

LEVELLING AUSTRALIAN TERTIARY EDUCATION*

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1.0 Preamble

DISCUSSION on the supposed differences in the various sectors of our tertiary education system has been done to death in the past few years. Such discussion appears to have emanated mainly from universities who have been fighting a rearguard action to retain their status. Many emergent C.A.E.s have now gained sufficient stature to equate themselves with other pinnacles of tertiary education. Australian tertiary education is fast going through a levelling-out process.

2.0 History

Australia as a nation first became interested in tertiary education over 120 years ago. With the establishment of the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne in the early 1850s we started well. During the mining boom a little later, various schools of mines were also established. One, now the Ballarat Institute of Advanced Education, founded in 1870, claims to be the oldest institute of technical education in Australia. (Figure 1.)

3.0 Stabilisation

By the 1920s Australia had a reasonable framework of tertiary educational opportunities. The various State universities produced the traditional broad range of degree graduates and some specialised certificates and diplomas, while the technical colleges, agricultural schools, teacher training establishments and schools of mines issued diplomas and certificates to their graduates.

This era in tertiary education laid the foundations of what is now referred to as the binary system of education—degree and diploma/certificate courses.

4.0 Explosion

After World War II, the tertiary education institutions received a shock. Many returned servicemen availed themselves of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme to swamp the existing facilities. Anyone who had experienced tertiary education

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at this time will fondly remember the chaotic times of crowded lecture rooms, timetable clashes and the quaint student mixture of raw youth and serious war veterans. (Figure 2.)

5.0 Co-ordination

In 1920, the Vice-Chancellors of the autonomous State universities decided to meet to discuss common problems. In 1935, this meeting was named the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and was practically the only co-ordinating body in Australian tertiary education.¹

6.0 Crisis

In the early 1950s the A.V.C.C. decided to inform the public of the plight of the universities. In 1952, it published a booklet "A Crisis in the Finance and Development of Australian Universities".²

In 1956, the Federal Government appointed the Committee on Australian Universities (the Murray Committee) and accepted recommendations which gave Australian universities a boost.³

7.0 The A.U.C.

The Commonwealth Government also took the important step of establishing the Australian Universities Commission in 1959. This commission has, so far, reported five times at three-year intervals and has firmly established itself as overseeing the continuing welfare of universities.⁴

8.0 The Martin Committee

In the late 1950s the Federal Government decided to appoint an all-embracing Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia.⁵

The Martin Committee recognised the gravity of the problem of tertiary education in Australia and concluded that this was not only engendered by natural population growth but also by "a genuine demand on the part of the Australian community for increased opportunities in higher education".

The committee agreed that "higher education should be available to all citizens according to their inclination and capacity".

9.0 The A.C.A.E.

It was through the report of the Martin Committee that the Commonwealth Government, in the late 1960s, widened its sphere of influence in the tertiary education sector to include, as well as universities, colleges of advanced education, technical colleges, teachers' colleges and specialist institutions such as those concerned with training in physiotherapy, pharmacy, occupational therapy, etc.

The Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Advanced Education was established in 1965 "to furnish information and advice to the Minister on matters in connection with the grant by the Commonwealth of financial assistance to institutions other than universities".

The C.A.C.A.E. produced two triennial reports and was instrumental in establishing its successor, the Australian Commission on Advanced Education, in 1971.⁶

10.0 *Teacher Education*

The Commonwealth appears to be shouldering more responsibility for teacher education. It has requested the A.C.A.E. to make recommendations and has now received a report recommending that over \$200 million be spent on teacher training in Australia over the next two years.

11.0 *Confluence*

The Martin report also suggested the establishment of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission to replace the A.U.C. and to have wider powers. This recommendation has been opposed by the A.V.C.C. on the grounds that such a move could "subjugate the needs of the universities to those of the colleges". The A.V.C.C. suggested the alternative of closer consultation between the A.U.C. and the old C.A.C.A.E. There is distinct evidence that this has occurred when both reports of the A.U.C. and the new A.C.A.E. were prepared and presented together in Parliament in August, 1972.⁸

This co-ordination at Federal level has stimulated the States to follow suit. Victoria recently established a co-ordinating Tertiary Education Advisory Committee. It is to be hoped that this committee can sort out the conflicting Federal and State politics, the opposing educational interests and the various opinions on tertiary education in that State.

