Staff UK Universities, 1984/5

Status	Males (%)	Females (%)
Professors	97.6	2.4
Readers/Snr Lecturers	93.1	6.9
Lecturers	82.5	17.5
Others	65.8	34.2
Total:	84.4	15.6

Source: Equal Opportunity Commission, *Women in Universities: A Statistical Description*, Statistics Unit, Manchester, April 1985.

Australian Universities: Female Teaching and Research Staff 1980 and 1984

Status	1980 %	1984 %
Professors	2.1	2.7
A.Prof./Readers	4.2	4.9
Snr Lecturers	8.3	9.7
Lect./Tchg. Registrar	19.0	22.7
Principal Tutor	48.9	56.1
Snr Tutor, Dem./Asst. Lect.	38.4	40.3
Dem./Tutor, Tchg.F.	40.9	44.3
Total	16.2	17.1

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Table 2.21 and 2.22, pp.37-38, Tertiary Education Australia, 1984.

turers are in these fields while a further third of female lecturers are in medicine, science or education or are higher grade staff in arts subjects.[10]

In the UK there has been a decline in the percentage of Professors who are female from 2.7% in 1979 to 2.4% in 1984/5.

In Australia at the tutorship/demonstrator/teaching fellowship level, the lowest rung of the status ladder, the participation of women has increased from 38.4% in 1980 to 40.3% in 1984. Given that more women are gaining doctorates, albeit slowly, this should be reflected in staffing. In 1975 the percentage of doctorates received by women was 11.7%.[11] By 1984 the percentage of women receiving doctorates (PhD and other) was 19.7% but female staff had increased by only 0.9%.

In 1984 in Australia, 2.7% of all professors were female which is an improvement on the 1980 figure. This is also true at the associate professor/readership level. While there have been some increases at all status levels, the biggest increase has been at the principal tutor level — by 7.2 percentage points. The percentage increase for women at the lecturer level has been 3.7% — slightly more than half the increase at the principal tutor level. But overall it cannot be claimed that women academics in Australia are gaining much ground.

A University of Melbourne report raises the question of tutorships in relation to equal opportunity.[12] This report suggests that given the nature of tutorships, 'many women currently employed in Australian universities may be considered ineligible for academic careers despite their involvement in teaching, departmental administration and student service'.[13] If the trend for women entering postgraduate study is either to defer for a period or enrol as part-time students, this means inevitably that women will be older when they apply for their first academic position. If they proceed to the lowest academic rung, they will be even older when applying for a lectureship and then they will be rejected by selection committees because they do not fit the idealised image of the 'young scholar'.[14]

The UK Equal Opportunity Commission states that women have remained a minor proportion of the academic staff and have failed to make gains in areas of science and technology which are the traditional preserves of men.[15] Moreover in its response to the Government's Green Paper on the development of higher education the Commission states . . . 'that expected expansion of part-time education will neither attract nor benefit the majority of women unless the funding of part-time students is reformed substantially'.[16] It is pertinent that the Commission in this 1986 report cites an earlier 1979 report which pointed out that 'the present system was weighted in favour of full-time students and militated against women'.[17] Thus while government instrumentalities and industry are saying that something should be done, governments continue to do nothing.

Further recommendations by the Equal Opportunity Commission include asking the Department of Education and Science to encourage institutions to provide compensatory courses in science, technology or engineering for women. It also suggested that changes be made to the Grant Aid scheme to help part-time students as is the case already with some part-time teacher training courses. Given the imbalance of women academics in lower status positions, the Equal Opportunity Commission recommendation that institutions of higher education examine recruitment and promotion policies is also pertinent.[18]

While it is generally agreed that universities need to initiate changes within their own institutions, subordination of funding submissions to market forces and attempts by government to control universities may discourage female students especially those attending part-time. Substantial improvements in female participation at upper levels may in part depend on the provision of more scholarships or other forms of funding. This could go some way to overcoming the barriers of expectation and career stereotyping which are apparently still blocking the progress of women in the groves of academe.

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Life after Dawkins: teaching and research with diminishing resources[1]

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I am honoured to be here, and happy for a sentimental reason. The first lecture I gave in a university other than my own was here, twenty-five years ago, on the subject of higher education in Australia. Being about to retire, today's address on the same subject in the same place is likely to be the last. That symmetry would be even happier if it were not for a change in the subject matter. Then, we were considering how the universities should use growing money and freedom. Now we must think what to do with dwindling money and freedom.

It is convenient to begin with four contributions to that conference in 1964. First, George Howie argued for educating all school teachers in universities. Government chose instead to follow the Martin Report of the same year, so a lot of teacher education remained on the cheap side of the binary divide. But three other themes have fared better.

Sol Encel contrasted the instrumental or 'service station' role of universities — training doctors and lawyers and engineers as economically as possible — with the critical and cultural role which they should also play, but had generally failed to play in Australia. We have since done a lot of what he asked — you may not agree with all the arguments that academics address to business, government, the arts and the public these days, but there are certainly plenty of them.

Don Anderson reported surveys of students' responses to good and bad teaching. There is no good mass teaching: good teaching engages students in active discussion in small groups and gives expert individual attention to the work each of them does. Some honours students and some clinical students have always had that sort of care; but from the 1950s to the 1970s we extended varying amounts of it to most students. For that and other reasons first-year failure rates have fallen dramatically and there are now more distinctions and credits than passes. We teach better than we did — though the quality is now declining again as our resources decline.

