

Dr Gregor Allen Ramsey Citation

For four decades, Dr Gregor Ramsey has been a continuing, challenging and constructive influence on the shape of public education at all levels in Australia. His return today, to this stage, is particularly appropriate.

Dr Ramsey is a former principal of one of the University's primary antecedent institutions, the South Australian College of Advanced Education and he was significantly involved in the creation of that organisation, itself the product of a merger of all previously independent Colleges of Advanced Education in South Australia.

Subsequently, in Canberra, he was Chair of the Task Force on Amalgamations in Higher Education, whose work gave rise to the so-called Dawkins' Reforms that created the Unified National System of thirty-seven universities. This institution owes its existence to those developments and it stands today as one of the more successful examples of the post 1987 universities.

Throughout Gregor Ramsey's career, there have been two remarkably consistent characteristics noticed by his friends and colleagues.

First, he has revelled in the bold leap to new situations in response to changing pressures and priorities in the educational landscape. His involvements have not been without controversy, for he brings to each new task a formidable intellect with often scant respect for existing vested interests or conventional wisdom. As such, his influence can be discerned in *significant* change - to school systems, vocational education institutions, universities, and governmental education policy initiatives both in this country and abroad.

The second characteristic, understood by those close to him, is that he has an unwavering personal commitment to the profession of teaching, and a belief that quality teaching can shape young lives and provide the key to a better world. This passion was most recently recognised in his appointment by the Australian Government in June last year to the Interim

Chair of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, and his involvement this year in the Committee reviewing the teaching of literacy, and particularly the preparation of teachers to teach reading, in Australian schools.

Dr Ramsey's CV documents a range of achievements that extend well beyond what might normally be thought of as characterising an extremely successful career. He was an established leading educational innovator in his 'thirties and continues to operate as a force for change in Australia to the present. To do justice to his individual involvements in this citation is simply not possible. They are, frankly, far too numerous.

His success as an educational policy maker and advisor at national and international levels can obscure his early beginnings as a South Australian science teacher, but commitments he made then – to shaping the curriculum, teachers' working conditions, educational publishing, and the better organisation of schools - have continued in varying degrees throughout his subsequent work.

In 1967, with scholarships from both the SA Education Department and the National Science Foundation he undertook doctoral study in the United States and was awarded the Flesher Fellowship by Ohio State University for outstanding work as a doctoral candidate.

On returning to Australia, Dr Ramsey became Assistant Director of the Australian Science Education Project in 1969, the first fully national curriculum project (and a genuinely innovative development), and was appointed to membership of national advisory boards on educational achievement, ABC science programs for radio and television, and evaluation of the Commonwealth Secondary Scholarship Examination. He assumed the Presidency of the Australian Science Teachers Association from 1974 to 1976.

In the 1970's, Dr Ramsey moved into higher education, beginning a substantial involvement in the precursor institutions to our present University. Over a twelve year period from 1972, he was principal of four different Colleges of Advanced Education. Some might note that each institution was larger than its predecessors. This is no coincidence: he was a central

figure in the rationalisation of the Advanced Education sector, first in South Australian, then nationally.

During that period, he oversaw three developments that were to have a continuing influence in the University of South Australia: the professional recognition of teachers – and particularly opportunities for TAFE teachers - through an education degree (a national first), a commitment to extending access using distance education, and a first move into the recruitment of international students by an agreement negotiated with the Malaysian Government.

In July 1984, he moved to Canberra to assume positions that enabled him to exercise a fundamental influence on the nature of the higher education sector. As a Commissioner of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission and subsequently as Chair of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, he pursued ground-breaking policies in relation to equity, the relationships between vocational and higher education, and pursued a concept of seamless post-secondary education, of which the Unified National System of Universities can be regarded as one logical outcome. He was also Vice President of the Australian Council for Educational Research and a member of the Australian Research Council over this period.

Dr Ramsey's career moved in a different direction in 1991 when he was appointed as Managing Director of the NSW TAFE Commission (and I was pleased to have the opportunity to work for him for part of that time). Vocational education and training in NSW – some 40% of total Australian provision – was transformed under his leadership. The reforms in the Commission, with its annual recurrent budget of more than \$1,000 million, were among the largest ever undertaken in a NSW instrumentality and extremely sensitive, both politically and industrially. The new TAFE system increased student capacity by 12% and generated more than a quarter of its funding from non-State Government sources.

This period in NSW coincides with a large number of international involvements of which membership of the OECD International Advisory Board for Vocational and Technical

Education and Chairmanship of the UNESCO International Advisory Committee for International Projects on Technical and Vocational Education are but two examples. He has had numerous World Bank consultancies and undertaken OECD reviews of education in Russia, Italy, the Balkan States, Denmark, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.

Since 1995 Dr Ramsey has been involved in full-time consultancy work at all levels of education, both within Australia and overseas, and is Chairman of the Board of Scholastic Australia, an educational publishing company.

He is that most valuable of creatures – a genuinely independent thinker and the most generous and loyal of friends. He has progressed through his career generating both great affection and occasional exasperation, for he moves very much to the beat of his own drum. What nobody denies, however, is his passionate commitment to – and demonstrable success in - improving teaching and learning at all levels of education.

Chancellor, I present Dr Gregor Ramsey for the honorary degree of Doctor of the University.