12.0 *Summary*

So we have a picture of, for about a century, the various sectors of tertiary education developing and existing side by side.

Then suddenly about twenty years ago a rising tide hit them and there has been a resulting explosive growth in the demand for Commonwealth funds. Firstly the universities grabbed the lion's share in the 1950s because they were better organised, the C.A.E.s were not far behind in the 1960s, and now it appears that the teacher training establishments are lining up for their share in the 1970s.

13.0 *Community Pressures*

When World War II finished there were only about 17,000 university students in the whole of Australia; just about the planning number for a single campus nowadays. This student population has more than doubled every ten years until, now, we have somewhat more than 100,000 undergraduate students on our eighteen university campuses throughout Australia. One cannot help comparing this with a typical multi-campus State university in the United States which would cater for a similar number.

The embryonic colleges of advanced education and teachers' colleges were also engulfed with this growth spurt. These sectors of tertiary education have both been asked to double their student population in only the last five years. As a result now there are over 50,000 students in our 44 C.A.E. campuses and about 25,000 in teachers' colleges.

It is convenient to express such numbers as a percentage of the population aged 17-22 years (Figure 3).

The Martin Report⁵ and Professor Karmel¹² calculated this index as slightly more than 2 per cent for university enrolments just after World War II and the latest A.U.C. report estimates this figure as nearly 9 per cent for this year.

Currently the Australian community is prepared to siphon off over 15 per cent of this eligible age group to be educated in our tertiary institutions. This is a comparable figure with that experienced in the U.K. but plans there indicate that the proportion could rise to over 20 per cent by the end of this decade.¹³

The president of the Carnegie Corporation suggested recently that "higher education is simply to serve as a form of occupation for an ever-growing proportion of youth".¹⁴ I discussed this contention with academic staff in a staff lounge in a country C.A.E. recently and put the corollary that we are largely covering up for rural unemployment. "Yes," they all agreed, "ours."

14.0 *Finance*

In the five successive triennia of the A.U.C. regime the total government grants to universities has more than doubled from 0.33 per cent G.N.P. to 0.72 per cent G.N.P.

At the same time while the C.A.C.A.E. has been operating over the last two triennia the proportional allocation of public money to C.A.E.s has more than doubled from 16 per cent of the total to 31 per cent of total, currently. By this measure we can gauge the community's acceptance of C.A.E.s in tertiary education. A forecast by the Martin Report for the mid-1970s shows that the proportion

of students enrolled in the C.A.E. system will nearly double to one-third of the total (Figure 4).

15.0 *Colleges of Advanced Education*

When the Federal Government decided to foster a C.A.E. system it was commonly believed that it would be a cheap alternative to universities. This has not proved to be so. In fact in some cases, notably provincial C.A.E.s, it has proved to be a very expensive exercise.

A measure of the recurrent grant per student was made for 1975 by the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University, Professor B. Williams, using figures available from both the A.U.C. and the A.C.A.E. reports.¹⁵ These sums show that, on average, the Australian community is prepared to spend about \$2000 per annum on each university student and about \$1800 per C.A.E. student. However, in two States, notably Queensland and Western Australia, the cost per student will be higher in a C.A.E. than in a university (Figure 5). It is interesting to note that during the forthcoming triennium, the government envisaged investing more capital in C.A.E.s than in universities (Figure 6).

Undoubtedly the most highly developed C.A.E. system is that in Victoria. There, eleven metropolitan colleges and five decentralised country colleges are affiliated with a co-ordinating body known as the Victoria Institute of Colleges. It caters for nearly 25,000 tertiary students.

The country C.A.E.s need to be self-contained and they need to offer a wide range of courses. Small wonder then that local people, once they have sized up their provincial C.A.E., now refer fondly to it as "our mini-university".

