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Raising Edith: The transformation of a new generation university: Edith Cowan University 1995-2005

Ken Spillman

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About the author

Ken Spillman studied media and history at Griffith and Murdoch universities and now ranks among Australia’s most prolific authors. His published work includes history, fiction, children’s fiction, poetry, short film and documentary scripts, sports writing, and criticism. Dr Spillman has won or been shortlisted for numerous literary awards, and the US reference work Contemporary Authors has compiled an entry on his career. He has taught at university and conducts writing workshops and residencies at libraries, writers’ centres and schools.
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INTRODUCTION

Two universities

"Wounded we cross the desert's emptiness,
and must be false to what would make us whole.
For only change and distance shape for us
some new tremendous symbol for the soul."

– Judith Wright

Consider two universities with ostensible similarities. Each has several campuses utilising prime metropolitan real estate, complemented by a regional presence. Each seeks to cultivate international markets. Each has approximately 20,000 enrolments. Each collects approximately one quarter of tertiary entrance first preferences in a highly competitive operating environment.

Beyond these similarities, there are differences. The first university performs abominably in sector reviews and in the pursuit of research funds. From time to time, it is the subject of adverse press reports. It suffers the disdain of competing universities, does not have a cohesive marketing policy, and has conspicuously failed to win the esteem of the general public. Among school leavers, it is a 'university of last choice'.¹ Many academic staff members are dissatisfied, underqualified or both – and the university experiences profound difficulties in recruiting high quality replacements. This first university is not armed with a strategic plan. It is navigating a future on its wits, entirely at the mercy of prevailing conditions. It has only a nebulous conception of what it ought to be.
The second university, by contrast, is wedded to the theory and practice of strategic planning. It has a vibrant public image, a distinctive 'brand' and a clearly defined policy of differentiation. It is recognised for its enterprise, and for its client-focused approach to teaching and learning. Many of the staff at this second university have contributed to the determination and elucidation of future directions, and are committed to achieving outcomes. This is a university that has forged alliances with kindred universities, with other educational and government organisations, and with the community. It understands its capabilities, and knows how best to use them.

These two universities have one name. They are both, in fact, Edith Cowan University (ECU) – snapshots of one Western Australian university taken at different moments in time. Contrasts would be unremarkable if those moments were separated by half a century, or even by a couple of decades. Organisations evolve in a manner analogous to the evolution of living organisms, with extinction awaiting those unable to adapt to environmental change. What is extraordinary about these comparative representations of ECU, however, is that a progression from 'first university' to 'second university' occurred within the space of ten years. Adaptation is an important theme in ECU's history between 1995 and 2005, but the university's transmutation in that decade was revolutionary as well as evolutionary. Organisational reform was deliberate, broad, swift and consequential. It was accomplished in the face of significant resistance. The impact was measurable. ECU was ineradicably altered by means of a change management operation which, in the strictly corporate world, might well be described as 'reengineering' – a radical redesign process to 'achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance'.

Campus rationalisation, faculty reconfiguration and reform of the university's academic profile tell part of the ECU story since 1995, but there are multifarious indicators of transformation. In the decade after 1995, for
example, ECU’s expenditure increased by approximately 64% while income increased by 94%. Striking, too, are such statistics as an increase in the number of full fee-paying international students from 1,100 to 3,700, growth in the number of discrete courses from 234 to 434, and a rise in the number of ECU staff holding doctorates from 150 to 265. In the same ten-year period, the university developed a sophisticated Internet presence, delivering many courses through on-line study and ensuring that, by 2004, more than half of its student population utilised a ‘virtual campus’.

In 2003, moreover, ECU became the first Australian university to relocate its headquarters, its new chancellery building at a developing campus in the northern suburbs of Western Australia’s capital city providing a spectacular and powerful statement of confidence in the future; a little over two years later, the former flagship campus was closed down.

In 2006, ECU is Western Australia’s second-largest university. It offers courses in a range of discipline clusters and is explicitly focused on education for knowledge-based service professions and the creative industries. Key teaching areas include computer and information science, nursing and health, education, communications, business, law, psychology, social and community studies, and the creative and performing arts. Among the university’s particular research strengths are health and environment, communications, information technology, microelectronic engineering, service professions, e-commerce and applied financial economics. ECU has also developed a comprehensive range of activities in the Asia and Indian Ocean region, including the offshore delivery of courses, student and staff exchange programs, joint research activities, and international consultancies.

Edith Cowan University identifies as a ‘New Generation University’ (NGU) — a classification of tertiary institutions it helped circumscribe — and played a key role in the Federal Government’s recognition of NGUs as significant contributors to the nation’s economic and social development.
ECU has a particular focus on education for knowledge-based service professions and the creative industries, and is Western Australia's second-largest university.
ECU's rapid transformation from vulnerable drifter to progressive leader within the tertiary education sector is testament to the value of strategic vision and collaborative teamwork. It underlines the value of candour in assessing the need for structural and cultural reforms, and the need for executive fortitude in eschewing 'the path of least resistance'. The decade from 1995 to 2005 was pivotal in the life of an institution 'that never stood still', and ECU's history during that time affirms C.P. Snow's observation – quoted by newly arrived Vice Chancellor Professor Millicent Poole in 1997 – that 'A sense of the future is behind all good policies'. Strategic management within ECU therefore provides a salutary reminder that NGUs – and, more broadly, other educational institutions – hold the power to embrace self-determination. That fundamental and lasting changes were effected in a manifestly hostile operating context, however, imbues the ECU story with a broader significance. The importance of universities to social wellbeing and national prosperity is rarely disputed yet, for over a decade, policy directions taken by successive Australian governments have forced the tertiary education sector to reduce its dependence on public funds. Basic survival in this policy environment has required universities to expand funding bases and aspire to the goal of being increasingly entrepreneurial and imaginative. ECU's decade of achievement stands, therefore, as a guide to leaders interested in strategic planning, organisational creativity and quality improvement in an increasingly commercial age.
1. Prelude to transformation

“If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favourable”

– Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC-65 AD)

EDITH COWAN University (ECU) traces its origins to the establishment of Western Australia’s first tertiary education institution. Claremont Teachers’ College opened during 1902 in a grand stone building, signalling its gravitas with a series of turrets above the main entrance. ‘In those days,’ reflected historians Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne, ‘buildings for academic use were meant to display their continuity with the great European university tradition’. In 1913 the University of Western Australia opened in a cluster of old corrugated iron buildings in Irwin Street, Perth, and looked very much the poor relation.¹

Decades passed, and much changed. By the early 1970s, the Perth metropolitan area was home to five independent post-secondary colleges specialising in teacher training, located at Claremont, Graylands, Nedlands, Mount Lawley and Churchlands. Graylands Teachers’ College closed at the end of 1979 and the remaining colleges merged to form the Western Australian College of Advanced Education (WACAE) in 1982. Meanwhile, the University of Western Australia (UWA) had developed a sprawling
ECU traces its origins to the establishment of Claremont Teachers' College in 1902.
riverside campus with many fine buildings at Crawley while, from 1975, Murdoch University admitted students on its 220-hectare site in Perth’s southern suburbs. The Western Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) opened in 1967 to elaborate technical college traditions, grew rapidly in size and scope, and was reconstituted as Curtin University of Technology in 1987. WACAE established a new campus at Bunbury in 1984, seized an opportunity to open a School of Nursing in 1985 and was respected for its delivery of vocational training. By the end of the 1980s, however, it had lost its place in the sun. Despite a distinguished history in post-secondary education and more enrolments than the State’s two oldest universities, WACAE lacked academic prestige. It wasn’t a university and, without research traditions or significant numbers of staff holding masters degrees or doctorates, couldn’t even claim that it resembled one.

Remarkably, discussions were advancing during 1989 that resulted in university status for the multi-campus college within two years. Between the middle of the 1970s and the end of the 1980s, Commonwealth Government policies aimed at reducing public expenditure had exerted unprecedented fiscal pressure on the tertiary education sector. The Liberal-National coalition led by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser set the pattern from 1976, partly by reallocating funds from universities and colleges of advanced education (CAEs) to technical and further education (TAFE) institutions. As Don Smart and Janice Dudley have argued, Fraser’s cutbacks opened a ‘long period of neglect’ in higher education, which was ‘undoubtedly the most neglected area’ of education policy during the first five years of the Labor Government that took office under Bob Hawke in 1983. Throughout this period, the major political parties were committed to increasing market competition between institutions and encouraging managerial savvy. A sink-or-swim attitude prevailed, and was reflected in federal budget allocations to universities and CAEs, which declined from
4.6% in 1976 to 3.0% in 1988 – a reduction of almost 35% across a period that witnessed a 30% increase in student numbers.\(^7\)

In the third Hawke ministry, appointed following the 1987 election, John Dawkins was entrusted with the education portfolio, which suffered an ostensible reduction in status through a merger with the related policy areas of employment and training. Years of starvation had brought the tertiary education sector to crisis point. A Western Australian member of the House of Representatives regarded as an ‘economic rationalist’, Dawkins was convinced that brisk review followed by radical reconstruction provided the government’s only practicable option.\(^8\) In the assessment of Bolton and Byrne, he possessed ‘an ability almost as great as his insensitivity to criticism’, and ‘proceeded to revolutionise the tertiary sector’ – ultimately to the benefit of WACAE.\(^9\)

In a ministerial statement of 22 September 1987, Dawkins foreshadowed an ‘intensive review of the structure and funding’ of higher education, committing the government to the preparation of a discussion paper identifying proposals for reform.\(^10\) The resulting document, released in December, provided a glimpse of the future for Australian tertiary education and was the basis of *Higher Education: a Policy Statement*, published in July 1988. The most far-reaching structural change proposed was the establishment of a unified national system of higher education – or, in other terms, abandonment of the binary system, bringing universities and CAEs together by means of amalgamation or reclassification. ‘Under the new system,’ the government’s White Paper declared, ‘there will be fewer and larger institutions than at present, and there will be more effective co-ordination between them’.\(^11\)

Significantly, the Dawkins policy statement of 1988 also identified diversity as the way of the future:

The new arrangements will promote greater diversity in higher education rather than any artificial equalisation of institutional roles.
Institutions that attempt to cover all areas of teaching and research compromise their ability to identify, and build on, areas of particular strength and the achievement of areas of genuine excellence. The ultimate goal is a balanced system of high quality institutions, each with its particular areas of strength and specialisation but coordinated in such a way as to provide a comprehensive range of higher education offerings. Diversity and quality are paramount; the unified system will not be a uniform system.¹²