In 1964 we already perceived conflicts of interest about university size. Some big research can get bigger resources in big universities. But plenty of the best research, much of the best teaching and most of the sensitive, quickly responsive administration are done in medium sized and small ones. In big ones administration is normally more expensive and inefficient as business has to be duplicated at several levels of hierarchy, and thought and choice by principals have to give way to rule-book administration by subordinates. Big universities don't actually economise. What they do is make it easier for the mass of undergraduates to be short-changed and alienated by cheap mass instruction, to yield surpluses to pay for big research and administrative tophamper.

We also discussed how to get useful research, and the public cultural and critical work that Sol Encel was asking for, from scholars of the kind who need time, libraries and sometimes study leave, rather than research grants. A good deal has since been achieved. In the department to which I belong there is more and better undergraduate teaching, plus output of three other kinds which were rare or non-existent a generation ago: substantial postgraduate teaching and research; a lot of public broadcasting, book reviewing, serious journalism and services to government, public enterprises and trade unions; and books and articles in print at the last count in eleven languages.

Thus in about twenty years from the onset of the Menzies reforms our universities were transformed, and contributed noticeably to transforming our society. They became respectable members of the international league and substantial contributors to our own economy and culture. We should not forget who contrived that: a Liberal Prime Minister decided to revolutionise the universities. He commissioned three excellent teachers, researchers and academic administrators to tell him how to do it. And he did what they advised.

There were good reasons for another review in the changed conditions of the 1980s. The demand for higher education was growing, but governments had been cutting the real resources per head for supplying it every year since 1976. They have continued to cut them, while increasing the total provision for higher education to meet a fast increase in student numbers. How much of the growth could be met cheaply by getting the academics to work harder?

Competent investigators were commissioned to review the universities' efficiency and effectiveness. They found that the universities were running fairly efficiently with their costs cut to the bone. Faced with that unwelcome message the Hawke Government took the imaginative step of dispensing with competent investigators. It replaced the Minister of Education and hurriedly introduced drastic changes of system designed by people, mostly anonymous, who don't appear to have included many excellent university teachers, researchers or leaders.

My subject is how we should work under the new regime rather than what is wrong with it. But to characterise what it is that we must work under I will begin, for a reason which will appear at the end of the lecture, by summarising the way three of its distinguished critics see it.

In a notable lecture to your medical school four months ago David Penington, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, sketched the changing conditions which called for a review and expansion of Australia's higher education, and paid generous tribute to Mr Dawkins for recognising the need, for promising some funds for expansion, and for the stated aims of his policies. But three of the policies contradict the stated aims: good principles of management and intellectual independence are contradicted by a gross increase of central political and bureaucratic control over the universities; by a power to subject every research grant to central political control; and by forced mergers of disparate institutions.

Mr Dawkins responded to those criticisms with personal attacks on Penington, and untruthful or misleading statements about the policies in question. He denies that he has increased political control, or the possibility of political control, of the universities.

Colin Howard, Professor of Law at Melbourne University, has shown (in *The Age*, 27 June 1989) how untrue that is, and how well Mr Dawkins knows it. The Commonwealth can attach conditions to the universities' funds. There are no effective constitutional limitations on the conditions it may attach, and the new Commonwealth Act leaves no legislative limitations either.

In its published policy papers the government asserts that it will use a wide construction of the States Grants legislation to achieve compliance with its wishes, even in the matter of the internal government of the universities; and the Act provides that most of its wishes will in fact and in law be the Minister's. Funds voted for higher education are to be distributed 'as the Minister determines', without any requirement that parliament or public see the details of his determinations. The funds must be used in strict compliance with 'educational profiles' prepared by the universities under guidelines specified by the Minister. The initial guidelines were public; future guidelines need not be. The universities must also link their proposals to national priorities chosen by the government, and prone to change with each change of government.

The Minister may seek advice from various sources but does not have to accept it. There is none of the 'arms length' insulation from detailed political direction that has been traditional in government's relations with universities or with the ABC. Legally, the Minister himself allocates every research grant. Mr Dawkins promises not to exercise that power — but his past promises have not always been kept, his public servants do plenty of things in his name, and he will not always be the Minister.

The red-necks of the Waste Watch Committee certainly want such powers to be exercised, and any one of them may turn up as the next Minister of Education.

A four-level structure of Board, Councils and Committees has been created to offer the Minister the advice he need not take. The Board and Councils include many members who have not taught or researched in universities. The Act empowers the Minister to give binding instructions to the summit Board, which can then direct its Councils and Committees.

Professor Howard notices major gaps in what he calls 'this obese and complicated administrative structure'. Scarcely any of the Minister's decisions, his instructions to the Board, or the advice he receives from the Board and Councils have to be reported to Parliament and none of them can be disallowed there. Meanwhile each Board, Council and Committee has its public servants, and they demand flows of information from the universities. The same information is often demanded independently by a number of them. It is often demanded at short notice — that is said, I don't know how truly, to be part of a strategy to transfer power in the universities from their academic committees to their Registrars.

If asked, those who demand the information often say they have no idea why it is demanded, or whether or for what purpose it may be used, but they expect there will be financial penalties if it is not supplied. There has thus been an increase of bureaucratic numbers and costs in Canberra, and some forced shift of resources from teaching and research to administrative work within the universities.

