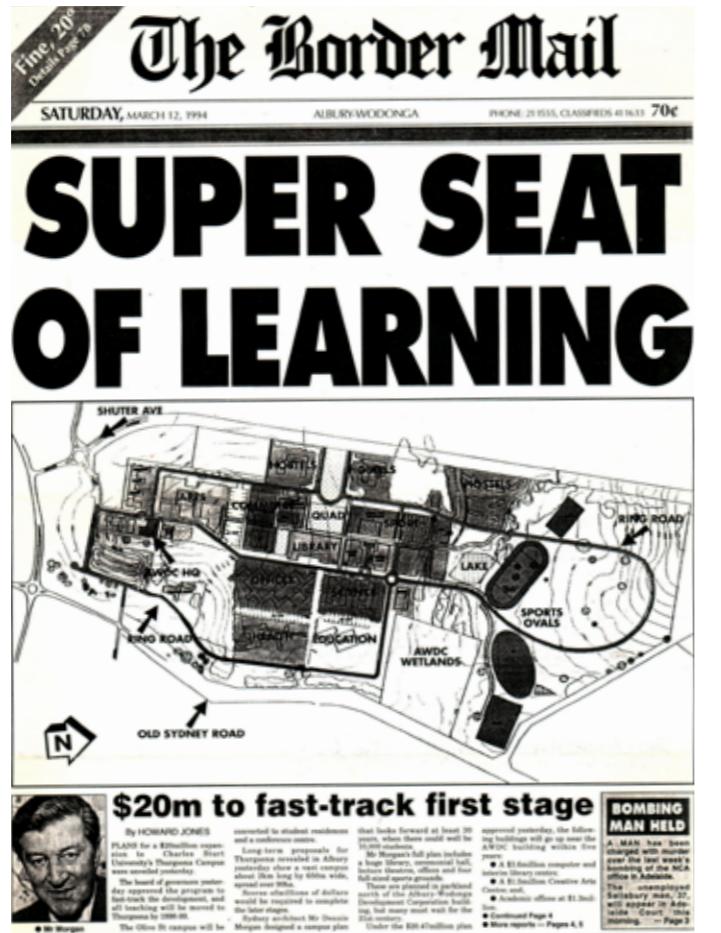
Ultimately, the partnership was not to last. Despite the efforts of the two campuses to reduce duplication and wastage of resources, there was still a doubling-up of the competitive courses (such as nursing, business and computing), which ultimately prevented each institution from developing fully. On receiving an honorary doctorate from La Trobe-Wodonga in early 1992, former prime minister Gough Whitlam labelled the situation a 'farce'.²¹⁷ That same year, it was informally proposed that both institutions absorb the other's campus and create one border institution – but both refused.²¹⁸ According to the *Border Mail*, La Trobe felt that Charles Sturt University-Murray had limited potential for physical growth in Albury-Wodonga, having already outgrown its Olive Street campus; whereas La Trobe had just bought 26 hectares (with a further 30 hectares reserved for future expansion) from the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation (AWDC) in Wodonga, giving it plenty of room to expand.²¹⁹ In a memo from Murray campus principal Brian Rothwell to Blake, La Trobe's Wodonga development was putting Charles Sturt University 'under the microscope'.²²⁰

Room to move

By the early 1990s, Charles Sturt University-Murray had outgrown its city location. The campus wanted to expand its course offerings, but had nowhere appropriate to house them. And with the threat of an expanding La Trobe across the river, it wanted to cement its place in Albury-Wodonga as the primary provider of higher education. At

the same time, the AWDC was beginning to wind down its operations and began to sell off the large swathes of land it had acquired in the 1970s. In 1992, it prepared to leave its large Thurogona headquarters. According to K.J. Biddle, Executive Director of the Division of University Properties, the move presented a 'once only' opportunity [for Charles Sturt University] to acquire a prime Greenfields site'.²²¹ The Thurogona site consisted of the working Peter Till Laboratory, which was leased to the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre, as well as a parcel of land leased until 2043 by the Forestry Commission, the old AWDC headquarters (colloquially known as 'the Castle on the Hill') and, most importantly, up to 90 hectares of blank canvas ex-farmland. By November of that year, Blake had already held meetings with the Higher Education Council and the Department of Education, Employment and Youth in the hope of obtaining some Commonwealth funds.²²² The following March, Charles Sturt University paid its first deposit of \$100,000 to the AWDC, with a further \$6 million to be paid between 1994 and 1997, which would include the purchase of 20 hectares, the AWDC building and part of the Peter Till Laboratory.²²³

In March 1994, NSW Premier John Fahey visited Charles Sturt University-Murray to announce the \$20 million in Commonwealth government funds for the development of Charles Sturt University's new Thurogona campus. Fahey commented that the 'development of quality educational facilities in regional centres like Albury [was] a key element in a successful regional development policy'.²²⁴ Just as 'decentralisation' had been the buzzword in any of



Above: 'Super seat of learning', Border Mail, 12 March 1994
Right: Building a campus from scratch at Thuroonga.

Right: Thuroonga Campus c.2009 (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives)



the early campaigns for a university in Albury-Wodonga, so too was 'regional development' a key factor in acquiring the support for Thurooona. In a *Sun Herald* article titled 'Sydney or the Bush', the author questioned whether, with 'capital cities reaching saturation point', regional cities could put aside their 'parochial attitudes' and develop regional communities that offered 'alternatives to the hurly burly of city life'.²²⁵ Albury City Council believed so, and actively supported the Thurooona development, seeing it as stimulating local growth. Brian Rothwell stated that it would 'act as a catalyst to reignite regional development in the area'.²²⁶

A 'green' campus?

On 10 October 1994, Rothwell announced to the Murray campus staff that 'after months of careful discussion and a few setbacks on the way', the university had finally purchased the Thurooona site from the AWDC.²²⁷ The new director of design, Marci Webster-Mannison, had already begun looking into the 'topography, natural water drainage, services access and north-facing aspects and has come up with a planning concept which optimises the natural advantages identified in her study'.²²⁸ Attached to the memo was a rough map of the new site and its



'When this land became available, back in the day with the Development Corporation, it was a very unattractive block for developers – a north-facing slope, it wasn't that useful to the developers for residential purposes. There were some key people at the university at that time, including David Mitchell, an esteemed emeritus professor here, who led the charge and got in the ear of the Vice Chancellor at the time, who was very open to the idea of building a campus that would fit in with the environment.'