Dawkins’ promised land of equalisation, excellence and efficiency could not be reached without exertion, of course, and upheaval followed. For WACAE, the 1987-90 period was characterised by immense opportunity and a concomitant quota of anxiety. Designation as a university under the unified system would require the institution to develop an educational profile defining its ‘broad mission and responsibilities’, as well as specifying goals for particular areas of activity. Funding was to be linked to performance against priorities agreed by negotiation with the Commonwealth.¹³ In Western Australia, Dawkins favoured a marriage of convenience between WACAE and Murdoch University, but neither institution was enthusiastic about the prospect of a shared future. Under its resolute director, Dr Doug Jecks, WACAE undertook to lay bare its operations to a committee of academic experts in the hope of achieving the sanction of the Western Australian Higher Education Council to become a new, independent university.¹⁴

Chaired by Professor David Caro, a former Vice Chancellor (VC) of universities in Tasmania and Victoria, the committee examined every facet of the college’s operations during June 1990. It disregarded opposition from the State’s three existing universities and followed precedents elsewhere in Australia to find in WACAE’s favour. The Higher Education Council endorsed the Caro report and – the Western Australian Government having
PRELUDE TO TRANSFORMATION

already accepted that, in the context of the Dawkins reforms, there was a strong case for upgrading WACAE – the college’s destiny was sealed. It remained only to select a name for the new university and cases were made for both ‘University of Perth’ and ‘O’Connor University’ (to memorialise a former government engineer). In 1990, with the intervention of Western Australia’s first woman premier, Dr Carmen Lawrence, honour was bestowed upon Australia’s first female member of Parliament, Edith Dircksey Cowan (1861-1932). Enabling legislation was assented to in December 1990 and Edith Cowan University was formally instituted on 1 January 1991, with Jecks as its inaugural VC.¹⁵

No amount of champagne on her bow could disguise the fact that the good ship Edith was sailing into treacherous seas. The strategic and administrative tasks were immense. Campus rationalisation had already commenced, with Nedlands closed and the historic Claremont campus restricted to non-teaching purposes. A Bunbury outpost of WACAE had been established in 1984, while a Joondalup campus was opened in 1988. In 1991, there were more than 17,000 students enrolled at four campuses in 160 vocationally-oriented programs of study.¹⁶ Over the previous decade, WACAE had progressively broadened its curriculum, maintaining its focus on education for the service professions by introducing such disciplines as information technology and nursing, and building upon previously limited programs in business, health and the performing arts. By 1990, there had

*Edith Dircksey Cowan (1861-1932) – Australia’s first female member of Parliament.*
been five faculties or ‘schools’ (arts and applied sciences, business, community and language studies, education, and nursing) and one ‘academy’ (the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, established at Mount Lawley ten years earlier).  

Under the continuing stewardship of Jecks, Edith Cowan University (ECU) sought to increase its participation in research activity and postgraduate teaching, improve staff qualifications and build upon solid foundations in the area of external studies. The executive also demonstrated interest in further diversification, adding several courses in new fields of study that would eventually prove valuable for ECU, including police and justice studies, and youth and community studies.

The Dawkins mantra about ‘particular areas of strength and specialisation’ had set down a blueprint for niche development, the goal being a diversity of tertiary institutions rather than diversification within individual universities and duplication among them. In its early years, there was little evidence that ECU was alert to the opportunities inherent in this new climate or the need navigate the future methodically. As Bolton and Byrne observed, ‘The top team at Edith Cowan continued to show enterprise in taking new initiatives, but perhaps these sometimes seemed responses to unexpected opportunities rather than the result of a long term strategic plan’.

With four universities located in one isolated city and operating in a sector increasingly dependent on market forces, ECU inevitably suffered from the derision of competitors, giving rise to the tag ‘Enid Blyton University’. In the public perception, it was the ‘university of last choice’, a CAE in all but name. Intellectual snobbery fed such chatter, but ECU’s low proportion of staff with postgraduate qualifications – in 1992, only 22% held doctorates – provided grist to the mill. Attempts by Jecks to encourage staff to upgrade their qualifications met with resistance, stalwarts of the
college system contending that the teaching of undergraduates would not be improved by narrow research projects consuming years of their time. A rancorous industrial dispute between November 1991 and April 1992 served only to draw attention to the new university’s lack of highly qualified staff – an episode of self-harm from which it would take years to recover.\(^{20}\)

Jecks retired in January 1993 and a committee comprised of members of the ECU council, together with Professor David Caro and Dame Leonie Kramer (Chancellor of Sydney University), selected Professor Roy Lourens as his successor. With a background in business and accounting, Lourens had most recently held the position of Deputy Vice Chancellor at UWA. He possessed what the ECU executive previously lacked – solid experience beyond the confines of the old CAE sector – but he did not underestimate the challenge of improving ECU’s performance and image. The position of VC, he stated, was onerous:

It encompasses the managerial responsibilities of chief executive officer in one of Western Australia’s largest organisations together with those of academic leader, innovator, defender, and confessor, as well as a guardian of truth, justice, freedom, and integrity.

Lourens wore no cape in this crusade, instead wishing to assemble a posse of committed individuals wearing academic gowns. He continued:

Universities are frequently described as communities of scholars. In one sense, my over-riding objective is to nurture such an ethos, since good scholars know what to do and in the main, advance learning with distinction. This self-generating management style is increasingly being adopted by progressive businesses in rapidly changing environments for the benefits it brings – self-motivation, adaptation, teamwork, and enterprise.\(^ {21}\)
Lourens' laudable goals included 'formulating a sense of direction', 'attending to the causes of excessively high levels of internal disquiet', and 'enhancing external perceptions'. He recognised the need for outstanding professorial appointments, stronger research capabilities, development of the Joondalup campus, longer-term strategies and quality assurance mechanisms. In identifying these priorities, he demonstrated a profound understanding of ECU's requirements. Lourens described ECU as 'a university in rapid transition', clearly perceiving that nominal change was no more than a beginning. The teachers' colleges and CAE had made important contributions to Western Australian education, but transition meant overlaying heritage with signal contributions to society's needs in the twenty-first century. 'My role', Lourens affirmed, 'is to facilitate that transition while ensuring that the University is fully competitive with other universities as it builds on past strengths dating from 1902'.

Significantly, Lourens argued that ECU should be intent upon 'differentiating itself from other universities', and he saw opportunity in research findings anticipating that service industries would account for approximately 70% of employment. He also took steps to strengthen the university's profile in science, technology and engineering, with a particular focus on developing electronic and software engineering capabilities. The number of PhD and Masters students increased from 0.9% of all enrolments in 1991 to 5.1% of enrolments in 1996, and there was notable progress in the areas of external and overseas studies. In many respects, however, the period from 1993 to 1996 was vexing. The university's industrial problems were particularly challenging between 1993 and 1995, and Lourens confessed in 1995 that they had 'left some scars'. ECU fared very poorly in Commonwealth Government quality control reviews and ranking exercises, and sound arguments that such processes were flawed did little to counteract negative publicity. There were, Lourens wrote in his 1994 annual
report, 'lively headlines from time to time'. In 1995, he told his chancellor that staff morale had 'sagged perceptibly' as a result of media slurs, that professors were 'edgy', and that he was experiencing 'added trouble recruiting top staff'. During 1996, further uncertainty was generated by renewed discussion of a possible amalgamation with Murdoch University, which eventually reduced to consideration of a transfer to Murdoch of ECU's Bunbury campus.

Lourens remained at the helm until July 1997, dealing patiently with many difficulties arising from the transition to university status while endeavouring to calm troubled waters. In 1995 he commented: 'Good universities do not eventuate overnight. They are built by hard work, by many people, over many years'. He encouraged debate and confessed that he emerged from his first academic meeting disappointed because 'no one had said anything'. Robert Nicholson, a Federal Court judge who became ECU Chancellor in 1997, told a researcher in 2001:

Roy's approach, after the traumas of his predecessor, was to show that things could work together by avoiding confrontation and sometimes, not confronting the central issue that was there, but on the other hand demonstrating that unity, working together and so on was possible.

According to Bolton and Byrne,

This softly, softly approach to administrative change enabled the University to adapt without trauma, but it may have meant that unresolved issues... were likely to emerge at a later date.

Unresolved issues, deferred ambitions and faltering progress were the distinguishing themes of Edith Cowan University's first six years in Australia's unified system of higher education. These, together with ECU's
lamentable public image, were elements of the legacy awaiting Lourens’ successor as Vice Chancellor, Professor Millicent Poole, in the middle of 1997. Distinguishing ECU in more positive and connotative ways would be Poole’s challenge. It was a forbidding assignment.
2.

Watershed

“He that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils: for time is the greatest innovator.”

– Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

IN THE autumn of 1997, Professor Millicent Poole was serving as Deputy Vice Chancellor at Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. Deciduous trees flaunted colours of red, brown and gold. The air was bracing, increasingly indifferent to the federal capital’s delicate sunlight. Poole carried a heavy load of responsibility but hankered for one monumental challenge to crown a satisfying career. When opportunity knocked, she opened the door.

Previously interviewed for the position of Vice Chancellor (VC) at Curtin University of Technology, Poole had received a letter from Edith Cowan University (ECU) during 1996 enquiring whether she might present herself as a candidate for the position soon to be vacated by Roy Lourens. Aware of discussions about a possible amalgamation with Murdoch University, however – and knowing that Professor Brian Smith, a former VC at the University of Western Sydney, was then in the process of preparing a report on this issue – she held back. ‘I didn’t want to come and work anywhere which was going to be amalgamated,’ Poole recalled. Smith’s
report was decidedly equivocal, however, and Poole was re-approached after the possibility of a merger was laid to rest. This time, she indicated that she ‘could be interested’.¹

Poole possessed an impressive range of experience in the tertiary education sector. An academic interest in human development and the influence of environmental factors, honed in the late 1960s and 1970s, had ushered her to a professional involvement in education and social policy research. After teaching at the University of New England, La Trobe University and Macquarie University, Poole had been appointed to a professorial post at Monash University in 1987.² As a member of Monash’s newly-formed research committee during the Dawkins era – a time of upheaval and repositioning as a result of a Commonwealth Government push to change the face of tertiary education³ – Poole contributed to the establishment of research policies and funding strategies. She played a role in building relationships with the scientific, business and industrial communities, as well as in the establishment of links with Gippsland CAE and the Chisholm Institute of Technology – particularly in relation to nurturing research cultures and identifying priorities in the context of likely mergers. Poole remained at Monash until 1991, with a period as visiting professor at Griffith University in 1990. She then served three years as Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Advancement) at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) before moving to ANU in 1994.⁴

In years to come, Poole identified the Monash experiences in the Dawkins era as her ‘training ground’, the bedrock on which her executive career was founded. ‘I did like the big picture stuff,’ she reflected. ‘I had a helicopter view and had to think outside the box’. The amalgamation of faculties and institutions created ‘massive convulsions, sudden and dramatic change’. She worked closely with the VC at Monash and ‘got on all these major committees and could see how things worked’. She developed ‘a taste
Poole built on these experiences at QUT and ANU, gaining broad experience in leadership and policy formulation, and playing central roles in formulating faculty and corporate plans. At QUT she developed a research management plan and led group involvement in quality assurance initiatives, while at ANU she was part of the VC's strategic vision group, established to promote the idea of a unified and integrated university. Poole understood the importance of underpinning planning processes with resource strategies, and argued the importance of targets, performance criteria and ongoing review in the changing context of higher education policy. She also gained vast experience in staffing matters – recruitment, retention, promotion, tenure and equity – and handled ANU's enterprise bargaining process. Clearly, her range of experience dovetailed neatly with ECU's needs.