The Minister thus has comprehensive powers to direct the universities in what to teach and research. When he says he won't use the powers, it is reasonable to ask why his White Paper said he would, and why he got Parliament to create them. When he says he has not got such powers or that his servants are not backing them with financial threats he is simply being untruthful.

He says, for example, that he and his servants are not forcing mergers. To that Paul Bourke, Director of the Research School of the Social Sciences at the Australian National University, replied in *The Age* on 9 June 1989. The government has announced that institutions above specified sizes will be funded at higher rates per head. That is an explicit threat to institutions below the specified sizes to merge or suffer.

Second, the Minister's servants have actively encouraged university administrators to expect that institutions currently funded at rates above the national average (that is, most universities) will be cut back to the national average rate unless they merge with institutions currently funded below the average. As far as we know there is still no decision about the principles on which the institutions will actually be funded, but as often as the Minister denies that merging will have any effect on long-term funding the institutions are privately encouraged to expect that it will, and the White Paper still says that it will.

Bourke concluded that 'it is a sham . . . for the Minister to insist that no coercion or direction is at work here. Virtually every institutional move recently reported by his taskforce, and indeed the taskforce itself, has been driven by the perception within the institutions that, if they do not comply with the guidelines of the White Paper, their operating base will be altered. The proposition that the mergers exhibit some voluntaristic, state-based process is an affront to public intelligence.'

Penington, Howard and Bourke are excellent teachers, researchers and academic leaders and administrators. Their criticism is supported by almost all the contributors to the debate who have similar qualifications, most recently by the ex-Vice-Chancellors Karmel, Williams, Inglis, Hancock and Caro, and (with different qualifications) by the Chairman of BHP and Chief Executive of Western Mining.

Similar policies in Britain are attracting similar criticism, some of which I will presently quote. If we are to conserve the good principles we stand for within the new system, it is important that we understand just how bad the intended system is.

First, many of the mergers defy experience. Diverse activities on separate campuses, conducted by staff recruited on different principles with different expectations but now put into unfair competition with one another for pay and status, are not likely to be improved by subjecting them to an additional layer of administrators. Such mergers usually increase administrative costs, duplicate work, and slow administrative procedures. As proposed between college and university institutions they are likely to cause long periods of mutual jealousy and suspicion between the ex-college and the ex-university staff, as the college staff expect university rewards and conditions of work but the Minister intends that most of the ex-university staff should accept college rewards and conditions.

Above the new central bureaucracies of the multi-campus institutions stands the new Canberra bureaucracy. It has recruited some intelligent young people into its junior ranks, but from top to bottom it is staffed almost entirely by people who have not themselves done any excellent teaching or research, or recruited, led or defended excellent teachers and researchers. As noticed by Colin Howard they exercise Ministerial powers which could any day be used, even if they have not yet been used, to threaten the political and intellectual independence of much Australian scientific, social and political research. The powers are evil if they are to be used, and if they are not, the bureaucracy is a waste of money and public servants.

Next, it is absurd to suppose that the universities can increase the quantity of their members' teaching without reducing its quality. I have sixty pupils where ten years ago I had forty. Because sixty is too many, less than forty are getting the attention that forty used to get.

That is not because I won't put in the hours, it is because a starved library can't multiply enough copies of the books they need, in practice they can no longer use interlibrary services, and I do not have the personal capacity to develop a knowledgeable human relation with so many people, or to keep in mind their individual aspirations and styles of work and the ways in which each could be challenged and helped.

Much of that damage was done before Mr Dawkins' arrival, by the attrition of real resources since 1975. The research funding clawback will make it worse. It will be worse if universities which don't merge with colleges are cut a further ten or twenty per cent to bring them down to national average funding. It will be worse if the ablest academics who get research grants can unload their teaching to overload the less able. And it will be worse if the Canberra bureaucrats succeed in their current attempt to freeze and rigidify teaching methods by imposing uniform schedules of class sizes and contact hours throughout the system.

In our returns to Canberra I already have to lie about two thirds of my teaching because it is by appointment with individual students, and the bureaucrats refuse to count that as teaching at all, or to give my university financial credit for it.

But the worse threat is the long-term one which springs from a double contradiction in the determination to make a radical separation between teaching and research. It arises from two causes: from thinking unhistorically about the new conditions of employment, and from designing them to check slack performance without any understanding of the conditions for good performance.

The main intent of the scheme, including the mergers, is to save money by having two thirds or so of the academics stop researching and do more teaching instead. For that purpose the basic conditions of employment will require scholarly teaching but will neither require research nor allow time for it. But ambitious members of the teaching force will be able to compete for research grants from the Minister in Canberra or from private industry. Those who get grants are then expected to get matching favors from the new businesslike chief executives of the universities, in the form of less teaching, faster promotion and perhaps higher rates of pay.

The scheme might imaginably work in the short run to redistribute work and resources among the existing population of academics. The present generation was recruited on standard university conditions, it includes plenty of high talent, and it has taken Australia from far behind to the forefront of the world's scientific and social research. But as that generation retires or emigrates, the proposed new conditions of university employment are not likely to recruit more like them.