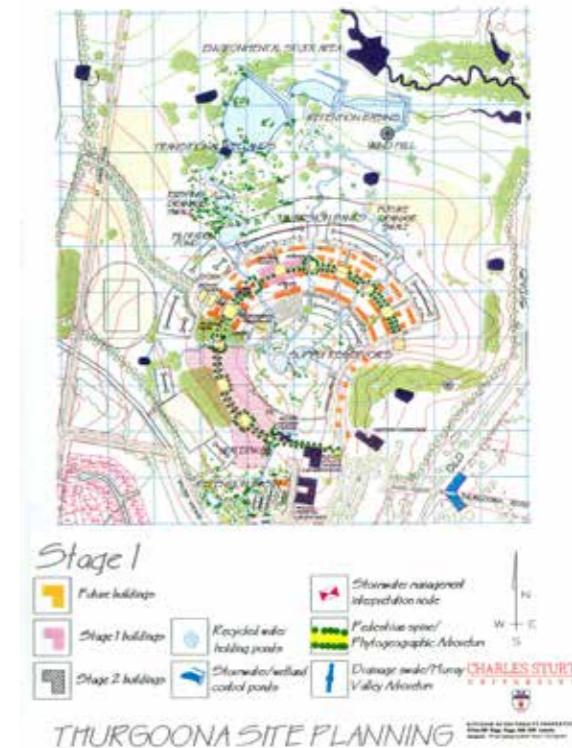
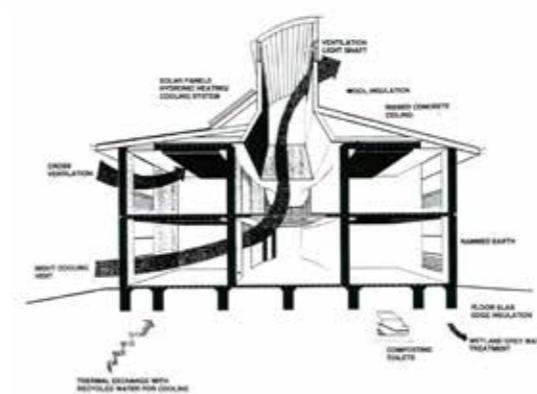
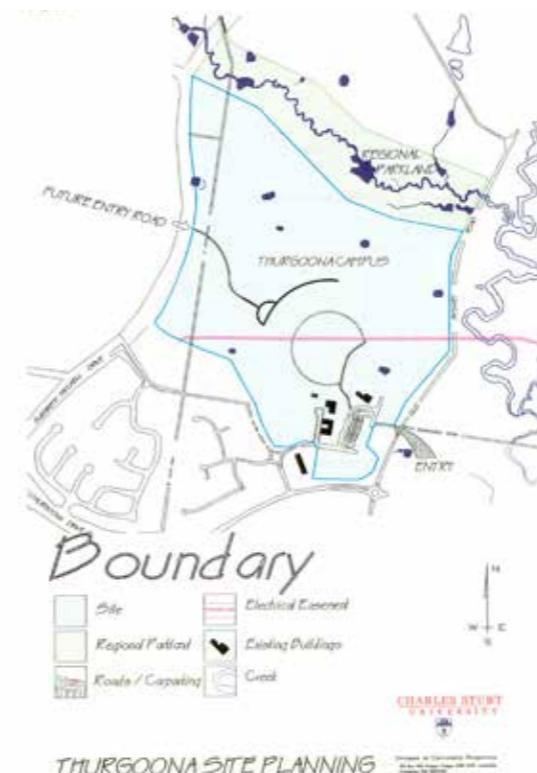
John Rafferty, lecturer in Environmental Sciences

boundaries. But what was this new green-fields site, and what did it offer Charles Sturt University? Prior to colonisation, it had been dry woodland on the River Murray floodplain, which was the land of the Wiradjuri People. With European occupation in the mid-1800s the land was cleared for grazing and crops, which remained its main use up until and after the AWDC bought the land in the 1970s. When Webster-Mannison conducted her survey

in 1994, she concluded that the site was 'mostly poor quality pasture dominated by introduced grasses and weed infestations, [with] small areas of native woodland'.²²⁹ What was this new campus to look like? What would be its ethos?

In a short letter to Gordon Bevan of the Charles Sturt University-Murray Advisory Board in September 1993, Associate Professor Terry De Lacy introduced the idea of making the 'Thurooona campus an ecologically and environmentally friendly campus'.²³⁰ De Lacy argued

that just as the Olive Street campus had sought to 'conserve the heritage streetscape', so too should the Thurooona campus seek to preserve and protect its natural environment. His suggestion was part of a larger movement nationally towards ecologically sustainable development, with state and federal governments taking steps in both 1992 and 1994 to encourage and support



Above left: Map of the Thurooona site, Development Application Report, 1998 (Marci Webster-Mannison)

Above right: Map of staged plan of the Thurooona site, Development Application Report, 1998 (Marci Webster-Mannison)

Below Left: Image from Development Application Report, 1998 (Marci Webster-Mannison) (Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394.110)



'These buildings were experimental. These were the first rammed earth buildings in Australia built for anything other than a private residence. [For] two-storey office stuff, we had to work out a lot. So, they were an experiment. Each time we built one, we got better at it.'

John Rafferty, lecturer in Environmental Sciences

ecologically sustainable development.²³¹ In 1999, the federal government released a discussion paper entitled *Today Shapes Tomorrow* that explored the role of education in environmentally sustainable living. In De Lacy's view, universities should be the leaders both globally and locally in the development of ecologically sustainable design. They had the research capability, including knowledge, skills and support, to develop new design initiatives, and with that a responsibility to be innovative leaders in ecologically sustainable development. As institutions, universities have influence over society and governmental bodies, and should lead by example. Finally, with Charles Sturt University providing courses in environmental sciences and parks management, it would be 'an embarrassing hypocrisy not to practice what it preached'.²³² In a special meeting of the Charles Sturt University-Murray Advisory Board on 8 February 1994, the board passed a resolution supporting the development of the Thurooona campus as an 'environmentally innovative campus'.²³³

'A bold move'

In an article published in 2000 in the *Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, the architects of the Charles Sturt University-Thurooona campus explained how they were able to include sustainable measures and practices in the design and construction of the new campus. The authors contended that, instead of focusing on the 'end goals' of the project, they had adopted a set of ethical principles around sustainability that helped guide them through the design and construction of the project. This, they argued, allowed for a flexibility that enabled them to resolve, in a sustainable manner, the many challenges and changes in requirements faced by the project.²³⁴ Listed in Webster-Mannison's *Development Application Report*, the principles that shaped the design and construction of the campus project were low energy consumption, careful resource management and minimal environmental impact.²³⁵ The full range of sustainable strategies implemented is too long to list here, but included: rammed earth walls for temperature regulation, the use of low and high air ducts to promote air flow through the buildings to release hot air and draw in cool air, the use of natural or recycled materials, composting toilets, and a water management system that sought not only to reduce water use, but then to recycle the grey water through a system of man-made wetlands located around the university. The wetlands were named the David Mitchell Wetlands after the lead designer of the water recycling system who worked closely with Webster-Mannison on the design of the Thurooona campus.



Building a campus and wetlands at Thurooona (David Mitchell collection held at Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394)



Construction of Charles Sturt-Thurgoona
(David Mitchell collection held at Charles Sturt University Regional Archives
CSU3394)



"It comes back to that original foresight – [that] water is critically important, and it's going to have an increasing importance in Australia into the future – and that's proven to be right. This is a very water-efficient campus. Then we put on top the recycling of materials, and on top of that the energy-saving capacities. It's quite a remarkable story.'

John Rafferty, lecturer in Environmental Sciences

Announcing the new university in 1998, Campus Review celebrated that Charles Sturt University had 'made a bold move' by establishing the first ecologically sustainable campus. Outlining some of the green initiatives implemented by the university, it contended that it would act as an example to industry and property developers by showing them how to do things 'in today's environmentally conscious times'.²³⁶ The journal was not alone in recognising Charles Sturt University's achievements, with Charles Sturt University's new Albury-Wodonga campus at Thurgoona receiving multiple awards: silver in 1996 and gold in 2000 for the RiverCare 2000 Awards; the NSW Branch of the Australian Water and Wastewater Association Award for Best Practice Water Cycle Management for 1999; the Master Builders Association's National Resource Efficiency Award and National Energy Efficiency Award for 2000; the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Architecture Awards Ecologically Sustainable Design Award and the Blackett Award in 2000; and the Metal Building Products Manufacturers Association Metal Building Award

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Design uses less energy
By DAVID THORPE
■ Merril Webster-Mannison designed the 200-seat lecture theatre at the Charles Sturt University Thurgoona campus.
Boilers and Empressive Phoenix units will heat water through a series of pipes to circulate air through the air intake ducts. Hot air generated by the Phoenix units will pass through thermal chambers to preheat the air entering the lecture theatre. The ventilation system in the theatre was installed using the principle of hot air rising - through Phoenix units air entering the building is heated by a fan motor.
The same basic criteria of low-energy design with responsible use of resources and a minimal impact on the environment have been applied.