Professor Eric Robinson, deputy director, North East London Polytechnic, recently stated that the challenge facing Australian C.A.E.s is to dispel the view that vocational education is second rate compared with pure academic. He suggests that vocational education should become the power house of education.¹⁷

16.0 *Courses Offered in Colleges of Advanced Education*

In line with this tremendous growth of C.A.E.s has been academic development leading to bachelor degrees and postgraduate courses. Much of this was stimulated by the Wiltshire Report in 1969.¹⁸

According to the A.C.A.E. report early in 1972 no less than 70 degree and 40 postgraduate courses were being offered by the C.A.E. system in Australia.

Another phenomenon of this era is the development of interchangeability of courses. C.A.E. degree courses are now being

designed so that students may interchange without undue loss of course time.

Sir Hugh Ennor in his Trinity College centenary oration made this point in his speech on "Problems of Mass Post-Secondary Education": "One of the essential requirements for the future, as I see it, is the need to open the way for students to move from one aspect of post-secondary education to another—from universities to the colleges of advanced education and vice versa."¹⁹

A recent report from the Victoria Institute of Colleges shows that whereas about 40 degree courses have been approved for introduction in its affiliated colleges in the last five years, there are over 90 degree and postgraduate courses in their pipeline for approval to be introduced by 1975.

Recently, also, some documents have emerged from this C.A.E. system foreshadowing the development of doctorate degrees.

There are other organisations which can award degrees too, but they should not be taken too seriously. In Victoria there are at least three private universities. They offer courses by correspondence and tutorial systems but it is doubtful if employers recognise such degrees yet.

We may well see in the future the establishment of the equivalent of the University of Walt Disney which awards "pixie dust" to its graduates.

However, to be serious though, some universities would be proud to foster a degree course founded on aims and objectives of degree courses now being designed for the C.A.E. system.

17.0 *The Student in the C.A.E.*

Both the A.U.C. and the A.C.A.E. reports examined the role of C.A.E.s and their relationship to universities. Not unnaturally the A.U.C. report reflects the concern expressed by universities that the C.A.E. system appears to be muscling in on their territory. Realistically however the A.U.C. concedes that an overlap between universities and colleges is "bound to occur".

The A.C.A.E. report agrees that colleges should be vocationally oriented but points out that "the basic purpose of the colleges is to increase the range of opportunities for tertiary education having a strong emphasis on practical application". This report also shows that "some commentators here claimed that already the differences between colleges and universities are becoming less obvious. In some cases this may be true and at least part of the explanation may be in a changing attitude of the universities".

The C.A.E.s are also fast upgrading their student services over the wide range expected in tertiary institutions.²²

Many student unions in the C.A.E. system are affiliated with the Australian Union of Students and reflect the attitudes of that body in their student newspapers and broadsheets. The A.C.A.E. report even quotes a submission from the A.U.S. as part of its statement on the role of colleges. Some student bodies exhibit a high degree of political awareness and resulting student activism.²³

Four personal experiences with tertiary students are given now to show you that the difference between a university and a C.A.E. is not marked.

- In a university I have been threatened in my office by a lady student who declared she “wanted to beat up a bureaucrat”. Since she was backed up by about 150 students in the crush outside the Vice-Chancellor’s office, I slammed the door in her face. That was the first time I have slammed a door in anyone’s face, but since I have often thought how delightful the beating up might have been.
- In a C.A.E. a group of students once placed an unflattering pen picture of me and other academic staff on the faculty notice board.
- In a university I have been locked up for six hours in a council chamber with other members of the university council and without a toilet.
- In a quiet country C.A.E. my study has been shot up with a double-barrelled shotgun. I now have 31 bullet holes in my office chair as a souvenir.

So tertiary students appear to be the same whatever their choice of institution.

Foreign students are attracted as much to C.A.E.s as to universities. In country C.A.E.s you can find many Asian students who do not wish to live in our large cities.