Poole's first impressions did not augur well. Whereas Curtin had appealed because of its respected research profile in science and technology, ECU appeared to offer only adventure. She summed up her thoughts after an escorted tour of the Churchlands and Mount Lawley campuses in just two words: 'No way'. Neither, she thought, had the 'look' or 'feel' of a university. ECU's Pro Vice Chancellor (Development), Professor Neil Tuckwell, then drove Poole to Joondalup. The banksias were in bloom, the campus site sprawled invitingly in the fast-growing satellite city, and she was exhilarated by development possibilities: 'I thought, wow! I can do something with this... I saw that I could build a university.' Joondalup in 1997 called to mind La Trobe University a quarter of a century earlier, when Poole been one of only sixteen staff 'building a university from mud flats' – an experience that endowed her with 'an interest in architecture, buildings and concepts of what it meant to be a university'.

Poole's interest was piqued after a telephone call to an acquaintance, Murdoch University VC Steven Schwartz, asking what he knew about ECU.
'At least it’s got a lot of good real estate,' quipped Schwartz. ‘It would be good to sell off Churchlands!' This comment demonstrated to Poole that others were alive to the possibilities for development at ECU. She became excited by the challenges posed by Edith Cowan University, and made up her mind: she would go west, seize the day and – in her own words – 'have a go'. Back at ANU, reactions ranged from surprise to incredulity. Poole recalled: ‘My colleagues at ANU used to call it ‘Enid Blyton University’ [and]... said, “Why would you go from ‘rocket ship to sailing ship?”’

Jane Richardson, a reporter with the higher education supplement to The Australian newspaper, posed a similar question while referring to recent news that ECU trailed the field of thirty-eight Australian universities in the area of research. ‘Why’, Richardson asked, ‘would you go from Australia’s leading research university to one that was ranked 38th?’ For Poole, the answer was simple. Here was an opportunity to ‘work with a young university... to reposition it and help it find a strategic direction’. Risk was inherent in the task, but Poole had little motivation to remain at ANU:

I said to myself the justification was that if I stayed at ANU I’d be polishing the silver... I really wanted something where I could make a difference... I wanted a challenge.

A great believer in the adage that failing to plan is the equivalent of planning to fail, Professor Poole decided that a comprehensive strategic planning process would be her first priority. At a meeting in Cambridge, England, in June 1997, Chancellor Robert Nicholson agreed that a commencement should be made at the earliest possible date. Poole also
sensed that key staff members were ‘looking to me to set a sense of direction for ECU’ and – even before taking up her new position in July – contacted consultancy groups with experience in strategic planning. Once in Perth, she embarked on a series of discussions and briefings involving relevant ECU groups, including the university’s policy group, all deans, the planning and resources committee of the academic board, and staff unions for academic and general staff.\(^{14}\)

The new VC’s purposeful approach delivered a jolt to the university’s senior management team, and executive meetings became more frequent and focused. Long serving finance director Warren Snell recalled:

> When Millicent arrived we had a pretty uncoordinated group, that didn’t meet that often. She pulled this group together... Millicent wanted to discuss a very broad range of issues with this group and we didn’t know what to make of it. Some felt she was travelling across their patch; others were edgy and suspicious of everything. Some rejected any sort of change quite outright.\(^{15}\)

Poole was far from blind to such misgivings and, gearing ECU for a thorough and productive strategic planning phase, feared the crippling effect of internal conflict during implementation. She recalled:

> We had to do more than plan; we had to underpin it with the right structure and people. This was not going to be a strategic plan that you just put on the shelf after it’s written. It was going to underpin budgetary processes.\(^{16}\)

It had not been her intention to address structural issues prior to the completion of the planning process, but early signs of resistance caused Poole to change tack. In August 1997, Emeritus Professor Malcolm Nairn – a former VC of Northern Territory University – was engaged to interview
the university’s key players and advise on ‘how the current senior management structure and operation at ECU may be modified to assist the development and implementation of a strategic plan’.17

On 4 September 1997, Professor Millicent E. Poole was formally installed as Vice Chancellor of Edith Cowan University. Such ceremonies are rituals marking transitions of leadership, and Warren Snell recalled that many staff members attended Poole’s installation ‘thinking it was likely to be another lightweight event, a launch accompanied with some drinks and food’.18 It turned out to be much more. Poole had elected to deliver a policy statement, subsequently referring to it as ‘a good mapping’.19 The title of her speech – ‘Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation’ – provided a powerful hint of Poole’s intentions, and she spoke plainly of her desire to fully ‘embrace the opportunity to lead Edith Cowan University into the future with its eyes and mind wide open’. Poole stated:

To begin with we must reject the cliché that we can never know what the future holds. While that may be true in a personal sense it is unproductive to accept the adage as a good reason for not forecasting challenges and planning for change. The successful universities will be those attuned to political, economic, environmental and social trends. They will be able to read the signs of the future, acknowledge and allow for uncertainty, and make decisions that will achieve a more desirable future state of affairs. Such universities will secure a strategic advantage over the competition...

Trends define the context in which the organisation functions. In order to identify and create strategic competitive advantages we must first identify critical trends, particularly emergent ones, and forecast their future direction. Secondly we must derive implications for effective planning, and construct plans to take advantages of the opportunities they offer or ameliorate their consequences if they may
impact negatively upon the University. In order to do this we must look widely in the social, technological, economic, environmental and political sectors locally, nationally and internationally.\textsuperscript{20}

This, then, was ECU’s future. Poole’s arrival had closed an era and assigned cardinal importance to the business of forecasting trends and planning for strategic advantage. The objective of the new VC was to reposition and reinvigorate ECU and, in this context, she emphasised that the university’s staff would need to be positive, forward-looking and adaptable. Poole referred to staff as the university’s ‘greatest and most important resource’ – and identified a duty to ‘re-skill and reassure... build their confidence and sense of “can do”’. Her own sense of ‘can do’ was patent as she told the gathering:

A four year-old child once taught me a lot about a “can do” philosophy. I was minding my small great niece and to keep her amused I gave her some crayons and paper. She scribbled happily away and, trying to show an interest, I asked her about what she had drawn. “It’s a picture of God”, she said waving a mass of squiggly lines at me. “But nobody knows what God looks like”. “They do now”, she triumphed.

Poole urged ECU staff to ‘rise to the new possibilities and meet the challenges of change’. In order to be at the vanguard, she said, they would need to be ‘environmental scanners, strategic thinkers, opportunity makers and takers’, having both the vision and the skills to ‘advantageously position the institution and its constituent parts in a deregulated, competitive, international and exciting environment’. Poole’s challenge to all was implicit in her concluding quotation. With Robert Kennedy, a former United States Senator, she declared: ‘The future is not a gift. It is an achievement.’\textsuperscript{21}

According to Bill Louden, a senior research fellow at the time of Poole’s installation, staff reactions to the speech ‘depended on where you were...
within the institution at that time'. Inevitably there were some academics who – engrossed by current projects and preoccupied with teaching loads – considered questions no more profound than 'What do you think of the new Vice Chancellor?' Others applauded Poole's determination to study and define the university's mission. Ron Oliver was a senior lecturer in the School of Computer, Information and Mathematical Sciences when Poole arrived, and he remembered: 'There certainly was a sense that there was change in the wind with the new Vice Chancellor... The installation speech matched my own thoughts about where we were heading.' Many, of course, were sceptical that bold words foreshadowed decisive action. Pat Garnett, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering at that time, subsequently admitted: 'I do recall the speech, but I wondered at the time whether or not these changes would really happen... I didn’t think we would see the magnitude of the changes that we did.' For Warren Snell, Poole's speech seemed 'a significant set of words', and he believed that 'most people' recognised them as such. 'There was a lot of discussion,' he remembered. 'People were left in no doubt that there was now a significant change agenda in place. It was a watershed event.'

The new VC's own perspective on her installation ceremony was that she had delivered her message without achieving maximum impact. Poole regretted that professors left many front seats empty after their formal parade to seats facing the audience. She also regretted that some staff members wanted to attend but hadn't been invited. 'I am surprised it had any impact at all,' she reflected. There was little time to ponder this, however, as she grappled with matters pending – notably, the execution of enterprise bargaining agreements and work associated with resolving the future of the Bunbury campus. According to Warren Snell, the new VC's handling of these issues helped distinguish her leadership from that of her predecessors. Poole 'meant business' and things were going to change – rapidly:
I knew this within the first few weeks. One of my earliest recollections was of her declining to sign off on the enterprise bargaining agreement which had been negotiated... It hit the new Vice Chancellor's desk and she was not happy with it and chose not to sign it off.²⁷

Soon afterward, the Bunbury campus was successfully retained after the State Government decided that its transfer to Murdoch University carried few benefits for the campus or higher education more generally. Snell recalled that Poole had had been undeviating in her view that 'this needed to be thought through very strategically', while Pat Garnett gave her credit for having stood her ground, remembering that it would have been 'extremely damaging for morale if we had lost one of our campuses in that way'. Snell concurred: 'The feeling amongst the executive was that we were pretty pleased – it was definitely a win – it felt good'.²⁸

Poole acknowledged that these early achievements enhanced her standing within ECU – in the case of Bunbury, 'I was seen as defending the university' – but also knew that the task of strategic planning would be testing for all. The Nairn structural review had quietened voices of resistance, but would diminish neither their clarity nor effect. Nairn's report and the planning process were unlikely to reduce dissent. During Poole's first week at ECU, she received a letter from Professor Deryck Schreuder, an acquaintance who was VC at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). It was jovial and empathetic, but did little to relieve her apprehension. 'I know a bit about hot seats,' wrote Schreuder. 'UWS in 1995 was a bit like sitting on a blazing gas ring. But be of good cheer; only the first three years are like that!'²⁹

Poole received other messages of support but felt her isolation in Western Australia keenly. Years later, she acknowledged that the 1997-98 period was 'intensely difficult' because she 'knew nobody'.³⁰ Moreover,
while former VC Roy Lourens had taken steps to break down male domination and reform the university’s ‘blokey’ culture – a legacy of the teachers’ college era – there remained significant pockets of resistance to female authority. Bill Louden remembered an ‘old blokes table’ in the Churchlands campus staff room; although women were free to join the circle, ‘the men would just talk over the tops of their heads’.31 Not surprisingly, this environment contributed to Poole’s feeling that she was a categorical outsider: ‘I was female, from the east coast, I didn’t fit into the culture and I worked at a different pace’.32

In relation to strategic planning, pace was a critical issue. ‘We had to move fast to be even credible,’ Poole remembered.33 Determined to consign ‘Enid Blyton University’ to history, she had wasted little time in sowing seeds of transformation. ‘I tried to present myself as the Vice Chancellor of Strategic Necessity’, she attested. ‘That’s the approach I took.’34 Poole was a long way from ANU, and even further from her comfort zone. She was rapidly getting used to it.
3.

