

THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
COMMITTEE OF CONVOCATION

MEETING 6/09

MINUTES

A Meeting of the Committee of Convocation was held on Wednesday 26 August 2009 at 5.00pm at Graduate House.

Present

Ms L Boston (Chair), Mr A Abbott, Ms L Adams, Mr E Bellchambers, Ms A Burgess, Ms B Chan, Ms J Chiew, Dr C Close, Ms J Crowe, Ms C Cummins, Mr B Dance, Mr D Ford, Dr A Gibbs, Dr T Gould, Dr JK Harcourt, Mr G Israel, Ms I Jablonka, Mr F Lees, Mr R McGauran, Dr R McMillan, Mr J Meehan, Mr C Middleton, Dr J Nelson, Ms B Perry, Dr I Rechtman, Dr B-A Rodan, Mr L Rowe, Dr L Simpson, Mr G Thomas, and Mr N Whiting

In Attendance

Professor Sharman Pretty (Dean of VCAM), Mr J Green (Deputy University Secretary), Mr S Halliwell (Minute Secretary)

SECTION 1

1 Welcome, Apologies and Leave of Absence

Ms Boston welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Dr V McRae, Mr M Warwick and Mr P Davies.

Dr R McMillan, Dr D Parbery, Mr B Fitt, Ms A Ada and Dr R Otzen were on Leave of Absence.

Leave of Absence requests were received as follows.

23 September: Mr D Ford (in addition to Mr G Israel and Mr G Thomas).

2 Returning Officer's Report

There was no report.

3 Starring of Additional Items

Items 6.1.6 and 10.3 were starred

4 Receipt of Unstarred Items

The Committee received the unstarred items.

5 Minutes of Meeting 5/09 (29 July 2009)

The minutes were approved.

6 Matters Arising

Under Item 8 in the minutes of meeting 5/09 is a report from the President about the University Secretary's decision to defer elections for members of the Committee. Mr Dance had sent an email to the University Secretary (cc to members) with the following questions.

- Do you have the authority to extend members stay on the Committee beyond the time limit set by the Parliament?
- If you do, does the Parliament know you have the authority to override their decision? Because if you do for the Committee then you can do so for the Council and all other elected University bodies. On that basis there are no need for elections.
- The step to defer elections indefinitely must surely be based on some knowledge of what is likely to happen to the Committee, because if not and there are no changes to the Committee then you could be accused of acting prematurely. Could you please share that information with the Committee?

Mr Green provided the following responses.

1. The University statutes require an election to be held by 31 December. Hence the proposal to defer the election is strictly in breach of the statutes but not necessarily in breach of the University Act. The view was taken that from an administrative law perspective, none of the parties involved was disadvantaged by the delay.
2. Because the decision to defer the election process until the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Committee of Council are known is not in breach of the Act, it is not a matter for the Minister to be aware of (Parliament being read to mean Minister in the context of the question).
3. The decision was not to defer the elections indefinitely. It is only until the results of the Ad Hoc Committee are known. The decision to defer the elections is intended to ensure that any decisions are consistent with any decision that might be made about the future of the Committee and that is still to be determined.

Ms Boston said that the decision was a sensible one in light of the Ad Hoc Committee and Mr Ford noted that the rationale was well explained at the previous meeting and that the meeting had concurred with the general approach. Members expressed the view that no members whose terms notionally expire at the end of 2009 should be disadvantaged.

The following motion was carried:

That the Committee concur with the proposed temporary delay in elections for the reasons explained; that a report be provided to the first meeting of the Committee in 2010 by the Deputy University Secretary on the status of the report from the Ad Hoc Committee; that if there is no clear direction in terms of the requirement for elections, an election for members of the Committee be held as soon as practicable.

6.1 Action Sheet 5/09

6.1.1 Template letter for faculty representatives

This matter has now been deferred pending the outcome of the deliberations of the Ad Hoc Council committee.

6.1.2 Library and Information Access sub-committee report

The letter as endorsed by the Committee and signed by the President was sent to those specified in the minutes on 13 August. Mr Green advised that the Librarian is preparing a response on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor.

6.1.3 Meetings re VCAM

Dr Gould reported that no meetings had yet taken place but that he and Dr McMillan will report further at the next meeting.

6.1.4 Refining Our Strategy

The response was finalised and sent to the consultation team on 30 July.

6.1.5 Distribution of pins at Conferring ceremonies

This matter has been followed up. A final decision has been deferred pending the outcomes of the discussions at the Ad Hoc committee.

6.1.6 Sub-committee to redevelop the web site

Ms Boston thanked Ms Chiew for the speedy work of her sub-committee in producing the discussion paper (circulated as Item 10.4). The Committee discussed several issues arising out of the paper, notably:

- the need to change the focus from history to recent activities and achievements;
- the potential for the profile of members to be included, bearing in mind the requirements of Privacy legislation and the need for individual members to be able to choose how much personal information might be provided;
- the potential for photos of members to be included (an idea that most members present approved of);
- the need for consistent and user-friendly formatting;
- the potential to use new technology such as Facebook and blogs;
- the fact that the web site is a University web site under the control of the University Secretary, with the necessary protocols and authorities that that entails; and
- the fact that Advancement has a modern, interactive Alumni web site that might provide a more appropriate vehicle.

The Committee determined to leave the matter with the sub-committee for further discussion at a future meeting.