The new recruits are to be hired as teachers only, with enough reading time to keep up with their subjects but not contribute originally to them. Academic pay rates have been cut about 20 per cent since 1975, and for teaching only without a research requirement the industrial tribunal is likely to cut them further. Research opportunities for a minority are to depend on a competition in Canberra and matching favours from chief executives who are not accountable to the academics. The opportunities may anyway be temporary, with the researchers returning to full-time teaching any time their external funding stops. For the kinds of work in the humanities and social sciences which need time and library services rather than research grants the new conditions appear to make no provision at all.

Not many of the productive researchers of the present generation would have joined an Australian university, or would now join it, on those conditions. Why should they, when standard university conditions of work are available in every other English-speaking country? When basic Australian university pay and conditions are likely to be roughly those of the old teachers colleges?

When rhetoric about free inquiry in the humanities and social sciences is contradicted by conditions of work which make no provision for it? When almost every genuinely distinguished university teacher, researcher and academic leader who has spoken publicly about the new conditions has condemned them as misconceived and unproductive?

And when draconian powers to direct teaching and research are available to whoever gets to be Minister of Education?

If these conditions prevail, the universities are likely to recruit chiefly college teachers without much original research ability. The exceptionally intelligent and creative individuals whom they ought to recruit will go to universities abroad, or will earn their livings at home in the learned professions, business, advertising or the arts, as exceptional Australians did in the past before the Menzies revolution equipped us with first class universities of our own.

I know that the Hawke Government thinks its new measures will produce more and better and better-used research. But the measures are so incompetently designed that any genuinely original and productive academic can see how likely they are to be counter-productive. By discouraging the basic supply of rare talent — degrading its undergraduate teaching and discouraging its academic recruitment — they are likely to replace original and valuable research by more of exactly the second-rate ritual publication that they say they want to discourage.

The mistake extends to their approach to the under-use of Australian science by Australian industry. Their response to that problem is truly extraordinary. Their own admirable Minister of Science has shown more vividly than anyone that Australia produces plenty of excellent, industrially usable science, but our comparatively uneducated and unadventurous business managers and our industrially inexperienced public servants have been notoriously backward in putting the science to industrial and commercial use.

So with breathtaking logic the Hawke Government proposes to transfer control of the excellent science from the excellent scientists to the mediocre business people and bureaucrats, with a frightening share of power for whoever gets to be Minister of Education.

It may partly be to make that transfer look plausible that the new authorities have been expressing some public and a lot of private contempt for Australia's academics. Though their review of efficiency and effectiveness told them that there was not much slack left in the universities, they seem determined in the words of one of them to 'put a bomb under all that academic stodge'.

Some of them are said to want revenge for having been refused academic jobs and some just enjoy pulling wings off flies, but the respectable reformers among them are trying to legislate against slack performance in ways which show little understanding of what produces good performance.

There is no sign that they have looked for excellent individuals, departments or schools to study how they are contrived. My own university owes some of its excellence — some of the excellence which it has managed to sustain despite declining resources and an aging academic staff — to some inventive methods of internal government and self-review. Mr Dawkins is said to be particularly hostile to this achievement. Peter Karmel has recently explained very clearly why the top-down, unrepresentative management which the Minister wants is a bad way of managing intellectuals. But the Minister is unmoved.

I ask you to consider one particular history as a sample of the academic and industrial problem which the government faces, and the kind of solution it is trying to impose.

Twenty-eight years ago, very early in the history of the genetic engineering which followed the discovery of the structure of DNA, my colleague Derek Rowley published a paper on the theoretical possibilities of engineering certain kinds of new organisms with benign uses for humankind. The intelligent professionals of the National Health and Medical Research Council, some American foundations, and the University of Adelaide recognised the promise of the work and the worker and supported both steadily for a quarter of a century.

One effect of that was to keep Rowley's riveting teaching in Adelaide for a quarter of a century. A research product was the world's first oral vaccine for typhoid and cholera, much more easily and widely usable by very poor people than vaccines which rely on hypodermic injection. With more than four hundred human volunteers in Australia and the United States, Rowley and his team took the vaccine as far as research funding could take it through the process of clinical trial and proof. It is a proven product capable of saving many millions of young lives in the poorest regions of the Third World.

But at the point where it had to pass from research support to commercial development, Australia stopped it in its tracks. Australia's bankers, venture capitalists, private enterprises, public servants and Commonwealth Cabinet Ministers will have nothing to do with it.

An American charity is financing a field trial in Bangladesh on terms which prohibit any Australian advantage from the trial. An Australian company may acquire the product and sell it for development abroad. But that is all.

As the years pass, scientists in other countries are replicating the genetic engineering and when they complete it, other countries' manufacturers will develop and market the vaccine, and other countries' governments will get credit for its use which may well be a massive life-saving use as an item of international aid. The only people in the whole wide world who are in a position to develop it but refuse to develop it are the heads of the relevant branches of Australian business and government.

Why do they refuse to develop it?

They say the product can only sell to poor countries or aid agencies, so the profit margins and returns are likely to be modest. The returns will also be some time coming: five or ten million dollars of development money must first be invested over three or four years. In present conditions, at current rates of interest and future discounting, other uses of money promise earlier and higher returns.

And that's it, that's all, that's the end of it: economic rationalism rules in Canberra now. No long-term considerations, no humanitarian considerations, no strategic thoughts about the base and outreach of Australia's pharmaceutical industry, or Australia's standing in the Third World, or the potentiality of the vaccine as an item of international aid, or better Australian business uses of brilliant Australian science, or the motivation of future Australian research, or the continuing need to attract rare, original, creative brains into Australia's universities and hold them there — none of those considerations, not even the prospect of modest profits five and ten years down the track, seems to have moved the relevant authorities.