Wheels in motion

"Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator and change has its enemies."

– Robert F. Kennedy

BEFORE leaving the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra, Professor Millicent Poole lunched with John Mullarvey, a respected observer of Australian universities who was actively involved in the Australian Vice Chancellors’ Committee. Aware of Poole’s determination to initiate strategic planning at Edith Cowan University (ECU), Mullarvey suggested identifying a number of committed and respected individuals within the university to collaborate in the work of coordinating and implementing the process. It was important, Mullarvey believed, for Poole to avoid becoming mired in the day-to-day work of developing a strategic plan – not least because she would have a myriad of other issues requiring immediate attention.¹ Poole needed little convincing of the power of collaborative teamwork and its importance in achieving consensus about future directions. She recalled:

I wanted it to be me the leader working collaboratively… [E]veryone had to be a leader because I have a philosophy of enabling. I have a background as a developmental psychologist… so I had the notion
of developing people, and... [those people] develop others so that everybody is raised. I didn’t see myself as the “El Supremo” keeping everybody down.²

An obvious difficulty, however, was identifying initial collaborators and potential members of the strategic planning team in a sea of unfamiliar faces. In July 1997, with anxiety levels already high as a result of the incoming VC’s decision to commission Emeritus Professor Malcolm Nairn to report on senior management structures at ECU, the matter of appointing a team to lead the strategic planning process caused significant disagreement within the university’s executive.³ At a time when senior management was itself under review, Poole was wary about its direct involvement in such a critical review process. She insisted that fresh thinking called for new faces and untainted minds. Years later, she recalled being ‘keenly aware that there was much untapped talent within the institution, and many people who would want to be actively involved in shaping the future of ECU with me’. Even more provocatively, Poole advocated the appointment of an external consultant to guide the planning process – a possibility she had investigated in June 1997, prior to her arrival at ECU.⁴

In order to pursue the course of action she proposed, the Vice Chancellor required the approval of University Council, a governing body vested with statutory responsibility for policy determination and management of ECU’s affairs. Having broadly discussed the need for strategic planning with the council’s chair, Chancellor Robert Nicholson in June, and having briefed Nicholson further on 16 July 1997, Poole was quietly confident of support.⁵ At a meeting of University Council on 31 July 1997, she tabled a comprehensive package of proposals contained in three related papers titled ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium’, ‘Structure for Consultation in Strategic Planning Process’ and ‘Strategic Planning Cost’. The first of these
papers posed fundamental questions about the identity and aspirations of ECU, commencing with 'What are we today?', 'Where do we want to go in the future?' and 'How do we get there?'. Poole's interrogative thrust continued as she identified some of the areas requiring exploration in the context of the proposed review and planning process:

Revisiting of the Vision and Mission Statement: What kind of University did ECU want to be? Was it to be an international, regional or local university? How was it to differentiate itself in the market? Did it need to modify its Vision and Mission Statements?

Where were its clients? What delivery modes will they want? How big is ECU to become? What is its mix of students going to be? How will it provide lifelong learning in a global and technological environment that demands ever increasing levels of competence?

Academic Profile: Was ECU going to develop new faculties or niche programs in the next five to ten years? What are these niche programs/developments going to be? What opportunities existed to develop customised modular courses? What course rationalisation needed to occur?

Staff profiles and structures: What staff profile would best serve the institution into the next millennium? What management structure would best drive and energise this new direction? How will the role of academics change to accommodate the technological age? What would be the role of general staff?

Research and Scholarship: How would ECU grow our research within a policy of research concentration and selectivity? How would it develop and deepen the scholarly and research base of ECU? How many research centres of national significance should ECU plan for and resource?
Location(s): Did ECU need all its campuses? Do campuses matter? Should it consolidate certain campuses, shift load towards the development of Joondalup? Rationalise? Expand?

Internationalisation and globalisation: Did ECU aspire to be an international university? How could it internationalise its curriculum? With whom should it expand its teaching links and build research collaborations overseas? Are current offshore ventures cost effective?

Strategic Alliances: What strategic alliance could ECU make with business, industry, government and with other universities to advance its teaching, research and consultancy profile?

Income generation: How was ECU to grow the resource base of the institution in the short, medium and long term? How could it develop strategic relationships and partnerships to ensure sustainability? Were fees to be part of that income? If so, in what areas?

Student Services: What sort of student services should ECU offer? How would these impact on its resources? How could it ensure students get value for money and quality teaching and support? Were ECU's learning environments 'student' or 'client' focused?

The New Information Technologies: How could ECU build its 'Virtual Campus'? How would it build appropriate infrastructures? What are the emerging patterns? How will the new technologies re-shape teaching and learning and curriculum delivery?

In her address to council, the Vice Chancellor emphasised that Edith Cowan University needed to 'reposition itself strategically in the increasingly competitive, deregulated and global higher education environment'. She outlined a consultative process involving ECU's internal and external communities, as well as University Council. Poole also noted that, in a
round of July meetings, she had represented her views on the need for a plan and her proposed methodology to a wide cross-section of university groups, and had received solid support. Following discussion, University Council agreed to endorse the VC's proposal for the development of a strategic plan, noting that it would involve all parts of the university. It also resolved to form a Strategic Planning Committee linking University Council with the planning process, to be comprised of four members of the council – Ken Eastwood, Janet Rodgers, Greg Wall and Katharine White.7

Within days, the VC Poole had commissioned external consultant David Phillips, of Sydney-based management consultants Phillips Curran Pty Ltd, to develop a strategic plan with the assistance of a Strategic Planning Group comprised of ECU staff. As a former head of the higher education division within the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Phillips possessed impeccable credentials and – while this did not appease those who had advocated internal control – Poole knew that he would prove ‘an invaluable asset’.8 Her next task was to consider nominations from among ECU’s rising academic talent for team members to work with Phillips throughout the planning process and carry the project into an implementation phase. In August 1997, she appointed Associate Professor Robyn Quin to the key full-time position of executive officer to the Strategic Planning Group. Quin’s substantive position was Head, School of Languages, Literature and Media Studies within the Faculty of Arts, and she had recently returned after a period as visiting scholar at a university in Madrid. Poole had quickly assessed that Quin was articulate, confident and respected, and made arrangements for Phillips to join her in interviewing Quin on his initial visit to Perth. Quin was to provide ‘legs on the ground’ for Phillips – who would operate from New South Wales – and would remain at the front line of strategic planning within the university for much of the next decade.9
Phillips and Quin worked together to recruit other members of the Strategic Planning Group, and two critical appointments were effected immediately. Associate Professor Bill Louden, of the School of Education and Social Inquiry within the Faculty of Education, was appointed for his knowledge of the research environment and penetrative mind, while John Doyle was seconded from the finance department to equip the team to run complex financial models against various load scenarios. With Poole committed to an institution-wide effort ensuring that staffing issues and student impacts were identified, the core group was augmented by Michelle Nelson, from the university’s human resources division, and Stephen Dawson as president of the student guild.

Warren Snell, a member of ECU’s executive team at the time, considered that the composition of the Strategic Planning Group reflected
Poole’s desire for ‘quite a different team of people’. Quin and Louden were ‘fresh faces’ and their appointments underlined the VC’s suspicion of the status quo. Snell remembered: ‘These people weren’t part of the recognised executive team... [T]his was a key sign that things were changing.’

Under the guidance of Phillips, the Strategic Planning Group immediately embarked on an intensive consultation process, the introductory phase extending from 18 August to 19 September 1997. Numerous workshops were held at each of the ECU campuses for both academic and general staff, with some sessions open to all and others targeted by invitation to individuals with specific expertise or responsibilities. Written and oral submissions were received from more than three hundred people. In addition, Quin established a committee comprised of representatives of the university’s three key unions, providing updates on planning directions and soliciting feedback on staff perceptions and issues. Data collection and analysis was an integral part of the process, with particular research loci including demographic projections, workforce projections, students’ reasons for choosing ECU, graduate destinations and employment rates, and staff profiles. A website was established and updated regularly as a portal for information and discussion about the planning process. To complement the work of the Strategic Planning Group, Phillips commissioned Professor Tony Watson, Acting Pro VC (Teaching, Learning and Technology) to prepare a discussion paper on communications and information technologies in relation to the university’s future, and Jan Ring to report on the area of flexible delivery in teaching.