For some authoritative evidence on the increasing acceptability of graduates from C.A.E.s I should like to quote a draft minute from a conference of university naval liaison officers which I attended recently:

“Whereas the Navy offers career opportunities for men with conventional university degrees in technical, specialist, commercial and managerial fields, a little known yet valuable and untapped source of skilled officer manpower exists in the growing output of Colleges of Advanced Education. In these institutions of learning, degrees are job oriented, students are job motivated and to a limited extent subjects can be tailored to the requirements of employers. The R.A.N. still regards the college degree with some conservative suspicion, but a more modern acceptance of its trade values would

open a source of skilled men. Possibly the most advanced State in the creation of degree-granting career-oriented colleges is Victoria. Intensified recruiting efforts there should not only produce an immediate and expanding supply of officers, but would develop specialised recruiting expertise for introduction into other States as colleges expand in them.”

18.0 *Staff in the C.A.E.s*

Currently staff in the emerging C.A.E.s can be divided into two main groups:

- Those who originally were employed by the State Education Department in the old institution before it was made into a C.A.E. These people tend to be the older, more conservative staff and generally retain the attitude that “the department makes the rules and will provide”.
- Those who were hired by the new C.A.E. in an effort to augment its academic staff. These people tend to be younger and mostly come from a university background.

Many of this new breed of academic are providing a stimulus to the old lags. They show research and academic leadership and are contributing to the elevation of the C.A.E. system. Many are now appearing at national conferences and are publishing widely. In time more mention will be made of the “Publish or Perish” syndrome and the catchcry of “academic freedom” in the C.A.E.s.

The “departmental man” is content to leave planning to “the authorities”. The new breed tends to immerse himself in planning committees and trots out current Australian and overseas university standards of building construction, lecture loadings, library standards and service facilities to use in budgeting.

It appears to be largely as a result of activities of these staff with backgrounds from universities that staff in C.A.E.s enjoy similar salaries and conditions to their counterparts in universities. In fact, the A.C.A.E. develops an argument for establishing portability of superannuation and other staff entitlements. It points out that “In tertiary institutions, movement of staff seeking promotion or the opportunity to work in a department which has established a particular reputation, is a normal procedure.”

Staff associations are represented on the governing bodies of some C.A.E.s and there is also an overall Australian Federation of Staff Associations. Some C.A.E. staff associations have active dialogue with the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations and some have applied to join that old established body. In Victoria, V.I.C.S.A.C. and the three university staff associations have joined in

a Victorian Tertiary Staff Association Liaison Committee "to establish common policy wherever feasible so that a united lobby in these areas can be taken towards governments".²⁵

It is evident that some of the recommendations of the Commission on University Affairs²⁶ with respect to staff/student participation in governance have been followed by some C.A.E.s.

The staff in a C.A.E. have the usual rankings found in a university as recommended by the Sweeney Report.²⁷ Titles of various levels of staff vary at the higher level and generally, so far, the title of "Dean" has become to be accepted in the C.A.E. system. Some recent discussions indicate that the title "Associate Professor" and "Professor" will also become commonplace in the colleges soon.

The staff of the emergent C.A.E.s have done a tremendous job in their discarding of the old education department trappings and their assumption of responsibilities for autonomous institutes. They have quickly progressed from the old days where during the vacation the only person who could be found on the campus was the principal, licking stamps.

Mr. R. Parry, Registrar of the Victoria Institute of Colleges, when speaking at the recent Warburton conference, said that the honeymoon period of the C.A.E.s is now passing. There is now evidence to suggest that C.A.E. staff will be getting down to the nitty gritty of tertiary teaching. We should soon be seeing similar reports to those which have been issued by the A.V.C.C. on teaching methods,²⁸ the student,²⁹ year-round teaching,³⁰ use of academic staff time,³¹ the future pattern of higher education,³² and by F.A.U.S.A. on government³³ and research.³⁴

The recent Australian Government decision to provide \$5 million to develop library materials in C.A.E.s will do much to upgrade their levels of teaching. It will place more onus on the academic staff to entice students to use the books and thus, to use the words of Mr. Borchardt, Chief Librarian, La Trobe University, choose between "senescence" and "fertility" in their teaching.³⁵

All in all, one can see that the C.A.E. system has gone through a period of suspicion and mistrust, a honeymoon period of large injections of funds, a levelling period of "me-too-ism", and is now entering a consolidating period of attaining academic excellence.