'Design uses less energy', Twin Cities Post, 20 October 1999

in 2000.²³⁷ This national and international praise for its Thurgoona campus set Charles Sturt University apart from other universities in a highly competitive market for both funding and students, offering something unique and innovative.

Viewing the Thurgoona campus as a whole, Architectural Product News magazine concluded that 'Thurgoona is much more than just a parade of environmental strategies. It is an expression of one university's commitment to the environment, education, and the social life of its inhabitants'.²³⁸ The new campus provided Charles Sturt University with the 'green-fields' site it had always hoped to achieve; the resulting campus was innovative and unique, and it looked to the future.



Above: Charles Sturt-Thurgoona Campus (David Mitchell collection held at Charles Sturt University Regional Archives CSU3394)

 [When Bob Brown visited Charles Sturt University to open a building], much to the disgust of the official party, up where we were, he said: "Take me down here [to the David Mitchell Wetlands]." I walked down here, chatting with Bob, to the wetlands. And he says, "So, who's David Mitchell?" "Well, [I said,] David's one of the key architects of the whole thing, blah blah blah." And then who emerges out of the wetlands in his waders with half a dozen students? David Mitchell. It was just like "Boom!" "David Mitchell, come here and meet Bob Brown." [laughs] It was just perfect.'

John Rafferty, lecturer in environmental sciences

Originally earmarked to be converted to student accommodation, the Olive Street campus was placed on the market in 2010 with an expected return of \$10 million.²³⁹ While the *Border Mail* labelled it a 'desertion', and with many of the staff still lamenting the loss of the close, integrated community fostered on the smaller campus, the Thurgoona campus cemented Charles Sturt University's identity as a regional university, finally severing the ties with its Albury beginnings.²⁴⁰

 'At the time that it [building 764] opened, it was one of 34 six-star [energy-efficient] buildings in Australia. It's just phenomenal that a little university campus here would build a six-star green university.'

John Rafferty, lecturer in environmental sciences.



Above: Construction of Charles Sturt-Thurgoona (David Mitchell collection held at Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (CSU3394)



11

Conclusion: here to stay



Charles Sturt
University

Opposite page: Student at the Commons
and in student residences at Thuroona

On 1 May 2019, Charles Sturt University launched its new branding. The revised logo drew on the university's coat of arms, but gave the three rivers, books and agricultural fields a 'contemporary' look and abandoned the three-flowered Sturt desert pea.²⁴¹ The new colour scheme was to reflect the institution's regional identity, with the earthy colours of ochre, green and blue signifying the 'spirit of the country' and its geographical locations from the inland to the coast.²⁴² Originally part of this 'brand refresh' was a proposed name change. Vice-Chancellor Andrew Vann was worried that Charles Sturt University was being lost in its acronym, and should instead change to a single-word title, such as Sturt University or Wiradjuri University.²⁴³ The proposal drew heated debate over what the university meant, not only to its staff and students, but to the wider regional NSW community, and fierce opposition to the name change.

Many felt the 'refresh' was a waste of money and resources, which would be better spent on developing the university's teaching and research facilities. Others felt that it was political correctness gone mad, believing that Charles Sturt University should be proud of its explorer/coloniser namesake. Yet, most saw it as an attack on their university. An online petition created



by Charles Sturt University alumni argued that changing the name ‘erodes the identity, tradition and history of the previous generations who have attended, studied and worked’ at Charles Sturt University.²⁴⁴ The name ‘Charles Sturt’ was originally chosen to unite the three campuses in a shared history and to demonstrate the university’s commitment to its regional identity. Some former staff and students saw the possible removal of Charles Sturt University’s name and the reworking of the logo as an attack on that history and their place within it. By February, Charles Sturt University had officially abandoned the name change, citing the large amount of feedback received. Andrew Vann stated that he was ‘proud and inspired’ by the passion people held for Charles Sturt University, as it demonstrated how important it is for the university to ‘reflect the views’ of the communities it serves.²⁴⁵

This perceived disconnection of the university with its history and founding ethos was a point constantly raised throughout the oral history interviews I conducted with past and present staff and students. Many felt that Charles Sturt University, in trying to compete with the metropolitan and ‘sandstone’ universities, institutions that were inherently different and with which Charles Sturt University would and could never compare, resulted in Charles Sturt University losing its way. They argued that the university had lost touch with its original purpose: to serve regional communities through a variety of courses that cater to the needs of these communities. Yet, how true is this accusation? Has Charles Sturt University really strayed that far from the original ethos of Merrylees and the Riverine University League: commitment to equality between

metropolitan and regional facilities, regional development, and community?

Equality

In terms of equal access for regional students to quality education, Charles Sturt University continues to serve students who have historically been excluded from metropolitan and sandstone universities. In 1997, Charles Sturt University won the University of the Year Award for its commitment to first-generation university students. Beginning with the amalgamation of Goulburn CAE and its parks and wildlife management course, Charles Sturt University has employed a range of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students. This has included providing access programs, financial support, and courses that directly relate to ATSI students (such as the graduate course in Wiradjuri language and culture), and locating culturally appropriate and supportive study centres on each campus. This has resulted in Charles Sturt University enrolling the largest ATSI student load of any Australian university, with 620 EFTS (or 2.6 per cent of the total Charles Sturt University student population) in 2018, double that of the whole of the Australian student population at 1.3 per cent.²⁴⁶ In Albury-Wodonga, two-thirds of the student cohort are female, with many of the courses offered in female-dominated areas such as nursing, education and occupational therapy. In the 1980s, there was a large push across the RMIHE to support female students by providing childcare facilities on campus. This is also reflective of the continued enrolment of mature

age students since 1972, when the Albury Study Centre offered only part-time evening courses to cater for their mature age student cohort, until today, with half of the student population aged over 30. Equal access for regional and rural students was central to William Merrylees’s original campaign. In the late 1980s, John Dawkins sought to address the continued low participation rate of non-metropolitan students, and yet, according to the Department of Education and Training, little progress has been made today. In 2018, regional students totalled 18.5 per cent of the total Australian tertiary student population, down 1.2 per cent from 2017. This figure contrasts with Charles Sturt University-Thurgoona, where regional students made up 61 per cent of their student population in 2019.²⁴⁷



‘All of this is to help people train for a profession in a regional setting. And I well remember when we graduated our first lot of dentists, they said very proudly, “Not one of our graduates has taken up a position that wasn’t west of the divide.” All of them took up positions in rural Australia. I think rural Australia needs graduates, and CSU’s been doing that.’