The methodology adopted by the Strategic Planning Group reflected David Phillips’ belief that strategic planning in the higher education sector is at its most potent when cognisant of such environmental factors as funding and enrolment trends, labour markets, demographic change and
geographic location. Phillips and the ECU team therefore undertook 'environmental scanning', initially categorising environmental influences as either government, internal or Western Australian. Phillips himself took responsibility for scanning the government and regulatory environment, while appraisal of the Western Australian environment was spread across the team. The task of scanning ECU's internal environment – involving navigation of the most contentious areas and so critical to implementation prospects – fell to the group's executive officer Robyn Quin.15

ECU's Academic Board had been fortified in the 1993-97 period under VC Lourens, taking a greater interest and role in institutional policy formulation. Professor Millicent Poole emphasised soon after her arrival at ECU that she supported this role wholeheartedly, viewing the Academic Board as a forum for debate and its members as 'guardians of quality'. She perceived, however, that a small number of dominant personalities tended to stifle or narrow important discussions, and knew that successful change management required meaningful debate, broad consensus and what she often termed 'buy-in'.16 Recognising that a strategic plan would have little prospect of gaining the support of University Council without acceptance by the Academic Board, Robyn Quin was thankful that Poole was 'anxious to get as wide an input as possible'. Knowing that she needed to tread gently, Quin spared no effort in attempting to defuse issues and prevent surprises:

I was aware that a top-down approach to strategic planning in a university was unlikely to secure buy-in from the academics. It also had the potential to alienate the unions. While there existed at ECU a distinction between administrative and academic activities, the reality is that they are dependent upon each other. If the strategic plan was going to influence the curriculum, the research agenda and the academic profile, then academics would be adamant that they should have input.17
The Strategic Planning Group's general approach, therefore, was to take every opportunity to deliver succinct progress reports to meetings of university deans and the Academic Board. 'We drip fed the information in small chunks, but often,' Quin remembered.\(^{18}\)

In spite of the planning team's policy of maximising inclusion and its routines of disclosure, opposition was significant. To some extent this had been anticipated, VC Poole having taken the precaution of commissioning a survey on the 'readiness' of staff for change.\(^{19}\) Many employees were recovering from previous periods of dramatic change and, for some, even the idea of a sweeping, university-wide review was repugnant. Professor Faye Gale, VC at the University of Western Australia, had warned Poole to expect a 'vipers nest', advising her of the need for someone to 'protect your back'. Poole found that operative in executive officer Robyn Daniels, describing her as 'tall and imposing', 'well connected' and 'good with people'.\(^{20}\)

The advice of Daniels – who was aware that she was recognised within Edith Cowan University as 'Millie's Spy' – proved invaluable as the new Vice Chancellor navigated her way in a 'cliquey' institution and an unfamiliar city. Poole acknowledged:

> From day one, she [Daniels] was my source of information, my moral support and my political adviser. She would come with me to various functions and tell me who was who on the Perth scene.\(^{21}\)

According to Poole, Daniels 'knew what was going on in the organisation' – and her insights supplemented feedback received directly from the planning team.\(^{22}\) As Daniels later observed,

> I think all organisations are resistant to change... Millicent was someone from “the other side” – many saw this as a black mark. I don't think ECU is any different from another other institutions in terms of resisting change. While tertiary institutions are at the
forefront of innovation, they also like to maintain the status quo and I don’t think ECU was any different from this.\textsuperscript{23}

VC Poole believed, however, that there was a paradox within ECU’s culture of resistance because many staff, students and council members were clearly frustrated with ECU’s ‘Enid Blyton’ tag – and, therefore, logical supporters of any opportunity to contribute to transformation. On reflection, she believed that the university’s academic staff fell into three groups: ‘About 20\% of staff supported me, there was a tail of real resisters and then there were those in the middle waiting to board either train.’\textsuperscript{24}

As the Strategic Planning Group began sifting though research material, extracting common themes and seeking staff comment, Poole’s ‘tail of real resisters’ found full voice. On one hand, Robyn Quin learned that ‘a lot of people were looking forward to the change – something new’,\textsuperscript{25} but she also recalled that the team’s ideal of posting input on its website was compromised because some contributions were unfit for public consumption. Quin observed:

Strategic planning is an unsettling process for people. They fear a loss of authority or influence, a loss of resources, in some instances the loss of their job. Although the VC repeatedly assured people that the process was not intended as a downsizing [exercise] many staff had their doubts. People within the University were aware that the most definite outcome of strategic planning would be a change in the distribution of resources. An understated but frequently repeated message in all the workshops and discussion papers was that resources should be aligned with strengths, not with weaknesses. This sounds self-evident – but much of the resource distribution in ECU was historically based and courses with very low enrolments and/or poor student outcomes were soaking up a greater than the fair share of resources.\textsuperscript{26}
Bill Louden later ascribed the quality of ‘relentless leadership’ to Millicent Poole, an evaluation supported by subsequent events.\textsuperscript{27} As the work of the Strategic Planning Group proceeded, Millicent Poole became increasingly concerned about ‘getting white-anted’ – the possibility of the review process and the subsequent implementation of a strategic plan being sabotaged.\textsuperscript{28} The VC’s disquiet increased following the completion of the Nairn report on 19 September 1997. Professor Nairn had interviewed two dozen people, including senior ECU staff, members of University Council, and representatives of the unions, the staff association and the student guild. In each interview, Nairn had sought opinions on institutional objectives and ‘the capacity of the current senior management structure to deliver these goals’; he had also asked about ‘the key issues which should be addressed in any review of structure at a senior level’. Nairn reported concerns that
decision making at ECU was 'not sufficiently transparent', and that the existing management structure appeared to have been 'formulated to suit certain individuals rather than to match the needs of the University'. Moreover, Nairn found evidence of 'poor teamwork' and 'a lack of solidarity by the executive management team on key policy issues'. His report provided a crystalline indication that ECU did not have the personnel required to reposition itself in response to strategic imperatives, and was naturally disturbing for the new VC. Poole discussed Nairn's report with planning consultant David Phillips, who advised that, if she intended to progress toward transformation, she needed to act upon the report 'sooner rather than later', particularly given the 'corrosiveness' of division within the university's leadership group.

Poole needed no further justification for swift action. In a confidential presentation to Chancellor Nicholson, she reported that she was 'running up against personnel issues', asserting that these issues needed to be resolved before the strategic plan was released 'so the institution isn't encumbered at the time of implementation'. Poole recalled:

I was saying that to deliver the strategic plan we needed the right foundation. We needed to have the right structures and the right people. You can have the best strategic plan in the world but if you don’t have the right people to deliver it, it will fail... So that was why I was persuasive.

The VC's plan was to 'spill' the two Deputy VC positions and – in line with Nairn’s recommendations – create a single Deputy VC position to be advertised immediately. With Nicholson’s blessing, she took this proposal to a meeting of University Council on 23 October 1997. Quite unexpectedly, the council 'recognised it was time to either sink or swim' – and went further.

University Council accepted 'the thrust of the Nairn Report that, to advance the University's strategic planning process it is necessary to
restructure senior management for the implementation of the University’s strategic goals’. For this reason, it supported the revised management structure outlined by Nairn and endorsed by the VC, directing that implementation be commenced on Monday, 27 October 1997. The senior management positions of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research), Executive Director (Administration), Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean, International Development and Training were abolished, and University Council required that each new position ‘be thrown open to the widest possible competition’.33

Vice Chancellor Poole remembered this as a turning point in her battle for ECU’s future. She felt she had ‘buy-in’, which meant that ‘I’d got the council to be confident in the direction I was taking the university for the
next five years’. It enabled her to bring in new people ‘with the notion that they had to be change agents’, emphasising ‘cooperation and working together to facilitate a change agenda’.\textsuperscript{34} Inevitably, however, the period was difficult and reactions among other members of the university staff were mixed. Professor Patrick Garnett, Dean of the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering at the time, was ‘summonsed’ for an 8.00 a.m. meeting of deans on the morning after the spill. ‘Obviously the news was quite sensational,’ he recalled, ‘but we were not surprised’.\textsuperscript{35} Garnett, who was assigned the position of Acting Deputy VC until the appointment of Professor Elizabeth Harman as Poole’s deputy in April 1998, also noted that there was ‘some sense of loss’ – overridden by a conviction that change was necessary if the institution was to progress.\textsuperscript{36}

For Associate Professor Robyn Quin and others within the Strategic Planning Group, it seemed that the spill had effectively removed a blockage. The planning environment ‘changed markedly’, Quin recalled. ‘After the spill and the appointment of the interim Deputy VC and Pro VCs... there was a high level of engagement’.\textsuperscript{37}

Vice Chancellor Poole’s response to the Nairn report on senior management structures and to early resistance to strategic planning initiatives had been decisive, and University Council’s support for the direction she was taking was emphatic. In strategic change, as in physics, momentum is a force to be reckoned with. As spring turned to summer in 1997, it was clear to all at ECU that a brake had been released. Change was manifest. Wheels were turning. Poole meant business.
4. Blueprint for action

"Chance favours the prepared mind."

– Louis Pasteur

By November 1997, the Strategic Planning Group at Edith Cowan University (ECU) had identified key themes and priorities, and was working toward the delivery of a final report before the close of the year. Even without dramatic changes to the university’s senior management structure, the demands were heavy, the pressure extreme. There were numerous meetings and countless briefings, but the urgency of the task – together with the resolute commitment of the Vice Chancellor (VC), supported by University Council – drove the team hard. Robyn Quin, the Strategic Planning Group’s executive officer, remembered: ‘They were very exciting times’.¹

As the planning team worked through the multifarious questions posed by VC Millicent Poole in her paper ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium’, environmental scanning confirmed that external factors would exert increasing financial pressure on the university. The higher education sector in Australia had changed dramatically over the previous decade. The evolution of the National Unified
System and the emergence of private universities was encouraging unprecedented competition – not only within states but nationally and internationally. Quality assurance principles were beginning to be widely discussed within the sector. The operating context had been further altered by increasing demand for tertiary education, a growing number of international students, the introduction of fees for Australian undergraduate places and, not least, a steady decline in Federal funding. Moreover, most market analysts predicted further deregulation and a greater emphasis on the philosophy of user-pays.²

At its most elemental, the planning task involved an appraisal of institutional strengths and weaknesses, followed by the identification of strategies to – as Acting Deputy VC Professor Pat Garnett explained in 1997 – ‘align resources with strengths in order that Edith Cowan University can establish itself as a leader in selected academic fields and activities’.³ Strategic planning consultant David Phillips had assessed that the principal threat to ECU was the possibility of failing to meet load targets determined by the Federal Government. As Robyn Quin expressed it, ‘we were totally dependent on Commonwealth dollars’, making load targets an Achilles heel.⁴ Identification of this vulnerability motivated a concerted effort to meet external stakeholders in a search for ways to ensure a flow of students to ECU. As part of the Strategic Planning Group’s review of the Western Australian environment, Phillips and Associate Professor Quin held discussions with the Education Department, representatives of the TAFE sector, and directors of the Perth Institute of Business and Technology.⁵ The notion of establishing productive strategic partnerships – finding partners that were positioned to direct students into ECU – became a central tenet of the strategic plan.

This was foreshadowed in an early discussion paper, released by the planning team in October 1997.⁶ The paper identified the need for
'involvement' – envisioning a university that was active in 'seeking and exploiting opportunities for close and productive involvement with the professions, government, industry, the community and educational institutions at the local, national and international levels'. The team considered that ECU would need to strengthen its role as a provider of professional training and lifelong education by forging closer links with schools, vocational education and training providers, and employers. The Strategic Planning Group also perceived the need for 'enterprise' – and this, too, pointed to the importance of partnerships. The discussion paper referred to the goal of 'collaborating with other institutions and organisations in strategic partnerships to accomplish objectives that would be beyond the capacity of individual institutions acting alone'. This also applied to offshore arenas, the team advocating a concentrated effort by ECU to increase 'the international dimensions of its teaching, research and community service programs through selective partnerships and enterprises'.