7 Guest Speaker

Professor Sharman Pretty, Dean of the Faculty of the VCA and Music ('VCAM'), was guest speaker. Ms Boston said that the Committee was delighted to have Professor Pretty as guest speaker at this time. Her presentation would inform

members about recent developments in relation to the faculty and they could then speak in their respective communities to clarify any issues and scotch any rumours that were circulating about VCAM.

Professor Pretty thanked the Committee for the invitation to speak and noted that although the invitation had come some time ago, it was indeed an opportune time to speak about the new faculty. Professor Pretty outlined the history of developments in higher education – of particular relevance being the Dawkins reforms of the 1980s that saw a host of small institutions required to merge with universities. The VCA, however, remained only an affiliate of the University of Melbourne. She also outlined the two basic funding models that pertain to Arts institutions. Many, such as NIDA and ANAM, are funded from the federal Arts Ministry; others, including the VCA when it was a separate institution, are funded from the federal Education Ministry and funding is based on a general formula that gives an amount of approximately \$12,000 per undergraduate student.

When the VCA was an affiliated institution, the funding was channelled through the University. The VCA made several attempts to secure direct funding, but in 2005, the federal government reduced the funding by some \$5million. The VCA therefore agreed to become a faculty of the University and as part of that arrangement, the University guaranteed extra funding to 2012 with a plan to restructure the relevant faculties as the University found itself with two schools of music. On April 6 2009, by an Act of the Victorian Parliament, the two faculties merged to become the faculty of the VCA and Music. Several myths have emerged in recent times, and Professor Pretty offered the following corrections:

- there has been no program restructure in the VCA part of the new faculty;
- there are many versions of the Melbourne Model based on the basic principles of contextualised depth of study and an increasing specialisation as students progress;
- the University has supported the new faculty financially; and
- the University greatly values the Creative Arts themselves and Creative Arts education.

Professor Pretty showed a series of slides emphasising the strength of the University's financial contribution and highlighting how government financial support and student:staff ratios are worse for VCAM than for comparable institutions in Australia and overseas.

Professor Pretty stressed the fact that the restructure is not merely an exercise in cost cutting, and the faculty is exploring various ways of generating and raising revenue.

In terms of the program areas themselves, Professor Pretty noted that she had been at the University for only five months and the new Head of the School of Music – Professor Gary McPherson – had been here only six weeks. It is unlikely that there will be any new programs finalised before 2011. The line that change is being rushed through and forced on VCAM is another myth that needs to be corrected.

In answer to questions, Professor Pretty made the following responses.

- It may be possible to increase the number of international students (currently 8% - far lower than in many overseas comparable schools and faculties). Facilities are limited in Music but less so in other disciplines.
- The Vice-Chancellor's staff are assisting with the necessary PR work in response to campaigns such as the "Save the VCA" campaign whose leaders, now identified, will be met on Monday 27 August.
- The faculty has a continued commitment to enrol mature-age students and there is no age restriction on entry.

- The faculty will also continue the policy of talent based entry to its courses.

Ms Boston thanked Professor Pretty for a thorough and detailed presentation which had been a great help to the Committee's understanding of these complex issues.

8 President's Report

Ms Boston noted the unfortunate passing of Dr Noel Ramsey – a former member of the Committee who is remembered with respect and affection. She has sent the Committee's condolences to the family.

She reported on two events recently attended by members – the morning tea at Advancement on 31 July and the "Taking Stock" meeting of Council that had provided a valuable opportunity to meet Council members one-on-one.

8.1 Report to Council

As there was no August meeting of Council, a single report from meetings 5/09 and 6/09 will be sent to the 7 September Council meeting.

9 Issues of Concern to Members

9.1 Ad Hoc Committee re Alumni Council

The committee is scheduled to meet on 9 September. The membership is:
 Chancellor, Justice Alex Chernov (Chair)
 Deputy Chancellor The Hon Susan Crennan
 Mr Peter Yates
 The University Secretary, Ms Janet White
 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Relations), Professor Warren Bebbington
 Ms Lesley Boston
 Dr Laurie Simpson.
 The secretary is Mr Steve Halliwell.

9.2 Annual Dinner

A vote was taken and the preferred option was the Lyceum Club as in 2008. Ms Boston will book the venue and she and the minute secretary will liaise on invitations.

10 Reports from Sub-committees and Working Groups

10.3 Melbourne Model

Dr Simpson raised the issue of teaching quality in the Melbourne Model courses, noting that in presentations from the Vice-Chancellor, there is an emphasis on facilities and curriculum. He proposed that this matter be raised with the Vice-Chancellor and the Provost. Mr McGauran noted that there had been considerable emphasis on senior staff teaching in the first year of the Biomedicine and Environments degrees. Mr Ford reminded members of the recent detailed response that the Committee had made to the Refining Our Strategy consultation. A response to that might provide a good vehicle for raising the matter.

11 Deputy University Secretary's Report

There was nothing further.

12 General Manager Alumni Relations Report

There was no report.

13 Other Business

13.1 Letter to Librarian.

As noted under Item 6.1.2, the letter was sent on 13 August.

The meeting closed at 7-20pm

Next Meeting is on **Wednesday 23 September 2009 at 5-00pm in the Council Chambers**

Meeting dates for the remainder of 2009

21 October (Council chambers)

25 November (Graduate House)

16 December (Note change of Date from original schedule; venue to be advised)

President's Signature.....Date.....