Bruce Pennay, associate professor
in Heritage Studies

In arguing for a rural university, Merrylees stated that the institution would promote regional development, which would benefit not only the local communities, but also Australia nationally. Merrylees believed that a regional university would draw students and professionals out of the ‘over-crowded’ cities and promote decentralisation. While Gough Whitlam’s Growth Centre Project never became what it was originally envisioned to be, Albury-Wodonga has still managed to attract a large percentage of city

dwellers, with 34 per cent of Charles Sturt University-Thurgoona’s students originating from the major cities in 2019, up from 26 per cent in 2014.²⁴⁸ This is also true for Charles Sturt University staff, many of whom left the cities to pursue an academic career. Charles Sturt University graduates promote growth within the region, with many interviewees contending that one of the most demonstrable impacts of Charles Sturt University in Albury-Wodonga is the number of former students they see in professional positions in the region. The Regional Universities Network (a body that promotes higher education in regional and rural Australia, which Charles Sturt University joined in 2019) estimates that seven out of ten graduates remain working in the region upon graduation.²⁴⁹ The Western Research Institute report on the economic impact of Charles Sturt University, commissioned in 2016 and released in 2018, found that when taking into consideration the flow-on effects, Charles Sturt

University-Thurgoona contributed 3.7 per cent of equivalent full-time employment in the region.²⁵⁰ Finally, while attempts to promote decentralisation or regional development have not been all that successful in the past, the federal government is still committed to this policy, with education playing a central role. At the beginning of 2019, the Commonwealth government committed \$400 million to supporting regional access to higher education, with Education Minister Dan Tehan

arguing that the scheme will promote economic growth and development through jobs, business opportunities and tourism.²⁵¹

'Albury now can hold its head up and say, "Yes, we are on par with Wagga."

Eileen Clark, RCAE student

Community

However, a university's worth is not measured purely by its economic contribution to the region. Merrylees argued that a rural university was integral to cultivating and promoting a 'country culture' in its community. Charles Sturt University may not actively promote a 'country culture' per se, but it does contribute in many ways to the wider local community of Albury-Wodonga. Many of the courses on offer at Charles Sturt University were adopted or adapted in order to meet community needs or to suit local requirements. From 'upskilling' teachers in the 1970s, to being the first institution to provide podiatry and occupational therapy outside of the cities, Charles Sturt University's courses give back to Albury-Wodonga in real terms. Jennifer Munday, senior lecturer in education at Charles Sturt University-Thurgoona, contends that many of the students who study at Charles Sturt University 'do actually have a commitment to the country. So they really do want to go back into small



'So, my job isn't simply now writing about a nice research project that I find interesting. My job is trying to capture what we are doing and how we are impacting on our communities and the world around us – and it's a bigger job, I can assure you.'

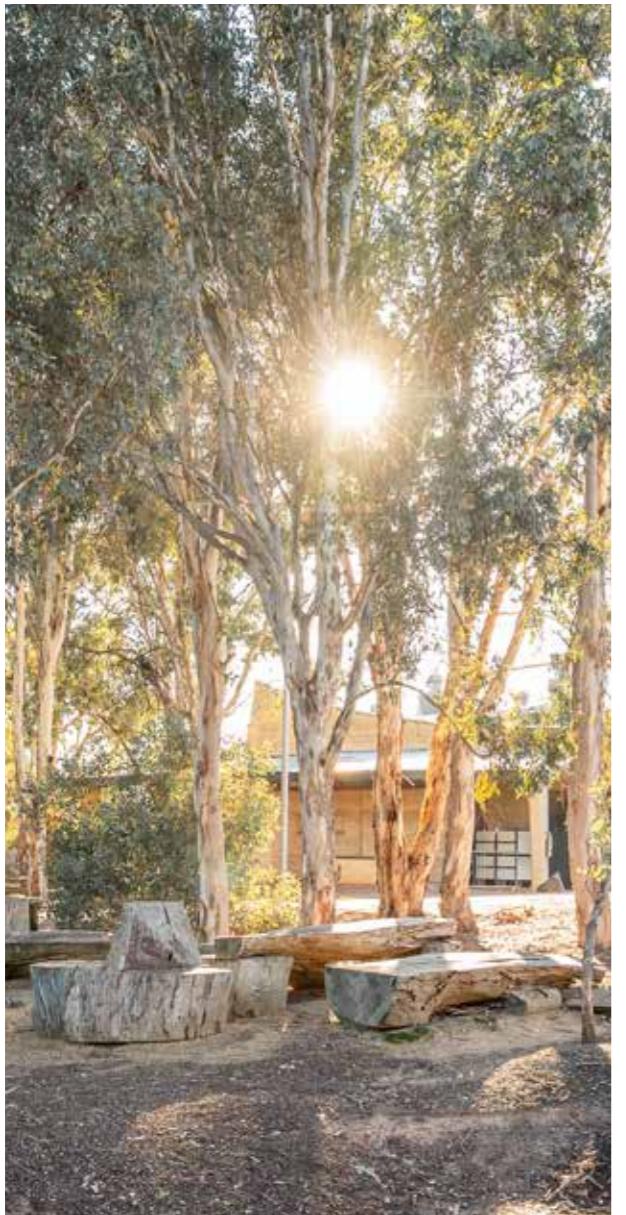
Margit Beemster, media officer

communities to become teachers and functional members of these rural communities.'²⁵² Charles Sturt University has also sought to promote local cultural life, through its support of the Murray Conservatorium (located in the old RMIHE premises on Dean Street) and the Fruit Fly Circus (established in 1979). Charles Sturt University has made strong community links through conducting research that is applicable to the region, and by forming partnerships with businesses and other institutions such as the Albury LibraryMuseum. In recognition of its communities and students, Charles Sturt University has tried to work closely with and to show its respect for Indigenous Australians. Recently, Charles Sturt University adopted a Wiradjuri phrase as the official university ethos: *yindyamarra winhangantha*, meaning 'the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in'. This phrase not only reflects Charles Sturt University's values – inclusive, insightful, impactful and

inspiring – but is also a direct acknowledgement and demonstration of respect to Indigenous Australians and the university's commitment to Indigenous education.²⁵³ Charles Sturt University has worked actively to foster a vibrant regional culture on the border.

At the close of each interview I conducted for this research project, I asked the interviewee what was their most memorable moment at Charles Sturt University. After pausing to think over the often decades worth of memories, good and bad, most





'I suppose I have a double loyalty, in that I had a metropolitan upbringing, so that is my benchmark. But my students taught me so much about living on a farm, living in a community of under 200 people – the richness of that life experience. So, my students taught me heaps about a rural existence.'

Sally Denshire, lecturer in Occupational Therapy

of the participants simply stated that it was the relationships they formed within the institution and with the wider Albury-Wodonga community. Gail Whiteford, an Albury-Wodonga local who has travelled nationally and internationally as an academic and was head of campus at Charles Sturt University-Thurgoona from 2004 to 2008, commented on the importance of these relationships, which she described as something unique to Albury-Wodonga. She said that due to the smaller size of the campus and the degree to which it is interwoven with many aspects of the wider region, the 'feeling of connection to community is a lot deeper'. Unlike the large metropolitan universities, 'if you were to remove Charles Sturt University from Albury-Wodonga, both would suffer severely. Because of this commitment to each other, we're here to stay,' Whiteford said.²⁵⁴