While some of the ideas floated by the planning team were broadly supported, others proved controversial. Among the more contentious areas was the idea of developing closer ties with Western Australia’s vocational training sector, which raised anxieties about a potential ‘dumbing down’ of ECU. The Strategic Planning Group’s decision to – in Quin’s words – ‘go with our strengths and get rid of the weaknesses’ signalled a concentration of ECU’s academic profile and research resources, which in turn raised concerns among academic staff about future employment and research. Some were also alarmed that faculty restructuring was flagged, the existing structure embodying uneven capacities to attract international students and generate income. When Professor Tony Watson’s discussion paper on communications and information technologies supported the use of technology to lower costs by shifting work from staff to students, it attracted criticism because a comparable model had led to job losses and a depersonalisation of services.
RAISING EDITH

in the banking industry. Similarly, Jan Ring’s report advocated increasing flexible delivery in teaching, which many interpreted as ‘remote control’ teaching via the Internet.8

The university’s general staff, meanwhile, were made nervous by the prospect of a further privatisation of services. Food services on ECU campuses had already been transferred to the private sector, and other potential areas for outsourcing included security, parking, printing, payroll and technical services. Campus rationalisation was another delicate issue, David Phillips believing that it was imperative for ECU to shed some of its campuses and consolidate its resources. Data collected by the Strategic Planning Group suggested that Joondalup was in Perth’s growth corridor and, in a very real sense, represented the future of the university.9

The planning team’s call for ‘involvement’ – or engagement with industries, government and the community – also gave rise to controversy. Following the release of the October discussion paper, and at the instigation of Phillips and Poole, this concept was re-designated as ‘service’ and became one of ECU’s three ‘defining themes’: Service, Professionalism and Enterprise.10 VC Poole was personally committed to the inclusion of service as a core value, driving the university across the broad sweep of its activities. She recalled:

When I came to ECU, I didn’t want to replicate what was being done at UWA or Curtin. I thought that ECU’s strengths and history were in nursing, teaching and business – and they were very much professions. I knew that in terms of workforce projections, and so
on, that the big growth area was going to be the service sector – and that service sector had a huge group of professions within it. I thought ECU would be a good university to develop strength in the knowledge-based service professions.\textsuperscript{11}

Scepticism thrives in a university environment, however, and the Strategic Planning Group encountered strong resistance to the identification of ‘service’ as a broad institutional theme. As Robyn Quin acknowledged, ‘it didn’t go down well... people didn’t like “Service” and it was rejected as corporate-speak’.\textsuperscript{12} The VC, however, was convinced that initial resistance was a consequence of misconception. Years later, Poole explained:

“Service” was a very unpopular phrase when I came here. I think they saw service as someone serving over the counter in a shop. Then people began to realise that it meant a service-oriented culture – service to students and staff – and [it] also meant preparing people for the professions, working with people going to work in the growth sector of industry. Along with a lot of strength we already had in the professions through our history, we could also cater to the development of new professions.\textsuperscript{13}

Professor Poole understood the importance of engaging influential people within the institution to champion the development of the plan, counter misconceptions and, ultimately, build a coalition for change.\textsuperscript{14} The Strategic Planning Group – through Quin and Associate Professor Bill Louden – provided the spearhead for this crusade, initially by organising presentations to staff and stakeholders, known within ECU as planning ‘roadshows’. According to Quin, these roadshows helped the team accommodate ‘a greater diversity of views’ – and also resulted in greater commitment to the plan. Without them, she believed, ‘we could have got to the same end in less time and effort – but we wouldn’t have got the same buy-in’.\textsuperscript{15}
Beyond the planning group, Acting Deputy VC Pat Garnett emerged as an important figure in championing change, while Warren Snell (Executive Director, Finance and Administration) and professors Tony Watson, Geoff Soutar and Neil Tuckwell completed an interim management team that, in Poole's words, 'worked flat out' to 'get the strategic plan up'. As Poole observed more generally in 2001:

I had a Council and Senior Management team that gave me enormous support and enough people that recognised that the changes were very necessary if ECU was to survive and thrive into the 21st century. 17

*The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002* went before the Academic Board in December 1997 and was passed unanimously. The consultative approach had paid handsome dividends. 'There were no surprises', recalled Quin, 'all the arguments had been had'. 18 The strategic plan recognised that ECU was both an old institution of higher education, and a recent university. It identified that ECU would build on its strengths and increasingly define itself as a professional university – providing service to and preparation for the professions. Crucially, it defined ECU's future mission. Whereas the university's previous mission statement had referred vaguely to higher education needs, community needs and national and international communities, the new statement used half as many words to enunciate a particular focus upon the values of diversity, vigour, quality and service:

To provide, within a diverse and dynamic learning environment, university education of recognised quality, especially for those people employed in, or seeking employment in, the service professions. 19

*Strategic Plan 1998-2002* also gave clear expression to the three defining themes that had evolved during the planning process and were intended to 'inform the way Edith Cowan University pursues its mission'. These were:
Service:
◊ Encouraging the highest standards of learning by adopting a student-centred approach to teaching, learning and the administration of student services.
◊ Seeking opportunities for close and productive involvement with the professions, government, industry, the community and educational institutions at local, national and international levels.

Professionalism:
◊ Building on, and expanding, the University's strengths in professional education and training to produce graduates who will contribute to the workforce and the economy.
◊ Seeking to demonstrate the highest standards of professional behaviour in its relationship with students, staff and the community.

Enterprise:
◊ Building a culture which constantly seeks to improve itself by supporting and rewarding initiatives which enhance the University's performance.
◊ Increasing the international dimensions of its teaching, research and community service programs through selective partnerships and enterprises.
◊ Collaborating with other institutions and organisations in strategic partnerships to accomplish objectives that would be beyond the capacity of individual institutions acting alone.
◊ Promoting the University's strengths in local, national and international contexts through community service, targetted [sic] marketing and publicity.20

The strategic plan was supported by a comprehensive outline of the tasks to be achieved, with a target date for each task. A battery of key performance indicators covered such areas as professionalism in teaching
and learning; research, scholarship and postgraduate education; internationalisation; community and professional service; access and equity; and resources and management. Specific strategies to secure the ECU’s future included a recommendation to establish educational precincts at Joondalup, Mount Lawley, and Bunbury in co-operation with the Education Department of Western Australia and TAFE. Consideration was to be given to the lease or sale of the historic Claremont campus in order to fund a building program; to the commercial potential of the Churchlands campus; and to a consolidation of teaching at the Joondalup, Mount Lawley and Bunbury campuses. Through implementation of the plan, ECU sought to become a streamlined, cross-sectoral institution cultivating strong links with high schools and TAFE colleges and, at Bunbury, an emerging health services precinct.21 As foreshadowed, the plan expressed a strong commitment to the development of information technology and the flexible delivery of teaching programs – a commitment given concrete expression in November 1997 when ECU acquired one of the first sublicences for a new software system developed at Victoria’s Deakin University.22 The plan also pointed to a policy of appointing adjunct staff from the employment sectors served by ECU in order to enhance the university’s relationships within the corporate sector.23

The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002 also recognised the need for ECU to develop mechanisms to stimulate and support innovation while also enhancing performance within existing resources. It therefore introduced three integrated schemes, which would operate as part of the overall planning cycle. The first of these was a ‘Strategic Innovations Fund’ – later named the ‘Strategic Initiatives Fund’ – to encourage and support new developments, especially across faculties and disciplines. The amount set aside was $3.3 million, to be managed by the Vice Chancellor with advice on priorities from a committee of University Council members. A second initiative entailed the establishment of a pool of
unallocated student load, to be distributed annually on the basis of proposals from faculties for new programs or development in existing areas of strength. Finally, the plan envisaged the creation of a pool of research funds to be distributed to faculties on the basis of research performance. 24

At a meeting of University Council on 4 February 1998, VC Millicent Poole presented the Strategic Plan and outlined some of the outcomes she and the planning team expected. According to Poole’s executive officer, Robyn Daniels, members of the University Council regarded the VC as ‘a breath of fresh air’, applauding her for ‘brining the institution into real world’. 25 In spite of this, Poole experienced feelings of intense anxiety before such meetings. David Earl, the university’s secretary at the time, recalled: ‘We both had PCT – Pre Council Tension.’ 26 On this occasion, however, there was no need to fret. Extensive consultation and approval by the Academic Board had cleared the way; the battle for hearts and minds was more than half won. Before University Council, the VC re-emphasised the principles of excellence in teaching and selected areas of research; the alignment of resources with strengths; an escalating flow of local and international students; and the establishment of a distinctive and differentiated university profile. Council passed the new Strategic Plan without dissent, and Poole left the meeting ecstatic. 27 ‘I felt I had buy-in,’ she remembered. ‘I’d got council to be confident in the direction I was taking the university for the next five years.’ 28

The strategic planning process had been laborious and exhausting, but the plan itself provided a framework for a copious amount of work in the immediate future. For VC Poole, the completion of Strategic Plan 1998-2002 was a beginning, not an end. The plan had never been destined for the shelf, and would remain open on desks as a living document – a blueprint for action. 29 For this reason, the 1998 academic year loomed as the most busy and demanding in ECU’s history. Capital development, corporate
governance, employment policies, faculty reconfiguration, campus management, research planning, the realignment of human and financial resources, benchmarking and quality assurance all posed formidable challenges. At the same time, work needed to continue in the area of building strategic relationships and rebuilding senior management consequent to the establishment of an interim structure after presentation of the Nairn report.\textsuperscript{30} Importantly, however, Poole had recognised early that structural and organisational transformation could not be accomplished without cultural change. At the same time, strategic planning had underlined the importance of communication across all levels of the university and the rewards of locating committed and dynamic staff at the vanguard of change. While consultant David Phillips had played a key role in the process, ECU 'ownership' of it was never in question. The experiences of 1997 would inform change management processes following adoption of the strategic plan, preparing the university for an extended implementation phase aimed at strengthening its position both nationally and internationally.\textsuperscript{31}
5.

Making headway

“There are those who would misteach us that to stick in a rut is consistency
– and a virtue, and that to climb out of the rut
is inconsistency – and a vice.”