The terminal rejection came from a Commonwealth corporation which exists to support adventurous Australian enterprises. I don't reproach its directors, who were doing their duty under government guidelines. They are all eminent businessmen or public servants. Only one is himself a researcher. Some have seen some uses of Australian science, one or two for Australian firms but mostly for foreign firms. A majority of them, including all the public servants, have that certificate of economic rationalism, an Australian economics degree: they outnumber the scientists better than three to one, the only Arts degree seven to one.

They are eminent leaders in their own lines of business, among the very best of the business and government leaders of the kind to whom the government wants to transfer control of the universities and research funds. But if they are consistent thinkers, and we may suppose that they are, if they had commanded Rowley's resources from the beginning they would presumably have stopped him twenty-five years earlier from wasting resources on a project of no national economic importance.

They may have permitted work on the superpig that his colleagues have engineered, which promises to sell to rich rather than poor consumers; and Rowley would doubtless have gone off to one or other of the American universities which were offering him jobs at that time.

That is what the Hawke Government is trying to do. It wants to take Australia's universities and research funds out of the hands of people like Rowley and those who hired him, discerned his promise, supported his work patiently for a quarter of a century, and know how to teach, recruit and empower more like him to replace him. It wants to hand control instead to the type of people who dumped Rowley's work and who however good at their own vocations have never done or managed risky creative work and do not know how to recognise, teach, recruit, equip or motivate such rare creative talents.[2]

Am I exaggerating? Not if the new bureaucrats continue to have their way. As a last example of the quality of their work consider the current brawl about research infrastructure.

Canberra decided to claw back $65 million of regular university funds through the current triennium, then comparable amounts in a regular way thereafter, to be transferred to big research projects chosen by the Minister and his advisers. The transfer was designed to cut teaching resources and force each teacher to teach more students. It also cuts funds for library and laboratory services and other teaching aids, so that the fewer teachers work with reduced efficiency.

That may all have been intentional cost-cutting. But the universities and the research-funding bodies which still have competent members, and are still free to speak because they are not the Minister's servants, were quick to complain that even for its research purposes the fund transfer would tend to be self-defeating, because some of the transfer must come by cutting the universities' research infrastructure and thus absolutely reducing the amount of research funding they could accept and use.

Can you imagine how incompetent you have to be to have designed the clawback transfer without thinking of that? The outcry induced the Minister to appoint a competent group to advise the government what to do. The competent group calculated what it would cost to ensure that the transfer did not actually reduce research capacity.

What did government do? It promised half the recommended infrastructure funding. Which half? The half that supports research grants from the new Australian Research Council. Not the half that would support research funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NH&MRC), the body which chiefly funded Rowley and funds nearly half of Australia's academic research. Its grants, like most others, are conditional on the grantees' institutions supporting them with standard space and services, that is, with research infrastructure.

To the extent that their capacity to supply such infrastructure has been cut, the universities' capacity to accept and use NH&MRC research funding is cut. Will they strip yet more resources from their libraries and laboratories and faculties of Arts to maintain their biologists' and medicos' access to NH&MRC funding? Or will the NH&MRC reduce the number or value of its grants so that it can afford to accompany each grant with some infrastructure money?

Either way, the Minister has had one more success at dividing and ruling, with further damage to academic unity and morale, to the rational allocation of research resources, and to the reputation of his own bureaucrats.

Again, am I exaggerating? If Mr Dawkins notices this lecture I expect he will dispute every line of it. I'm not sure if such denials are a good or bad thing. It is hard to construe his recent signals. He keeps saying he's changed nothing, created no powers, wouldn't use them if he had, is generously increasing the funds for tertiary education and research.

Those assurances are interpreted differently by different observers. Some think he regrets his revolution and is backpedalling to have it do as little harm as possible. Others, backed by those strong words in the White Paper, think he is merely calming fears and minimising opposition until all the powers and mergers are securely in place — and then WHAM, we'll feel the crunch, especially any of us who have not merged, or have made speeches like this one.

But either way we seem certain to face a continuing decline of real resources per head for teaching, and for the kinds of critical, reflective, political and social and humanistic research and writing that demand human time and exceptional talent rather than computer time and research grants. Whatever else, the Dawkins changes should prompt us to stop shaving a few more per cent each year from our services to each student and instead to stand back, take a longer view, and consider in a strategic way how best to respond to the substantial reduction in our resources.

The most fundamental need is to preserve in Australia an academic profession of teachers and researchers, including political and social critics, capable of recruiting and holding some of the very best talents.

That may be easiest to do in universities which don't do big mergers; don't become administratively cumbersome; and don't face divisive conflicts between staff recruited on standard university terms and others who were recruited to the colleges without any duty or necessary capacity for original work.

Even in universities like yours and mine (the University of New South Wales and the University of Adelaide) which retain a homogeneous staff, I doubt if we will succeed if we do what the government appears to want, which is to spread all our teaching thinner as resources dwindle, and continue to increase the number of students to whom each teacher is expected to give proper attention.

Basically the government wants us to have one class of students but two classes of academics, with most research done by the upper class of academics and most of the students taught most of the time by the lower class. I believe that will be self-defeating, for the reasons I have outlined.