Appendices

Organisation

Title	Abbreviation	Definition
Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation	AWDC	Established in 1972 to lead the Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre Project in developing Albury-Wodonga into a joint cross-border city.
Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education Coordinating Committee	AWPSECC	Established in 1977 by the Victorian and NSW state governments to help coordinate higher education in Albury-Wodonga.
Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education Council	AWPSEC	Established in 1984 to eventually take over from the GOC and AWPSECC in coordinating and developing unified higher education in Albury-Wodonga.
Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education Secretariat	AWPSES	Established in 1983 by the NSW and Victorian education ministers to help coordinate higher education in Albury-Wodonga by undertaking research and creating a database.
Australian Universities Commission	AUC	Established in 1942, it was a federal body that regulated university enrolments and informed federal government legislation around tertiary education.
Board of Management	GCAE	Established in 1987 by the NSW and Victorian education ministers to help establish the proposed Albury-Wodonga CAE.
Charles Sturt University	CSU	Name formally adopted in 1989 after the passing of the Charles Sturt University Act (NSW).
Colleges of Advanced Education	CAEs	Created following the Martin Report of the mid-1960s, CAEs provided formal post-secondary qualifications, often with a vocational focus. They were ranked in between universities and TAFEs.
Commonwealth Tertiary Education Council	CTEC	The federal body that funded higher education institutions across Australia.
Charles Sturt-Albury-Wodonga		Charles Sturt University Albury-Wodonga campus.
Charles Sturt-Thurgoona		Charles Sturt University Albury-Wodonga campus located in Thurgoona.

Goulburn College of Advanced Education	GCAE	Originally the Goulburn Teachers College (1970), it became the GCAE in 1975.
Government Officials Committee	GOC	Established in 1975 by the Development Corporation to advise on higher education in Albury-Wodonga.
Murray Campus/CSU-Murray	VPSEC	The titles of CSU and RMIHE when it was located at the Olive Street campus in central Albury.
NSW Higher Education Board	HEB	The NSW government's education board that regulated and helped fund NSW higher education.
Riverina		The area in between the Murrumbidgee and Murray rivers. Relates directly to Wagga Wagga.
Riverine		The general area around the Murrumbidgee and the Murray rivers, including parts of Victoria. Includes Albury-Wodonga.
Riverina College of Advanced Education	RCAE	Established in 1972, located in Wagga Wagga at the old Teachers College, with study centres in Albury and Goulburn.
Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education	RMIHE	The RCAE became the RMIHE in 1984 following adoption of the recommendations of the Phillips Report of the same year.
Riverine University League	RUL	Established in 1952 to petition state and federal governments for the creation of a university in the Riverine.
Victorian Post School Education Council	VPSEC	The Victorian government's higher education body that regulated and helped fund Victorian higher education.

Reports

Title	Date	Definition			
The Case for an Australian Rural University	1953	By the Riverine University League, it outlined the reasons for and benefits of establishing a rural university in the Riverina.			
Report of the Committee on Australian Universities – Murray Report	19 September 1957	Critiqued the lack of access to university education and the low number of graduates. It placed university funding under Commonwealth control.			
Tertiary Education in Australia: Report of the Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia – Martin Report	August 1964 & 1965	Created colleges of advanced education that would help address the increase in student numbers and provide skilled workers for economic growth.			
Report on the Selection of Places Outside the Metropolis of Melbourne for Accelerated Growth – Manson Report	1967	Signalled to the Victorian state government that Wodonga and Albury, paired together, provided the best site for regional development.			
Report of the Committee Appointed by the Minister for Education and Science to Investigate the Proposal to Establish a College of Advanced Education at Wagga Wagga – Heath Committee	July 1968	Determined Wagga Wagga as the best location for the RCAE.			
Report on the Location, Nature and Development of Institutions of Tertiary Education in Sydney, Melbourne and the Albury-Wodonga Region – Swanson and Bull Report	March 1973	Tied in with Whitlam's wider educational reforms, the report recommended three new universities in Sydney, Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga that would meet the increase in student demand and promote regional development.			
Open Tertiary Education in Australia: Final Report of the Committee on Open University to the Universities Commission	1975	The report put forward a UK concept that developments in distance education would open up university education to those outside of the cities. The Albury-Wodonga University was to play a leading role in this.			
Education, Training and Employment: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Education Training – Williams Report	1979	The report criticised the increasing costs of higher education in Australia. It recommended greater cooperation between institutions and opposed the development of any new institutions – including an Albury-Wodonga University.			
The Future Development of Goulburn College of Advanced Education – Pratt Committee	1980	Commissioned to find a solution to the ailing GCAE, it recommended that the NSW state government diversify the course offerings at the GCAE. The government instead chose to amalgamate it with the RCAE.			
Albury-Wodonga Post School Education: Educational Specification	1980	The Development Corporation commissioned the report to devise a solution to developing independent higher education in Albury-Wodonga. The report recommended an Albury-Wodonga CAE by uniting the four existing higher education institutions in Albury-Wodonga.			
Report of the Consultative Committee on the Amalgamation of Goulburn and Riverina Colleges of Advanced Education – Hagan Committee	July 1981	The Hagan Committee was to profile the future of the amalgamated RCAE and the GCAE. It outlined development for each campus, including a doubling of academic staff and new infrastructure at the Albury-Wodonga campus.			
Developments on the Albury-Wodonga Campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education – Phillips Report	23 May 1984	A development strategy to promote growth at the Albury-Wodonga campus. The report recommended rapid growth through an injection of funds and resources – despite the possible loss to Wagga.			
Discussion Paper: Options for the Development of Higher Education Structures in Victoria	February 1988	Released in response to John Dawkins's Discussion Paper (the precursor to his Policy Statement), the Victorian Post-School Education Council proposed a multi-campus regional university through Deakin. However, it still supported the Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education to become part of the proposed Albury-Wodonga CAE.			
Higher Education: A Policy Statement	July 1988	Released by Education Minister John Dawkins, the paper sought to streamline higher education and to make it more profitable for the market. Dawkins introduced the Unified National System that removed CAEs and turned them into or amalgamated them with universities.			
The Future Structure of Higher Education in New South Wales	October 1988	The HEB's response to John Dawkins's Policy Statement proposed a series of 'network universities' that would link up existing universities with CAEs. It favoured the Murray campus linking up with the Australian National University along with the Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education.			
The Quality and Diversity Report	October 1991	Released by the Department of Employment, Education and Training, the report evaluated higher education in Australia post-Dawkins's reforms. It contended that participation had grown, and that this had been achieved by fewer institutions.			

Timeline

Date	Event
1943	Albury locals unsuccessfully petition Melbourne University for a university college in Albury.
1947	Albury locals unsuccessfully petition Melbourne University for a university college in Albury. Tom Mitchell, Member for Benambra, tries unsuccessfully to set up a university college at the former Bonegilla Army Camp.
1951	
January 4	William Merrylees makes a speech condemning the inequality of services and calling for a rural university.
May 16	Conference of graziers convened in Jerilderie by Councillor Crockett in support of a rural university.
May 18	Country Women's Association meeting held in support of a rural university.
1952	
February 22	At a conference at Narrandera, the Riverine Councils University League is established. Becomes the Riverine University League.
August 27	Merrylees meets with Prime Minister Robert Menzies to discuss the need for a rural university.
1953	Merrylees publishes <i>The Case for an Australian Rural University</i> .
1954	The federal government rejects the proposal put forward in <i>The Case for an Australian Rural University</i> .
1957	
September 19	The Murray Report is released.
1964	
August	The Martin Report is released.
1966	
March 3	NSW Education Minister Charles Cutler and his assistant Wal Fife meet with Australian Universities Commission chairman Leslie Martin, who states that a university college for the Riverina would be too expensive.
November 6–11	Merrylees and Fife take the AUC's Martin on a tour of Griffith, Leeton, Albury and Wagga. Martin comments on the community desire and drive for a university college and agrees to support a two-year college connected to the Australian National University.
	University College in the Riverina, Martin's last report to the AUC, is released.