– Mark Twain

Armed with its first strategic plan, Edith Cowan University (ECU) entered the 1998 academic year with new purpose. In just over six months as Vice Chancellor (VC), Professor Millicent Poole had restructured senior management, overseen an inclusive planning process and won approval from the University Council for the establishment of a multimillion-dollar Strategic Initiatives Fund. Much remained to be done, however, and Poole understood that the aggregation of a core group of outstanding executives was prerequisite to the accomplishment of strategic objectives.

The first of four senior positions created by University Council’s endorsement of a revised management structure in October 1997 was filled by the appointment of Warren Snell to the position of Executive Director (Finance and Administration) in April 1998. As Professor Geoffrey Bolton observed, Snell ‘provided a valuable element of continuity’. A key member of Poole’s interim management team, his service as head of finance had commenced in 1985 – six years prior to ECU’s designation as a university.¹ Snell’s enduring seniority was testament to his ability, adaptability and genuine
commitment to institutional goals, and it also emphasised that change, under Poole, was not an end in itself. The other three senior positions, however, were filled from outside ECU after a concentrated effort to 'bring in new blood'.

In characteristic fashion VC Poole left no stone unturned, adopting an approach she described as 'very proactive'. A recruitment agency was engaged and the positions were advertised internationally. An internal committee was established, calls were made and lunches arranged. The new strategic plan proved a valuable tool in luring high calibre applicants, throwing out a clear challenge to men and women keen to play central roles in the envisaged transformation. As Professor Robyn Quin noted in 2005, the plan had either 'ruled in' or 'ruled out' future changes – it 'put parameters around what we would be doing'. At the same time, it increased transparency and alignment in such areas as budgeting, load pool management and resource allocation. In short, a coherent plan gave ECU a sense of direction; the focus of the 1998 recruiting process, therefore, was identifying fellow travellers. Shortlisted applicants were invited to give presentations to staff – an initiative that captured the open and consultative spirit of the planning process. Dr Ron Oliver held a senior lectureship in the Faculty of Science, Technology and Engineering at the time, and he recalled: 'We really appreciated the opportunity to come and hear these people before they were appointed, to ask questions and get their view on issues that were important to us'.

Professor Liz Harman, a distinguished scholar in the areas of politics, public policy and public administration – and a former president of the Academic Council at Murdoch University – took up the position of Deputy VC in June 1998. In the same month, Professor John Wood joined ECU as Pro VC (Research and Advancement). Wood, a professional economist with wide experience in strategic business planning, had previously served as Foundation Dean of the College of Business at Notre Dame University, a
Ability, adaptability and commitment: Warren Snell's service as head of finance commenced six years prior to ECU's designation as a university – and continued well into the 21st century.

fledgling Catholic university in Fremantle. The fourth appointee was Professor Ann Deden, who joined the team as Pro VC (Teaching, Learning and Technology) in October. Deden had been Director of Pennsylvania State University's Centre for Learning and Academic Technologies, a position in which she had created collaborative learning environments utilising the Internet. Harman, Snell, Wood and Deden possessed all the qualities Poole admired – energy, vision, collaborative instincts and a belief in the value of strategic partnerships. At the end of 1998, VC Millicent Poole reported:

The senior executives share a strong sense of teamwork, purpose and vision. They bring together a blend of outstanding skills and experience that will assist the University to meet the challenges on the way to achieving its ongoing prosperity.
Poole candidly admitted that she had advanced the notion that members of the executive team 'had to be change agents', ensuring that they 'got the message that their job was... working together to facilitate a change agenda'. The conscripts' commitment to this notion was immediately apparent. Warren Snell was uniquely qualified to observe the impact of these appointments and, seven years later, identified 'change on the leadership horizon' as a 'huge factor [in]... the re-energising of the entire institution'. There was 'so much fresh thought, so much drive and energy', Snell recalled. With other recruits appointed to support the chancellery group and implement the strategic plan, the new-look leadership team brought the university administration 'fresh focus and a real “can do” attitude'.

This attitude was most immediately evident in ECU's embrace of faculty reconfiguration, which the Strategic Planning Group had identified as a burning issue in the university community through submissions to the group and input at planning 'roadshows'. Vice Chancellor Poole had considered faculty changes necessary from the outset and, during 1998, established a working party of four senior executives – Warren Snell, Professor Pat Garnett, Professor Geoff Soutar, and Associate Professor Robyn Quin – to examine possibilities. Garnett chaired the group, which followed the lead of the Strategic Planning Group in casting a wide net for ideas from other quarters and conducting discussion forums on ECU campuses. Ron Oliver remembered of this time: 'People were ready for reconfiguration. They warmed quite quickly to it, sensing that this was a way forward. Generally, there was enthusiasm.'
Options were assessed according to their degree of alignment with The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002 and their financial implications, as well as for ‘balance between faculties’. They were also evaluated for the extent to which they offered strategic and marketing opportunities; strengthened the professional focus of existing programs; promised growth; increased disciplinary cohesiveness; and produced research synergies. With economies of scale an important consideration, the existing seven-part structure – the faculties of Arts, Business, Education, Health and Human Sciences, Science, Technology and Engineering, together with the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) and the Bunbury campus – incorporated many duplications and was almost universally considered unwieldy. ‘We drew up all these models,’ Garnett recalled. ‘At the end of the day, we favoured a four- or five-faculty model’.

Meanwhile, however, the VC herself had reviewed the university’s requirements in the light of the strategic plan, and was increasingly convinced there was scope for a more radical overhaul. She knew that the broader tertiary education sector was watching ECU’s progress and saw an opportunity to be ‘taken more seriously as a university’ rather than ‘continuing in the vein of a teachers’ college’. Most of all, Professor Poole wished to avoid any perception that reconfiguration was ‘shifting the deckchairs on the Titanic’. Late one Friday afternoon, the faculty configuration working party delivered its preferred model to her office. Over the weekend, Poole called Robyn Quin and outlined her developing alternative – three ‘mega faculties’, with WAAPA and Bunbury as additional ‘special focus’ faculties. When Quin was asked to revise the working party’s model to reflect this, she immediately anticipated Garnett’s dismay. As Poole recollected, ‘I said to Robyn over that weekend, “go and change this and this”. She said, “I can’t – I can’t face Pat!” I told her that I would face Pat!’

The ‘mega faculties’ delineated after modification of the working party’s original proposal were Community Services, Education and Social
As Quin expected, Professor Garnett was initially aghast. Seven years later, he retained a clear recollection of the day this possible new structure was put to him:

On Monday I came back into work and that wonderful four or five faculty model had been turned into a three-faculty model – nothing like the original proposal... I thought the VC was mad. But, within half an hour, the VC had come to see me and of course I was soon thinking the three-faculty model was great. Initially, I thought it was very radical, but... it was the most sensible option.16

As Poole knew, Garnett’s support was crucial for the reconfiguration’s prospects of broader academic ‘buy-in’ – and certainly contributed to the proposal’s overwhelming’ acceptance at Academic Board level.17

At the end of 1998, Vice Chancellor Poole reported that the changes to faculty structure at ECU would reduce administrative costs, increase budget flexibility and achieve ‘a greater focus on the employment market’. In accord with goals of the strategic plan, it had been ‘aimed at eradicating duplication, aligning resources with strengths and building a marketable profile of academic programmes’.18 The new configuration also provided a framework for further work as the university immediately commenced a process of identifying its strongest and most strategically important courses and redistributing student load accordingly.19 Course consolidation and the progressive concentration of student load in areas of genuine market demand were to become high priorities for Poole and Deputy VC Liz Harman in the 1999-2000 period because, in Poole’s words, ‘we have to continue to say we can’t be good at everything... but we can be world class in certain areas’.20

The reconstruction of senior management and changes to faculty configuration provided clear indications that VC Poole was making headway
during 1998 – yet they were not, by any means, the only beacons of progress at ECU. Poole, Harman, Wood and Snell were all keenly aware of political and economic factors affecting the Australian higher education sector, understanding that the dry funding climate was likely to become yet more arid in the future. If streamlining was to occur across the full sweep of university operations, it needed to be underpinned by cost-effective administration – and corporate services were therefore targeted for review. In October 1998, ECU commissioned consulting firm Ernst & Young to conduct a study of corporate services including finance, human resources, information technology, facilities and student services. The goal was to improve customer service and increase efficiency so that resources could be ‘redirected to the university’s core business of teaching, learning and research’.21

The Ernst & Young report on corporate services was delivered and published within the ECU community on 18 December 1998. Despite this brief, two-month timeframe, the review proved effective in establishing an agenda for change and opened the way for a client-centred transformation of corporate services. Moreover, the review process incorporated consultation strategies developed during the strategic planning process, contributing to a developing culture of inclusion. University-wide communications were conveyed to ECU staff by a specially constituted project team; consultants and team leaders met regularly with a steering committee and divisional directors; presentations were made to the chancellery group; workshops were held; and progress reports were published in newsletters. In addition, a ‘Change@ECU’ website was developed, featuring a frequently asked questions link and a feedback form for staff and students.22

The corporate services review noted a lack of shared objectives across the eight university divisions studied, which ‘operated quite independently of each other and generally had a functional focus, rather than a customer focus’. Consequently, there was ‘a distinct lack of coordination in opera-
tional strategy and planning, and in the development of new initiatives'. The consultants also concluded that customer interfaces were unnecessarily fragmented, with students – the primary customers of the university – required to go to ‘numerous different locations for basic administrative matters’. Similarly, staff and faculties dealt with too many divisions for management and administrative support. Fragmentation and other inefficiencies in core management processes of the university were another cause for concern. Specific areas named included procurement, payroll, budgeting, reporting and student administration processes, the report urging ECU to ‘thoroughly rethink’ systems to eliminate waste, confusion and frustration. Ernst & Young also pointed to fragmentation in information technology planning, infrastructure, resources and investments. An overall communications and information technology plan had been developed, but there was ‘no mechanism for ensuring customer-responsiveness, or for translating plans into timely actions’. There were multiple standards for desktop computers and local area networks, while help-desk availability was restricted to weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and ‘had clearly become inadequate for both students and staff’. Finally, the consultants commented that the lines of accountability were blurred across all divisions, and that bureaucratic processes meant that it was common for routine operations to require a number of different authorisations.23

Though damning, these findings were precisely what VC Poole and her executive team had expected. The consultants’ recommendations for remedial action – framed with careful regard to ECU’s strategic plan – were taken as the invalid welcomes a tonic, opening a broader discussion of the ways and means by which limited resources could be used to maximum advantage. Ernst & Young recommended three major customer service mechanisms: a ‘one-stop shop’ student service centre on each campus; a call centre providing 24-hour telephone and internet access to students, staff and the community; and a new structure facilitating customer liaison between faculties and service
centres. Two business support areas were proposed: management services (with a focus on serving the faculties and frontline service centres) and operations and commercial services (encompassing facilities management, commercial services, IT infrastructure and transactional processing). The recommendations gave particular focus to IT policy and infrastructure, supporting university moves toward the implementation of a standard operating environment for desktops and servers, and also raising the possibility of outsourcing infrastructure and operational support.24