An alternative, just as ruthless and unpleasant as the government's plan but likely to serve national interests better, is to keep one class of academics but create two classes of students, chiefly by restoring the general segregation of honours students which used to provide a good education to a minority of students before the Menzies reforms began to fund proper teaching for most pass students as well.

If our students for ordinary degrees in Science, Arts, Economics and Law return to mass instruction with inadequate tuition, library or laboratory services or individual attention, we will have much to be ashamed of and the students will have plenty to complain of. We may do our best to direct the complaints to the government whose policies occasion the trouble. But we can identify honours students at entry or after one year of study and teach them properly, individually, rigorously, evocatively.

All academics can contribute shares of both kinds of teaching. All can also have the time and opportunity to research and think and write which alone attract rare creative talents to both teaching and research. The honours schools can replenish our profession, along with others, with recruits of the highest talent and commitment. And we can hope — and agitate — for happier times to bring another Menzies or Whitlam to finance the restoration of tolerable teaching and infrastructure to the mass of the undergraduates.

This is not to advocate a simple return to the past. Especially in the branches of learning I know best I think there has been cause to complain of some footling and ritual research and publication. Some universities have tolerated some lazy or drunken staff, as they should not have done.

And we should take a broader view than some academics do of what academics should be doing with their time and talents when they are not teaching. Not all our scientists should be doing nothing but teach and research; some of them should be, as some already are, leaders and publicists of movements for better health, energy use, environmental management. Not all Lecturers in English should write incomprehensible articles for refereed journals; many of them should be writing novels, poems, plays, biographies, reviews of books and arts. Not all Lecturers in History and Politics should be writing for academic journals; many of them should be working as some already do for governments, political parties and reform movements and supplying the well-researched responsible journalism on political and social issues that could help to bring the rest of the Australian press up to the standard of *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

I don't extend the same suggestions to sociologists because they scarcely need them; the School of Sociology and the Social Welfare Research Centre in this university have offered exemplary mixtures of theoretical and practical research and effective public education.

And so on: academics should contribute in many and various ways to the improvement of Australian life and thought. At the same time the universities should take effective steps (as mine does) to see that tenure and intellectual freedom are not improperly misused.

By those and other means we must husband the seed-corn: run a profession which can continue to recruit some of the very ablest youngsters, compete for its share of the world's best talent and contribute to the world's best thought and writing and scientific discovery. We must recognise that for the time being we do it under hostile government.

Though we must live under that government we should not resign ourselves to it. We should continue to criticise its principles, and its behaviour, as often as it deserves it. We should seek research grants to monitor its effects.

And we should not restrain or censor our research or writing in order to placate a Minister with dangerous powers. Mr Dawkins says he will not personally direct the allocation of research grants, and I believe him. But we have no such promises from his bureaucrats, who as public servants may well see a duty to do what they can to avert criticism of the Minister and his policies. And nervous academics and administrators within the universities may hesitate to propose or publish work hostile to the regime, or may want to restrain colleagues from provocative research or political writing.

We should resist those temptations (as you will agree I am doing in this paper), just as we should resist pressures to attract more funds from business by biasing our research in favour of business interests and ideology. We should do all we can in honest and responsible ways to publicise and discredit the further cheapening of our teaching, the shift of resources from teaching and research to unproductive administrative work, and the improper new powers to give political direction to our research.

If we in the universities thus defy some of the government's wishes it may be that the government will punish us and our students with disproportionate funding cuts. If that happens we should do our best to expose it, criticise it, enlist State governments against it, but not give in to it. Politicians and famines pass, universities continue. When King Charles made Oxford melt down its silver for his war chest the university did not recoup its losses by merging with the Oxfordshire Poly. It survived some lean years and recovered to employ Robert Boyle and John Locke on proper terms. So should we do.

* * *

I add, as postscripts, two quotations. First, Oxford still has trouble with government, and its Professor of Government, Peter Pulzer (in the London Review of Books, 22 June 1989) describes some effects of Mrs Thatcher's Dawkins-style university policies on life at the coalface:

> **. . . it is the job satisfaction that has gone. An increasing proportion of our time is devoted to saving our jobs, as opposed to doing them. To sitting on committees that decide which post is to be abolished and which merely frozen. To evaluating ourselves, each other, our own departments, everybody else's departments. To puffing ourselves, advertising ourselves, inventing new ways of praising ourselves, in the hope that our 'resource unit' will get a few more pennies next time. To answering endless, mindless, meaningless questionnaires, with no idea of who will evaluate the answers or how. The result is easily summarised. We spend an increasing proportion of our time on chores that are secondary to the main purpose of our existence.**
>
> **On present trends this disproportion will increase rather than diminish. Moreover in what we do teach, we are under increasing pressure to adapt to the wishes of grant-givers, or second-guess the presumed wishes of grant-givers and to revise our teaching and research accordingly. In other words, a growing proportion of our non-chore time is devoted to things we don't actually believe in.**
>
> **. . . If you are a student contemplating an academic career, you do not have to be outstandingly perceptive to see that this is not an enticing prospect. You do not need to be indoctrinated by your alienated tutor or supervisor to appreciate what happens when universities are under instructions to turn themselves into businesses, professors into managers and departments into firms.**
>
> **Nothing of what the present government is asking us to do is impossible. If balancing the books is the criterion of efficiency, we can balance them — by starving libraries, leaving posts empty and cramming more students into seminars. If word goes out that accountancy courses are in and archaeology out, we can comply. If the orders are that doctoral theses completed in three years and 11 months are good and those completed in four years and one month are bad, we shall bully our students accordingly. You can do all that, just as you can turn the Victoria and Albert Museum into an ace caff. Whingers and cultural pessimists will say that if that is how things go, then goodbye to Nobel Prizes and staying in the world league. But then they would, wouldn't they?**