Date	Event
1967	
	Tertiary Facilities in the Riverina, a re-hash of Martin's University College in the Riverina, is released.
October	The Manson Report is released.
1968	
July	The Heath Committee Report is released
1969	
	Merrylees dies.
October 27	First meeting of the Interim Council tasked with setting up the Riverina College of Advanced Education.
1970	
	Mitchell College of Advanced Education is opened in Bathurst.
February 9	Members of the Other Centres Committee visit Albury to determine the feasibility of a study centre.
March 2	The Interim Council of the RCAE agrees that a study centre in Albury is 'feasible'.
1971	
October 15–16	Gough Whitlam opens the Travelodge in Albury and announces his intention to open a university in Albury-Wodonga.
November 19	Renovations of the Albury Study Centre on Swift Street begin.
1972	
January 1	The Riverina College of Advanced Education is established.
March 3	The RCAE is officially opened in Wagga Wagga at the old Teachers College.
March 14	The RCAE Albury Study Centre begins classes at St Matthews Parish Centre.
March 27	The RCAE (Wagga Wagga) officially opens the Albury Study Centre with classes held at Swift Street.
December 2	Whitlam wins the federal election.
December 13	Whitlam has the AUC look at establishing a university in Sydney, Melbourne and Albury-Wodonga. The proposal will become the Swanson and Bull Report.
1973	
January 25	Whitlam and the premiers of Victoria and New South Wales agree to the Growth Centre Project in Albury-Wodonga.
March	The Swanson and Bull Report is released.
October 23	Whitlam and the premiers of Victoria and New South Wales sign the Albury-Wodonga Development Agreement.

1974	
	The federal government introduces the non-competitive-means tested Tertiary Allowance Scheme.
	The federal government takes over full control of financing tertiary education.
	Fees for universities and CAEs are abolished.
1975	
	Open Universities: Final Report is released.
March	Permanent facilities are built for the Albury Study Centre in Townsend Street and opened in August.
March	The Government Officials Committee on Post-School Education proposes a multi-campus community college in Albury-Wodonga.
October 23	Albury and Wodonga councils call a meeting and form the Albury-Wodonga University Committee. In 1976, it submits a proposal to the AUC.
November 11	Dismissal of Whitlam and the Labor government.
1976	
	The Fraser government gradually abandons the Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre Project and any plan for an Albury-Wodonga University.
	Wagga Wagga Agriculture College is absorbed by the RCAE.
	The Albury Study Centre becomes the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre.
1977	
November	The Albury-Wodonga Study Centre is renamed the Albury-Wodonga Campus of the RCAE.
1979	
February	The Williams Report is released.
1980	
	Albury-Wodonga Post School Education: Educational Specification is published.
1981	
	The Albury-Wodonga campus partially moves into the old Technical College building on the corner of Olive and Dean streets, where the Murray Conservatorium Albury is located today.
1982	
	First graduation of the RCAE held in Albury-Wodonga.
	Goulburn CAE and RCAE amalgamate.
March	The RCAE buys first properties of its Albury city campus at 620 and 624 Olive Street.
July	The proposal that Albury-Wodonga campus should become a 'Study Resource Centre', with no lecturers teaching and all course work conducted by correspondence supported by tutors, is protested by the student association and it is defeated.
1983	
	Goulburn Police Academy takeover of the GCAE campus is announced.

1984	
	First full-time students are enrolled in the Murray campus.
May 23	The Phillips Report is released.
July 1	The Albury-Wodonga campus of the RCAE is renamed the Murray campus of the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education, and is given the same status as the Riverina campus in Wagga.
1985	
	The Albury-Wodonga Post-School Education Council recommends a cross-border independent Albury-Wodonga CAE by 1990. The NSW and Victorian education ministers agree to one by 1993.
1988	
	Wodonga Institute of Tertiary Education is founded.
July	Dawkins's white paper, Higher Education: A Policy Statement, is released.
1989	
	Wodonga Institute is linked to La Trobe University.
January 22	The Commonwealth Government, the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education, Mitchell College of Advanced Education and Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education meet and agree to a 'University of New South Wales System' under UNSW. The proposal is rejected in April.
April	The decision is made to establish a university with campuses in Albury-Wodonga, Wagga Wagga and Bathurst.
June 2	The Charles Sturt University Act (NSW) is passed.
July 1	Charles Sturt University is officially established.
July 19	The federal government formally establishes Charles Sturt University as Australia's 26th university.
1990	
May 1	Clifford Blake becomes the first vice chancellor of Charles Sturt University.
1991	
	The Winan-Gidyal centre is opened as a support centre for Indigenous students.
1993	
March	Charles Sturt University purchases land from the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation in Thургоона.
1995	
	Building of the eco-friendly Thургоона campus begins.
1997	
	Charles Sturt University wins Australian Good University Guide's Australian University of the Year award.
April 18	Charles Sturt Albury-Wodonga's first graduation ceremony is held, attended by Gough Whitlam and Tom Uren.
2010	
	CSU leaves the Olive Street city campus.

Interviewees

Lynette Barber (interviewed 31 May 2019)

Lynne Barber began her journey at Charles Sturt in 1994 when she undertook a course in Bachelor of Arts and Cultural Heritage. Just one year later, she was doing casual work for the university, which over the years led her into many different roles, including administrative assistant, student adviser and marketing. Lynne enjoyed the camaraderie among the staff at the Olive Street campus, and its location in the centre of town. There, Charles Sturt University was able to actively engage with the Albury-Wodonga community by hosting and participating in many local community events. Lynne believes that a regional institution must have a strong and healthy relationship with its community. She feels most proud of Charles Sturt University when she sees former students succeeding in and giving back to the local community.

Margrit Beemster (interviewed 20 June 2019)

Margrit Beemster worked in journalism at the *Border Morning Mail*, where she became interested in sharing new and exciting knowledge and research projects so that they were able to have a real-world impact. At Charles Sturt University, she took on the role of managing communications for the Johnston Centre for Natural Resources and Environment, which consisted of making the work of Charles Sturt University researchers accessible to the wider national and international communities, not just locally in the Riverina. Margrit believes that Charles Sturt University's importance lies not just in its environmental research, but in its practice, as well as in providing affordable and functional education to regional and rural students. Her most memorable moment was seeing the eco-friendly C.D. Blake Lecture Theatre for the first time.

Celia Bevan (interviewed 24 July 2019)

Celia Bevan has had a wide-ranging impact at Charles Sturt University, and within the wider Albury-Wodonga community. Upon moving to the region in the late 1970s, Celia used Development Corporation community grants to implement a wide range of equal opportunity initiatives, including setting up emergency housing and a youth hostel. When she became a student at the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education, Celia became active on the College Council, becoming its first female chairperson. After a short break, she was asked to establish the geriatrics course at Charles Sturt University. Her work at Charles Sturt University, and her commitment to social justice and education, were recognised by Charles Sturt University through the creation of the Celia Bevan Scholarship.

Jim (Roy James) Birckhead (interviewed 7 August 2019)

Jim Birckhead arrived at the Riverina College of Advanced Education when the parks, recreation and heritage course was relocated to the Albury-Wodonga campus as part of the Goulburn amalgamation. Teaching anthropology and sociology in an innovative and highly successful course, Jim would often travel out to his distance education students at various rural and regional locations across Australia. The course was innovative in that it combined science, land management and heritage studies to provide a holistic approach to caring for national parks. It also worked closely with various Indigenous Australian groups, many members of which were undertaking the course. It was this extensive travel, unique teaching techniques and the close work with Indigenous groups that Jim recalls fondly.