19.0 *The Future*

Future growth in the tertiary education sector indicates that the rising tide of students will total over one-quarter of a million students by the middle of this decade. Just enough to fill two decent sized State universities in the U.S. The community has been prepared to finance this education explosion by pouring money into

universities, elevating the colleges of advanced education and promising funds for teachers' colleges.

In this way the government has offset the danger that the rising tide may have engulfed some of the established peaks of tertiary education. Some of the older C.A.E.s are already well elevated and appear to be developing an "Ivy League" in the system.

The newer and decentralised country C.A.E.s are barely above tidewater. However they have been promised a massive injection of funds to produce the uplifting earthquake. During the present era the teachers' colleges are no more than mudflats which exhibit promise and potential.

In the meantime the university peaks are being subjected to the erosion of public pressure. They are being required to be more in tune with community demands.

Pressures are being brought to bear from students, staff, graduates, the professions, the community and the politicians to level out the tertiary education institutions. It is inevitable under the existing system of administration of tertiary education that differences will become less important.

Good government and the academic leaders in the various institutions will ensure that the tertiary system does not degenerate to an educational swampland.

It is now up to the proliferating C.A.E.s to produce graduates who can prove themselves alongside other graduates. When this occurs the community will no doubt be prepared to accept the concept of an overall University of Australia. Such a tertiary institution would consist of many campuses which each would offer their own specialised training facilities to a fluid student population by an equally mobile academic staff. A wide choice of interchangeable tertiary educational opportunities is forecast for Australia in the future.

By now universities have ceased to have the degree-granting monopoly, C.A.E.s have already penetrated the market, and it appears that, soon, teachers' colleges will also be granting degrees. This trend was discussed with a prominent member of the State Council of Victoria Labor Party and he suggested that industry also should be able to award degrees. In his opinion, research in his particular industry—petroleum—is about five years ahead of research done in universities. So, he reasons, why should not these research workers also qualify for degrees?

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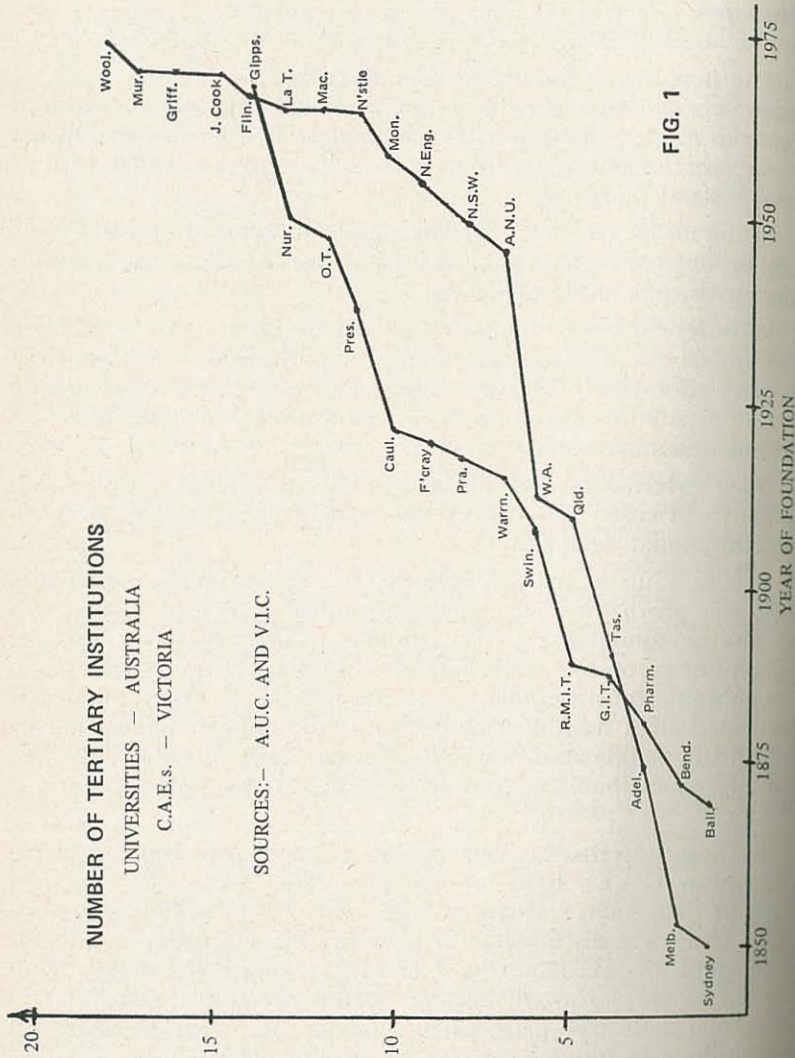