He's right, to the last line. Especially the last line. Penington's, Bourke's, Howard's, Karmel's, Hancock's, Williams', Inglis', Rowley's, Caro's and many others' expert and intelligent warnings about the new tertiary principles are written off by the Canberra vandals as the whinging conservatism of 'all that academic stodge' whose torpor has at last been disturbed.

My second quotation is from a piece of my own. Something like the present attack on the universities nearly happened in 1966. Sir Lennox Hewitt became head of the Universities Commission and proceeded to flood us with demands for information so detailed that it would enable his computer to cost and assess the performance of every academic in the land. I remember writing abusive responses across a form which demanded the authors, titles, publishers and retail prices of all the books we would want our history students to read in each of the next seven years.

Most of those books had not been written yet — Sir Len's impression of university life was different from the present Canberra one but no better.

Especially because of Hewitt's evident contempt for 'all that academic stodge', I was moved to write for Tom Fitzgerald's *Nation* of holy memory an account of the activity of my colleagues, faithful teachers taking equal shares of the department's teaching, determining its policies in a collegiate way, and also busy with the books that have since been found to be worth publishing in eleven languages. What I wrote then would hold as well now:

> . . . *I worry for my colleagues, so able, hardworked and generous. And for their students, our next teachers, researchers, writers, administrators, diplomatists and Treasury officers. It looks like a long siege, under sporadic artillery fire directed with increasing accuracy, and with increasing contempt for their valuable activities.*

But before that, there was what later became a more interesting passage. I was complaining about the government replacing a distinguished scientist, as head of the Universities Commission, by a notoriously harsh axe-man from the Treasury. But I conceded that:

> *It is often wrong to prejudge men by their formal disqualifications. The distinguished and successful Vice-Chancellor now retiring from the University of Adelaide came to it, improbably, from the ports and harbors branch of another Civil Service. The same sensitivity, humility, capacity and will to learn, conciliatory skill and temper, and respect for the liberal and humane values of the unquantifiable part of a university's product, might do much to restore everybody's shaken trust in the present regime, and its way with its university advisers.*

That retiring Vice-Chancellor was Sir Henry Basten. Shortly afterwards Hewitt left the Commission and a new Minister of Education appointed Basten to replace him. Rightly or wrongly Basten ascribed his appointment to that paragraph in *Nation*. Who knows?— perhaps the magic can work a second time. We must hope that a future government or Minister of Education will return power over university and research funding to an arms-length commission of a proper kind, and will have to appoint its members. The women members will virtually choose themselves, but for the men — why do you think this lecture has paid such tribute to the qualities of David Penington, Colin Howard and Paul Bourke?

References

1. This paper was delivered as the sixth Wallace Wurth Memorial Lecture at the University of New South Wales, 7 September 1989.
2. Postscript, 1990: So far, the worst has not happened. Because Canberra could not cope with the flood of applications, it has for the time being returned the award of all smaller grants to the universities; and the larger awards are still recommended appropriately by committees of competent researchers. But both concessions are by grace of the Minister, whose powers remain as described in this lecture.

Academic salaries in Australia, 1967 to 1990

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Between the early 1970s and the process of award restructuring in 1990, there was a substantial decline in academic salaries, in relation to prices and in relation to other wages and salaries: average community earnings, private sector earnings, international academic salaries and even — to a lesser extent — comparable salaries in the public sector.

At the same time as the decline in salaries, work loads increased, promotional opportunities were reduced and research funding became more difficult to obtain.[1] The combination of reduced rewards and greater stress has made an academic career less attractive, in itself and in relation to the growing number of alternative careers open to people with advanced university qualifications.

Thus one effect of the salary decline has been to worsen the coming shortage of academic staff in Australia. A serious shortage by the middle of the 1990s is now widely predicted.[2] The shortage is an international phenomenon (although some countries will feel it more than others)[3] and is being caused by the coincidence of increased demand for academic labour — due to enrolment growth and the spate of retirements expected in the 1990s — and insufficient supply because postgraduate work and academic careers have become less attractive options in the financial sense.

As award restructuring negotiations continued in March, Professor Brian Wilson, Chair of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, warned that Australian universities faced a shortage of up to 25,000 teachers by the end of the decade unless there were significant pay rises. He said that: "Careers in academia are much less attractive than they were, say, 20 years ago."[4]

Award restructuring was being negotiated between the academic unions and the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (the Vice-Chancellors' employer organisation) as this issue of AUR went to press. Award restructuring offers the prospect that some part of the lost salary ground will be restored. It appears that the increase in academic salaries will be significantly greater than the award restructuring minimum of 3 per cent plus 3 per cent.

Depending on whether the union or the employer view prevails, and incorporating the first 3 per cent for award restructuring already awarded last October, academics could receive increases ranging from 23.2 per cent at the bottom of the existing Tutor scale, to 12.3-16.6 per cent for Senior Lecturers and 12.7-32.7 per cent for Professors, as well as a new career structure.