Ann Brennan (interviewed 25 July 2019)

Ann Brennan moved to Albury as a single mother of six in the mid-1970s and worked multiple jobs to support her family. A friend suggested that she study at the Riverina College of Advanced Education's Albury Study Centre as a way to meet new people. Ann undertook a librarianship course and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1983. While studying, she worked in the library at the study centre. Ann's studies enabled her to have a real-life impact in the local community: she worked in social services, helping those with little education navigate a complicated social welfare system. Ann believes that free tertiary education for everyone is crucial and the only way for Australia to progress.

Eileen Clark (interviewed 20 May 2019)

Eileen Clark was one of the first students at the Riverina College of Advanced Education, when it was located at Swift Street in the Albury CBD. The courses offered at the study centre opened up new opportunities for Eileen outside of the family home, allowing her eventually to become a lecturer in sociology at Charles Sturt University and later at La Trobe University in Wodonga. Eileen's interview focused on the early changes of the RCEA into a university, on its importance in the region to mature age students (in particular, women), and on its leadership in external learning. Eileen expressed her gratitude for everything that Charles Sturt University has given her, and said she hopes that one day it will cross the final divide between Albury and Wodonga and become a truly cross-border institution.

Sally Denshire (interviewed 16 July 2019)

Sally Denshire moved to Charles Sturt University in Albury-Wodonga in 1995 to take up a lecturing position in occupational therapy, with the course only in its second year. She moved to the border from a teaching hospital in Sydney and recalls experiencing 'culture shock' on her arrival in Albury-Wodonga and Charles Sturt University. Not only did the town run at a different pace, but Charles Sturt University was often under-staffed, under-resourced and under-supported. Sally recalled that staff at Charles Sturt University were 'learning to be academics', developing course material, researching and publishing, and at the same time gaining their own Master's and PhD qualifications. While Sally contends that it was challenging and demanding, she credits the students – everything she learnt from them, and seeing their impact in the wider community – with keeping her at Charles Sturt University.

Christiaan de Vreeze (interviewed 25 July 2019)

Christiaan De Vreeze has a real passion for Albury. His parents migrated from the Netherlands in the 1950s, passing through the Bonegilla migrant camp. Chris studied science at Sydney University, then returned to Albury. He began work at Charles Sturt University as a maths tutor and says he fell in love with the art of teaching – not just with the theatrics of it, but also with seeing the 'cash register drop – not the penny' on students' faces when they truly understood something. Chris believes that as Australia grows, so too will Charles Sturt University. He expects it to continue to be a vital institution in the region.

Greg Fry (interviewed 31 May 2019)

Beginning work in engineering, Greg Fry moved into library services in the mid-1990s, when he moved to the Albury-Wodonga region with his wife, Charles Sturt University academic Katherine Ellen. In 1996, he began work at Charles Sturt University at the Olive Street campus, witnessing the transition to the Thurogona campus. Greg

believes that the sustainability focus of Charles Sturt-Thurgoona was innovative and unique, influencing the design of his own house, also constructed out of rammed earth. Greg believes that Charles Sturt University needs to return to offering the innovative courses and methods of teaching that initially set it apart from the crowd, as this is Charles Sturt University's strong point. He says he is most proud of the freedom he was given to develop his role of faculty liaison in the way that he believed worked best, which was to take the library and move it into the schools where it could be part of each community.

Ian Hume (interviewed 23 May 2019)

Ian Hume moved to the border from Melbourne in the 1980s and says he has never looked back. In 1984, he took over grounds maintenance when Charles Sturt University moved to the Olive Street campus. He designed beautiful and award-winning cottage-style gardens around the historical buildings. Ian praised the strong community feel at the Olive Street campus, where everyone knew each other and socialised together in and outside of work. When the campus moved to Thurgoona, he had to learn a whole new way of gardening, he says, shifting from water-dependent cottage gardens to a sustainable, Australian native garden. While he praises the leadership Charles Sturt University demonstrated in creating sustainable buildings, he says that in practice it wasn't always that easy: there were often conflicts between staff and management over what was best eco practice vs. a safe and presentable university. Ian laments that Charles Sturt University has let its sustainability focus wane over the past few years. He maintains that he will always be grateful for his time at Charles Sturt University, where he met great people and created great stories.

Doug Hunter (interviewed 8 August 2019)

Doug Hunter may have left school before his 15th birthday, yet that never stopped him from continually learning. Through his experiences in the army and working in construction in Papua New Guinea, Doug was constantly undertaking a wide variety of courses, from architecture to military history. Yet, it was the conversations he had with his wife, Jan Hunter, about the material that she was learning through her studies at the Albury Study Centre, that persuaded him to undertake a Bachelor of Arts degree in the mid-1980s. Doug finished with honours in literature. He says that, for him, the most significant thing is learning for its own sake.

Jan Hunter (interviewed 8 August 2019)

After completing her Higher School Certificate in English at Wodonga TAFE, Jan Hunter was persuaded to continue her tertiary studies by guest visitor Geoff Fairhall, director of the Albury Study Centre. She says that undertaking a course in liberal studies opened her world and mind to a wide variety of big ideas. She went on to do her Diploma in Education at Melbourne University. Jan believes that her tertiary education later in life was only made possible through the actions of the Whitlam government (free tertiary education and the Growth Centre Project) and the rise of feminism, which gave women the confidence to break out of traditional female roles and to undertake further education. Jan notes that while she was fully supported by her husband, Doug Hunter, many of the other women in her course had to work hard at home to convince their husbands that they should undertake further studies.

Tyrell Ingram (interviewed 4 October 2019)

Tyrell Ingram began working at Charles Sturt-Thurgoona in May 2019 as a student liaison supporter at Winan-Gidyal, the Indigenous Student Support Centre. Tyrell believes that education is crucial in supporting his Koori community

and setting them up to achieve. Part of this comes from his own success after completing the Djirruwong program in mental health at Charles Sturt-Wagga in 2011, which opened up opportunities in a range of public service facilities. While he has only just started at Charles Sturt University, Tyrell looks forward to the connections he will make with the local community and students, and to the initiatives he will be able to implement to support students in the future.

Howard Jones (interviewed 24 June 2019)

Howard Jones migrated to Albury-Wodonga from Wales in 1982 to become a reporter at the *Border Morning Mail*. Among a wide range of topics, he reported extensively on the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, the Murray Campus of the Riverina College of Advanced Education and the many times an Albury-Wodonga University was proposed. Howard believes that the difficulties of running the Growth Centre were reflected in the challenges of providing joint tertiary education in Albury-Wodonga – too many different personalities with too many different interests. Yet, he believes that the resulting two university campuses in Albury and Wodonga now provide students in the region with a wide choice.

Barbara McDermott (interviewed 20 August 2019)

Persuaded to undertake study by her sister, and up-sold from a single subject to a whole degree by the smooth talking of Keith Swan, Barbara McDermott began a Diploma in Business Administration at the Riverina College of Advanced Education' Albury Study Centre in 1974. She had three young children at the time, and recalls the supportive attitude of the study centre in tailoring her degree to fit around her role as a full-time mother. While some of the men who were studying for the same degree were antagonistic to the female students, Barbara says this only drove her to do better and to prove them wrong. If it hadn't been for the study centre, she says, she would never have gained the qualifications she needed to be more 'independent and free' in the workforce. She also credits her husband with giving her the support and encouragement she needed to complete her studies.