FIG. 1

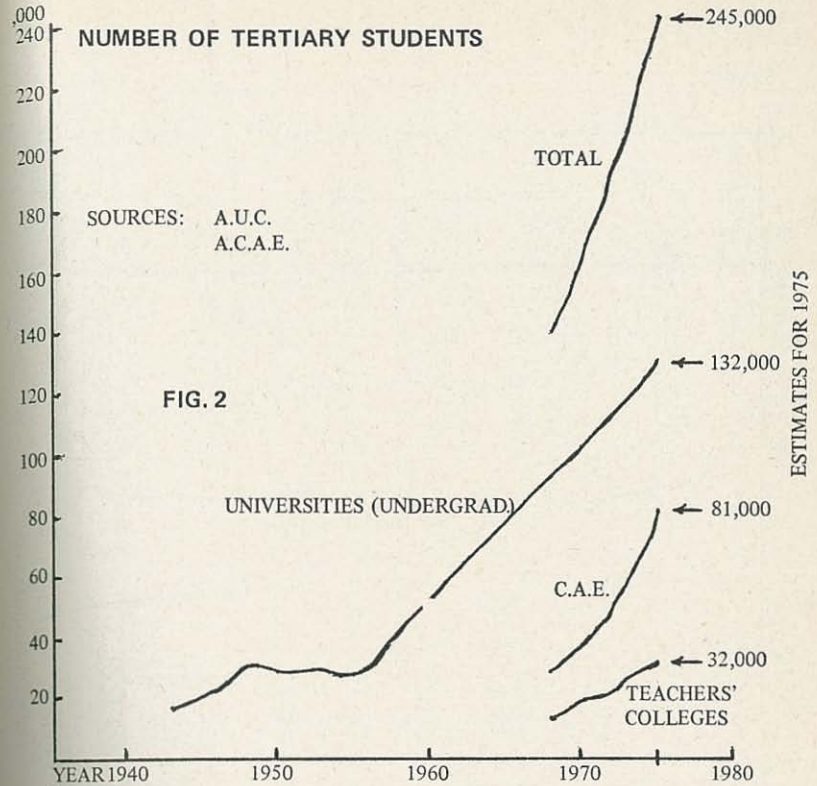


FIG. 2

STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AS PROPORTION OF 17-22 YEARS AGE GROUP

