

Macquarie University - a place for learning and teaching

This has always been a place for learning and teaching.

The traditional custodians of the land on which Macquarie University sits, the Wattamattagal clan of the Darug nation, have continued to nurture, learn from, and teach on this land since the Dreamtime. After 1788, this same place became part of what was officially known as the Field of Mars commons, turned to agricultural purposes, where the new settlers and migrants learned, and then taught their descendants, how to work this land to yield crops, raise livestock, and establish market gardens.

In the 1960s, these green fields became the site of Macquarie University - an institution that positioned itself at the crossroads of humanising education and technical preparation.¹ Its establishment was described by Mansfield and Hutchinson in their book *Liberality of Opportunity* as 'an act of faith and a great experiment' - not only in Australian tertiary education but for the hundreds of thousands of students, for whom Macquarie now offered possibility for their higher education: for lifelong learning, for establishing careers, for personal and professional growth and development.

At its birth, Macquarie was Australia's original Innovative University: imagined as an institution that would work to avoid the rigidities, the hierarchies, the restricted traditions, and complicated structures of older universities. Students would always come first at Macquarie.

In the book *The Heart of the Campus*, Macquarie teacher-historian Dennis Phillips states "Macquarie was born to be a student-centred university" in which the student's field of legitimate choices would be greatly broadened and the silos between faculties and disciplines were to be broken down. Students would be encouraged to have choice in their learning: they could take electives, learn by day or in the evening, by external or by distance. There were community college courses, and technical courses, professional and vocational education.

So it was envisioned from the very beginning, that teaching at Macquarie "must always press out to the very boundaries of knowledge and educational practice."² There would be emphasis on the universality of knowledge and disciplines; with special attention paid to the education of women. Macquarie's foundational acceptance of principles of equal opportunity, accessibility, inclusion, and the avoidance of discrimination in education, and its refusal to conform to stereotypes was borne out in the 1987 appointment of Australia's first female and the University's longest-serving Vice-Chancellor, Professor Di Yerbury.

Above all, the emphasis at Macquarie would be on the delivery of a quality classroom experience for both students and teachers. This was enshrined in the University's motto - words taken from the prologue to Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* - 'And Gladly Teche'.

This will always be a place for learning and teaching.

Written by Karina Luzia, October 2020

¹ Hutchinson M, Handley K. (2014) *A Humane Reckoning: From Accounting to Accountability at Macquarie University, 1964-2014*.

Mansfield, B., & Hutchinson, M. (1992). *Liberality of opportunity: A history of Macquarie University 1964-1989*. Hale & Iremonger.

Phillips, D. (1998) *The Heart of the Campus: A History of the Macquarie University Union 1968-1998*