Harvey Mendham (interviewed 24 July 2019)

Looking to escape the rat race of the city, Harvey Mendham moved from Sydney University to the Albury-Wodonga Study Centre in 1977 to become the first full-time academic staff. Upon arrival, however, he was given a large and demanding workload that consisted of research and supervision during the day, and teaching in the evenings. His students, he recalls, were primarily teachers and principals from Victoria and New South Wales looking to upgrade their qualifications. Harvey saw the institution grow from providing part-time courses for working adults, to offering full-time courses to school leavers, in a range of disciplines that contributed to the overall development of Albury-Wodonga, from the performing arts to allied health.

Jennifer Munday (interviewed 23 July 2019)

Jennifer Munday started as a lecturer at the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education Wagga campus, and confirms that the Albury-Wodonga campus was often forgotten by those in Wagga, including herself. Yet, this didn't prevent her from following the team running the early childhood education degree down to Albury-Wodonga. Jennifer says that once she was living on the border, she fell in love with 'the two little cities bunched together'. She enjoyed the connections and teaching experiences that she fostered with the local community, which she sees as having been a strong point of the University. More effort needs to be invested again, she believes, to promote the uniquely regional aspect of Charles Sturt University. Overall, Jennifer is happy with her time at Charles Sturt

University because of the sense of camaraderie, the success of the students, and the opportunities presented, such as to work for a time in Canada.

Andree Pender (interviewed 28 May 2019)

Andree Pender has a long history with Charles Sturt University, having originally undertaken a course in 1987 to increase her skills after taking time out from the workforce to raise a family. She then continued on at Charles Sturt University in various roles for 26 years, retiring in 2013. She still undertakes casual work as an exam invigilator and as a 'fake' patient for practical exams. Andree has seen the changes that have occurred in the rapidly expanding School of Occupational Therapy. She acknowledges that Albury was often seen as 'second class' compared to the Wagga campus, but says it made up for that in community spirit. She says this community spirit extends to the students, who often stay on to work in the region after graduating, and to the staff who chose to stay at Charles Sturt University because of their love for the institution.

Bruce Pennay (interviewed 28 June and 7 July 2019)

Bruce Pennay believes that he has lived a well-timed life, having ridden the wave of tertiary education expansion from the 1950s. Bruce first came to the Riverina College of Advanced Education when he represented the Goulburn College of Advanced Education, where he lectured in history, in the amalgamation between the two institutions. Having held positions that included the RCAE Albury Campus Director and Warden for the Board of Management (which sought to establish an Albury-Wodonga CAE), Bruce has an intimate understanding of the development of higher education in Albury-Wodonga. He continues to advocate for the importance of higher education in regional and rural Australia, for education that caters to the needs of the region, and – in the case of Albury-Wodonga – for education that seeks to bridge the state borders and unite the Albury-Wodonga community.

John Rafferty (interviewed 19 July 2019)

During this interview, John Rafferty, a lecturer in environmental sciences, took me on a tour of the Thurogona campus, pointing out its environmental features and the sustainability practices employed. As we walked around, John spoke of the materials used, where they were sourced, and how the environmental practices stack up today. He recalled the passion of those academics – in particular, David Mitchell – who, 30 years ago, pushed for the focus on sustainability at the new Thurogona campus. The original attention paid to water management gradually evolved into a holistic sustainability focus, evident in all aspects of the campus's design and construction. Looking to the future, John is concerned that Charles Sturt-Thurogona's sustainability commitment might wane. 'There is so much potential to be lost,' he said. He believes that Charles Sturt University has much more to give, especially in a society increasingly dominated by the rapidly changing environment.

John Saw (interviewed 24 July 2019)

When he was initially asked to develop the industrial relations course at the Riverina College of Advanced Education's Albury-Wodonga campus, John Saw turned it down. When he relented and took up the position in the early 1980s, he became the 11th full-time academic staff member. John was later to become the Dean of Business, and even Head of Campus, for a period of time. When asked about the Charles Sturt University of today, John sees an institution that is a little lost. He believes it should return to what made it so successful in the first place: offering unique courses or learning methods that set it apart from other tertiary institutions in Australia. Recalling his most

memorable moment at Charles Sturt University, John points out that it is, for him, both a community and a family institution, as his wife, Celia Bevan, and his two daughters have worked and/or studied there between the early 1980s and the early 2000s.

Phil Sefton (interviewed 13 August 2019)

Phil Sefton moved back to Albury, where he had grown up, in 1989 to undertake a job as 'computer manager' at the Riverina-Murray Institute of Higher Education. At that time, the RMIHE was in the process of becoming Charles Sturt University, and the transformation saw Charles Sturt University not only grow, but also become more centralised and integrated with the other campuses at Wagga and Bathurst. Phil was integral to this change, working to develop and connect the IT infrastructure, and to ensure that it met the latest global standards. The importance of the work that Phil and his department did in developing the Thurogona campus in the late 1990s cannot be overstated. The 'comms building' was the first new building built at the Thurogona campus.

Wesley Ward (interviewed 17 May 2019)

Wesley Ward has worked at Charles Sturt University as media officer for the past 25 years. In my interview with Wes, he discussed the Olive Street campus, the growth of the university, its innovation as a sustainable campus, and Charles Sturt University's place in relation to metropolitan universities. Wes attributes Charles Sturt University's success to the community spirit that he says is evident both within the university itself and in its working closely with and for the wider Albury-Wodonga community. He concluded that Charles Sturt University must be true to its roots, and put effort back into fostering an even stronger community connection.

Gail Whiteford (interviewed 31 May 2019)

As an academic, Gail Whiteford has travelled extensively for her job. Yet, she returned to her hometown of Albury to undertake work at Charles Sturt University. Gail worked her way up from associate professor in occupational therapy, to head of the School of Community Health, to Head of Campus from 2004 to 2008. She has since returned as an adjunct professor based in Port Macquarie. Gail speaks of the importance and strength of community connection for Charles Sturt University, and of the symbiotic relationship between the institution and the wider community. She believes that Charles Sturt University needs to own and be proud of its regional status – something it hasn't always embraced, she says. Throughout the interview, Gail noted the strong Indigenous (in particular, Wiradjuri) participation at Charles Sturt University, believing this to be one of its most important achievements.

Yalmambirra (interviewed 30 July 2019)

Yalmambirra came to Charles Sturt University on a dare and a promise. Lacking a formal education, Yal had learnt everything he knew from those he had worked with. His brother, who was studying at Charles Sturt University, dared him to undertake the entrance exam in the Koori Access Program. Yal promised that if he passed, he would remain a student until he was awarded a PhD. He did just that, undertaking a degree in environmental science and heritage and never failing an assessment. While studying, Yal also began teaching Indigenous studies to CSU students in the early learning degree course, and it is this that he remembers most fondly. Yal enjoyed the way he was able to make real connections and friendships with the students and the wider Albury-Wodonga community. He said that if he could do it all again, he would, except that he would start studying at an earlier age.

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- ²³ E.R. Treyvaud and J.D. McLaren, *Equal but Cheaper: The Development of Australian Colleges of Advanced Education* (Carlton, Vic, Melbourne University Press, 1976), 45; Murray, *Report of the Committee on Australian Universities*, 23.
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