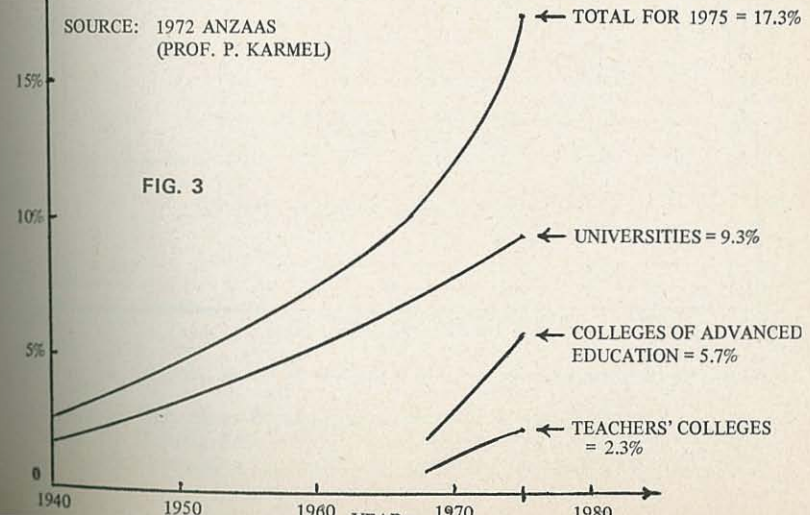


FIG. 3

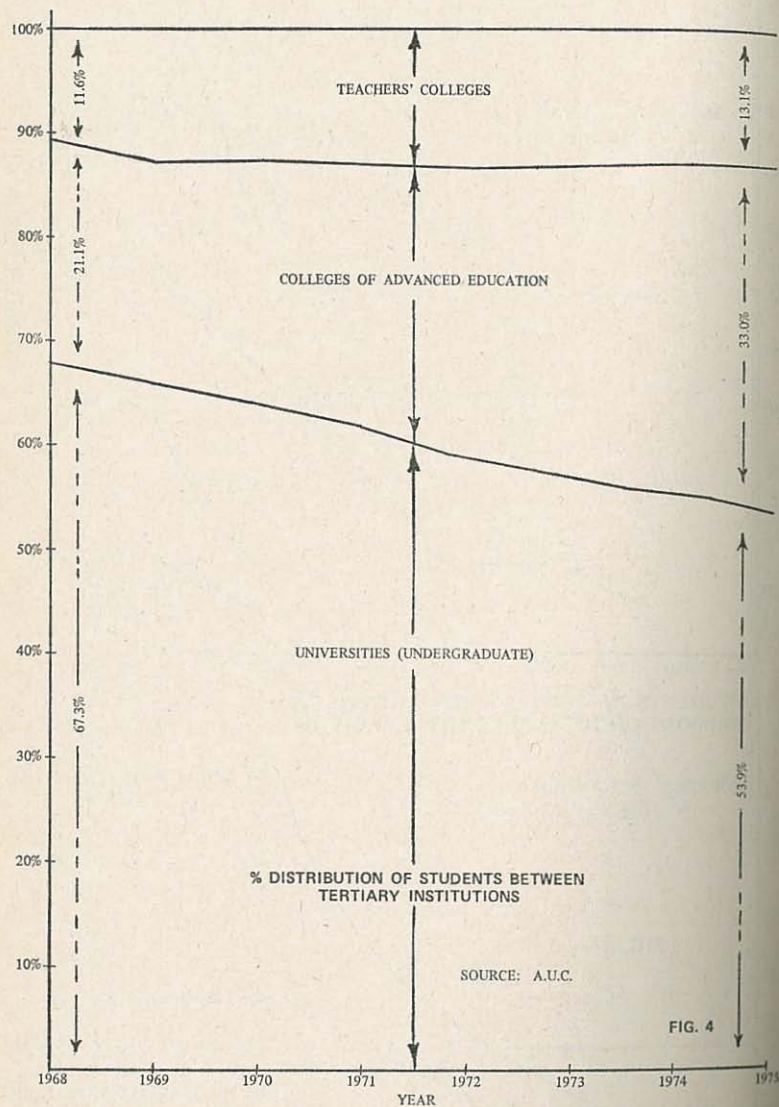


FIG. 4

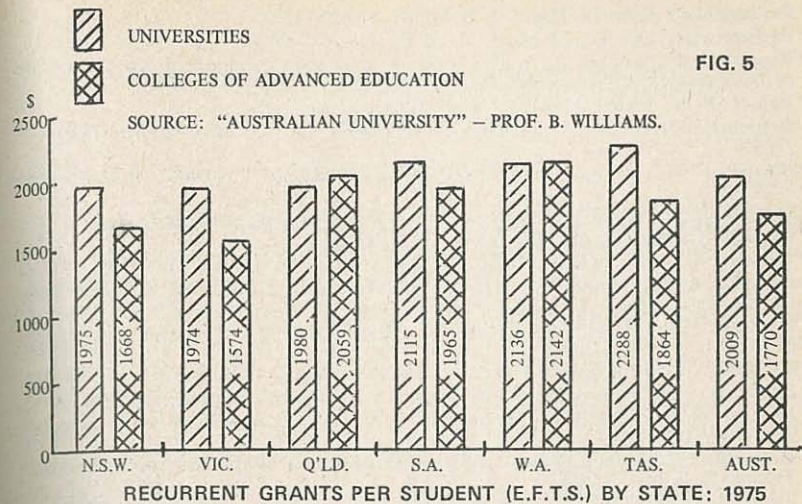


FIG. 5

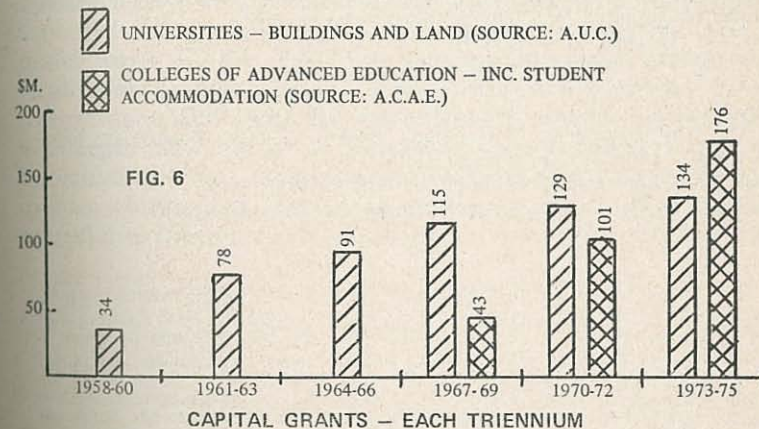


FIG. 6

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MARRIED WOMEN IN ACADEMIA— A PERSONAL VIEW

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At its Annual General Meeting held at Flinders University in August, 1973, the Federation of Australian University Staff Associations carried the following resolution "that the Federation investigate discriminatory practices in relation to women and single people in the Australian Academic Community and that it adopt as Federation Policy that all Australian Universities should seek to have implemented by *their governing bodies a maternity leave scheme*". In the following year it resolved to "instigate an enquiry into the status of women in academic positions in Universities . . .".¹ In July, 1973, the Australian Union of Students resolved that "specific research and action projects on sexual discrimination be a high priority of the A.U.S. in 1974".²

These resolutions reflect some of the questioning of the status of women taking place within Australian universities over the past two or three years. At Sydney, for example, a fairly large-scale survey of women academics in the city's three universities is well under way.³ At the A.N.U., a sub-committee was set up by the faculty board of the Research School of Pacific Studies in July, 1973, to investigate the problems encountered by women Ph.D. students with dependants and make recommendations designed to ameliorate the situation.⁴ Several universities have initiated women's studies courses, whilst others have attempted to integrate study of the role of women into existing course content.⁵ A number of student sub-theses

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¹ F.A.U.S.A., *Minutes of Annual General Meeting*, 1973, Sect. 28, 30, 1974, Sect. 19: the 1974 inquiry is to be "with particular reference to the qualifications of those women seeking academic employment; the level of position to which they are appointed; the extent to which the positions held carry tenure; the length of service in particular positions held; and the impact of promotion procedures on women in universities".

² "Woman's Day", a Flinders University publication, 16th July, 1973.

³ Madge Dawson, Diana Temple, Heather Radi, Bettina Cass, Anne Winkler, *Women Academics in Sydney*.

⁴ A.N.U. Institute of Advanced Studies, *Report to Chairman of Faculty on the Situation of Women Ph.D. Students with Dependants*, March, 1974. The survey and recommendations covered male students with dependants as well as female.

⁵ In the University of Tasmania a seminar course was run in the History Department in 1973. In the University of Adelaide, in the Politics Department 1974. In Sydney in the Philosophy Department 1973, and in the Department of Government 1974. In A.N.U. in the Department of Political Science, S.G.S., a set of lectures and seminars are included in the unit, *Political Sociology*. The Departments of