From the point of view of academic staff, this is a substantial gain. Whether the salary increases and new career structure will be enough by themselves to restore relativities and alleviate the future shortage problem is another question. It remains to be seen whether the salary and career framework established in the award restructuring process is a 'one-off' change, or the beginning of a longer term process of salary improvement that will further restore the economic standing of the profession. It also depends on what happens with award restructuring elsewhere in the work force.

This article looks at the long term trends, with emphasis on analysis of the decline in academic salaries between the early 1970s and the end of the 1980s. Salaries are compared to price levels and community earnings, to traditional public sector comparators in the research, management and professional fields, and to academic salaries throughout the English speaking world.

Data used

Movements in the base level of academic remuneration are examined — award salaries, as determined by the successive Inquiries into Academic Salaries until 1976, the Academic Salaries Tribunal until 1984, and thereafter the Commonwealth Arbitration Commission (now known as the Industrial Relations Commission). Salaries have also been periodically adjusted in National Wage Cases. A small number of academics now receive non-salary benefits on top of their base salary. We lack summary data on such benefits, but the incidence is probably still too small to disturb the longitudinal comparisons. Unlike the situation in the USA, these non-salary benefits seem to be almost entirely confined to senior levels, and are usually specific to a small group of disciplines. Non-salary benefits are not included. Salary loadings, another recent phenomenon, are not included either.

Gross salaries rather than net salaries are used. The after-tax comparison has been discarded (with some regret) because it is not a standardised academic income: non-salary income, tax and rebate status vary. Gross salary is a recognisable indicator which is common across the whole profession.

Academic salaries and price movements

Academic salaries peaked in real terms in 1973, when there was a shortage of staff and a bipartisan consensus on the need to increase public expenditure on education. Since the implementation of the increases recommended by Justice Campbell from 1 January 1973, the maximum Senior Lecturer salary has fallen by **26.5 per cent** in real terms as measured by the Consumer Price Index. If the value of academic salaries had been maintained in real terms, the Senior Lecturers' maximum salary would have been fixed at $67,346 per year last October, rather than the level of $49,529 which was actually adopted. That is a difference of $17,817 per year.

Since 1973 Professors' salaries have fallen by 26.9 per cent and Readers' by 25.7 per cent. At the bottom of the Lecturer range the decline is 20.9 per cent; for the bottom of the Tutor range it is less: 12.1 per cent. Table 1 shows the details.

Tutors and junior Lecturers lost less than their more senior colleagues because of the compression of relativities that was a feature of Australian wage fixation in the second half of the 1970s — a result of plateau wage indexation decisions, and decisions based on flat dollar amounts rather than percentage increases.

Because 1973 was the highpoint of academic salaries, the real terms decline is less if any other point of comparison is used. For example, following the 1976 Campbell Inquiry there has been a fall in real terms of 21.9 per cent at the top of Senior Lecturer and 23.1 per cent for Professors. Since October 1983, the first National Wage adjustment under the Hawke Government, there has been a loss in real terms of 9.6 per cent for Professors, 8.9 per cent at the top of Senior Lecturer and 7.4 per cent at the bottom of the Lecturer range. Table 2 sets down the history of the maximum Senior Lecturer salary, using some key points of decision in the history of academic salary fixation.

TABLE 1
Academic salaries in real terms, 1973 & 1989

	Salary as at 26 Oct 1989 (3 per cent)	Salary as at 1 Jan 1973 (Campbell Inquiry) 1989 Prices	Difference between 1973 and 1989
	$	$	%
Tutor	23414	26648	–12.1
Lecturer			
Bottom	32197	40698	–20.9
Top	41841	56300	–25.7
Senior Lecturer			
Bottom	42703	57656	–25.9
Top	49529	67346	–26.5
Reader	55818	75098	–25.7
Professor	65837	90118	–26.9

Source: Consumer Price Index, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue Number 6401.0; FAUSA salary files.

TABLE 2
Salary of Senior Lecturer (Maximum) in real terms
1967 to 1989

Date	Current Salary	Salary in constant Sept 1989 prices	Index numbers for salary in constant prices 1973 = 100.0
	$	$	%
Negotiated settlement 1.7.67	8750	53463	79.4
Eggleston Inquiry 1.1.70	10500	59783	88.8
Campbell Inquiry 1.1.73	**13900**	**67346**	**100.0**
Campbell Inquiry 31.7.76	21218	63458	94.2
National Wage Case 27.6.79	25476	58494	86.9
Post-indexation 10.8.82	35077	58314	86.6
National Wage Case 4.11.85	42588	57035	84.7
First 3 per cent for award restructuring 26.10.89	49529	49529	73.5

All the dates used here are operative dates of particular academic salary increases — that is, they are salary highpoints in relation to prices.

In terms of living standards, the most accurate indicator is not trends in the salary at each level successively established in the wage fixation process, but trends in the actual salary received in each financial year — embracing any changes in the salary rates that have occurred during the year. This provides a record of dollars in the pocket.

Using this latter measure, the highpoint of academic salaries was not 1972-1973, but 1975-1976. While the early 1970s were characterised by large but infrequent adjustments, in the mid-1970s salary adjustments were smaller, regular and frequent. Quarterly wage indexation prevailed for a time.