Upon receipt of the corporate services review, Poole acted immediately to appoint an interim project team to manage an intense consultation phase during the early months of 1999.25 As 1998 closed, therefore, another significant building block had been hoisted into position. Vice Chancellor
Poole had been an unknown quantity within ECU only eighteen months earlier, but her first full academic year in office had been filled with activity. In addition to appointments, structural changes and the corporate services review, subcommittees of the Academic Board had been reorganised, a research management plan had been prepared and a capital development plan had been approved. University Council had also endorsed a corporate governance statement, made important decisions in the area of campus rationalisation and campus development, and – significantly in terms of ECU’s commitment to strategic partnerships – approved the co-location of a new police academy at Joondalup.26

The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002 had articulated a shared vision for ECU, and VC Poole had worked collaboratively to ensure that this vision sparked action. The university had systematically begun implementing the strategic plan and, when necessary, had committed resources to detailed studies aimed at discovering how the principles of the plan could best be applied. As one ECU officer wrote of this period,

Staff learned very quickly (and sometimes painfully) that what the Vice-Chancellor and her team said they would do, they did. This began to build a degree of trust between staff and the executive. Getting the “runs on the board” helped confirm that this was a management team that knew what it was doing.27

The culture of the institution was changing. With her talented crew – handpicked ‘change agents’ within the chancellery group – Poole had set the university’s sails for reinvention. The end of the millennium promised bright new horizons for ECU, and all hands were needed on deck.
6.
Shaping and streamlining

‘How can you govern a country that produces 246 different kinds of cheese?’
— Charles de Gaulle

During 1998, a radical reconfiguration of faculties had positioned Edith Cowan University (ECU) to achieve unprecedented focus in its delivery of strong and strategically important courses of education. Vice Chancellor Millicent Poole’s acknowledgement that ‘we can’t be good at everything’ opened the way for an unflinching assessment of existing programs with a view to building a more marketable academic profile. Over the next three years, progressive alignment of ECU’s range of course offerings with its strategic plan became one of Poole’s top priorities.

Reducing inefficiencies in the form of small, costly courses provided part of the rationale for this scrutiny, but a still more important motivation was the need for ECU to carve out a distinctive identity. In bygone days of more munificent national government, such considerations had been trifling. By 1999, however, the Commonwealth’s portion of national university funding had declined to less than 50% and — as ECU historians Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne noted — ‘This parsimony hit hardest at the new universities, which had not had time or opportunity to build up capital reserves.’ As these
new universities adjusted to increasing competition beyond the comfort zone of adequate public funding, market recognition had become vital. VC Poole and her reconstructed executive group understood the importance of effective marketing, but were also cognisant of the need to shape a differentiated academic profile giving practical application to ECU’s principles of service, professionalism and enterprise.³

While academic profile had been central to the deliberations of ECU’s faculty reconfiguration working party, a more intensive review was undertaken in 1999-2000 under the leadership of the Deputy VC, Professor Liz Harman. The initial strategy behind this review was the identification of ‘strong’ and ‘strategic’ areas of scholarship, but the framework was later expanded to include a ‘niche’ category. ‘Strong’ areas were defined as those in which ECU had established a significant market presence, and in which demand was expected to remain high. These included teaching, nursing and business. ‘Strategic’ areas included legal studies and management information systems, which complemented existing offerings and had potential for future growth. ‘Niche’ areas were those in which ECU was thought to have the necessary expertise to capture a specific segment of the local, national and international market, and included performing arts, visual arts and aviation.⁴

Sharing Millicent Poole’s vision for a modern, differentiated academic profile, Liz Harman undertook the immense task of reviewing all ECU courses using the ‘strong’, ‘strategic’ or ‘niche’ taxonomy as a framework for analysis. The expected benefits of this work included the development of mechanisms to support major planning and resource decisions in the areas of load allocation, budgeting, and accommodation and staffing priorities. With so much at stake, Harman was at pains to ensure that the review took full account of university data on course demand (indicated by total equivalent full time student units (EFTSU) and fee-paying EFTSU), and
course success (indicated by completion, retention and satisfaction rates). Data relating to staff qualifications, research activity and tertiary entrance preferences was also studied, with course viability assessed on the basis of all available statistics.\(^5\)

Areas of scholarship were also assessed according to the extent to which they were aligned to the ECU mission statement and strategic plan. Encouragingly, an analysis of existing courses revealed that 78% fell into four broad service sectors: Government, Administration and Defence (21%), Health and Community Service (21%), Cultural and Recreational (19%) and Communication Service areas (17%). As ECU's annual report for 1999 noted, 'the university is already well-positioned to address the needs of the service sector and will continue to enhance its offerings to meet the emergent needs of that sector'.\(^6\) Using this and other analytical studies, Professor Harman worked with Gloria McQuillan and Rick Movick to develop a comprehensive database on the university's courses and units so that, for the first time in its history, ECU had a single definitive source of information for planning and other purposes.\(^7\)

Necessarily, however, a direct outcome of this review of academic profile was the closure or repackaging of units and courses falling outside the approved framework, with other areas targeted because of declining market appeal. Ultimately, the most dramatic reductions in course and unit numbers occurred within the Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences\(^8\) – but few schools would not be affected. Professor Pat Garnett, Dean of the Faculty of Communications, Health and Science in this difficult period, remembered:

> With a very short time... I had closed down about six courses within the faculty. We had one really tough executive meeting at Churchlands where we said we would get rid of a number of courses, and... we just shut them down basically. It was pretty serious stuff and it really rattled some cages. I suspect we moved a bit quickly on
this [but]... it was the right thing to do and we did need to move quickly... We knew which areas were weak, and which areas needed to be closed down.\textsuperscript{9}

Some within the university were uncomfortable with methodology, timing or both – and VC Poole regretted that ‘such was the external environment, we needed to move fast’.\textsuperscript{10} Bill Louden was an Associate Professor at the time and particularly recalled confusion between taught load and generated load – a problem for the School of Education because Education students filled discipline courses elsewhere in the university. Ron Oliver, a senior lecturer during this period, remembered that ‘out in the faculties... people reacted against the micro-management’, but that ‘once we had ownership of the strong, strategic process, it worked more smoothly’.\textsuperscript{11} Several approaches were tested and Poole testified that she and Deputy VC Harman ‘always aimed to get the buy-in of influential people’ by ‘working through’ their concerns.\textsuperscript{12} There were numerous professional sacrifices and many tough decisions. Long hours were passed weighing the merits of one course against those of another, the data-driven and trend-oriented approach of Poole and Harman leaving little room for emotional negotiation. Course closures were distressing for some academic staff members and for a relatively small number of students; Poole and Harman, however, consistently stressed that they were both desirable and necessary – not only for reasons of alignment and economy, but also for the encouragement of interdisciplinary approaches and the creation of an enterprising environment in which new disciplines could be identified and developed.

Five years later, VC Poole looked back on this overhaul of ECU’s academic profile and concluded that ‘regardless of flaws... the underlying principles were correct’.\textsuperscript{13} Within a relatively short time, indeed, this was much in evidence. Efficiency gains resulted in the development of a wide range of new undergraduate and postgraduate courses, particularly in the areas of finance, information technology, multimedia, and health and
wellness. A number of existing courses were remodelled and repackaged in keeping with changes in market demand. For example, ECU worked closely with local schools to develop a K-7 (Kindergarten to Year 7) teaching course and a graduate diploma course specialising in the middle years of schooling.\textsuperscript{14} By the end of 2000, ECU had identified its areas of strength in scholarship as business, communications and multimedia, computing and information science, education, and nursing.\textsuperscript{15} By then, too, the university was discovering a new operational strength – ‘the ability to use academic staff in innovative ways when courses were changed or closed’.\textsuperscript{16}

Like strategic planning, the task of achieving a differentiated academic profile that reflected ECU’s strengths and enterprising spirit in the 21st century required ongoing attention. Pedagogical alignment with strategic goals therefore needed to be supported by a review of organisational structures and systems, and the development of strategies to facilitate change. In the closing months of 1998, Poole had worked with Academic Board chairman Pat Garnett to revitalise the board’s structure and review its responsibilities. The creation of a new committee system significantly reduced the whole board’s administrative burden, enabling it to achieve greater focus on strategic issues – including those relating to the ECU’s academic profile – and equipped the board to assume primary responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning.\textsuperscript{17} It also gave members greater opportunity to engage in academic debate – a high priority for VC Poole, who had witnessed the benefits of rigorous academic debate at other Australian universities. To Poole’s delight, ECU’s Academic Board became ‘a real forum for debate of the issues, showing passion and so on’, and she gave credit to Garnett and subsequent board chair Andrew Taylor for their committed approach to this significant cultural change.\textsuperscript{18}

During 1999, a working party was established to ensure that ECU’s developing academic profile was supported by adequate facilities and
resources. Reconstituted two years later as the Academic and Campus Profile Committee – and later renamed the Academic Profile and Campus Coordination Committee – it played an increasingly important role in endorsing alterations to profile, and in endorsing academic load shifts between and within faculties. ECU's new 'Strategic Load Pool Process', introduced as part of the implementation of the strategic plan, served as an important adjunct to the work of the committee and was retained as a mechanism to stimulate and support innovation within the constraints of the existing resource base. This involved the removal of places from overall student load for redistribution across faculties on the basis of a competitive bidding process. Successful bids were required to demonstrate genuine strategic merit by meeting a set of fixed criteria, with final consideration
resting with the Vice Chancellor. Over time, a number of successful courses were introduced or fortified through the Strategic Load Pool Process. Further strategies to effect change in the academic profile were outlined in the ECU's Teaching and Learning Management Plan, endorsed by University Council during 2000. Curriculum management was one of five key objectives of the plan developed for the period 2001-03, and specific reference was made to ensuring that 'ECU offers courses that are cost-effective for the University and well understood in the market'.

Among the strategies developed to achieve this objective were identifying and providing resources for a set of 'signature courses' at ECU, and the nurturing of graduate attributes suited to the service professions through a series of two-year pilot projects. ECU's niche as a provider of education for the service professions also led to an escalating engagement with industry across all areas of scholarship, with a stronger emphasis on practicums, work experience programs and industry-sponsored projects. Course accreditation by professional bodies became a high priority and the university solicited input from the professions on course and unit design. During 2001, the university's commitment to meeting the needs of the service professions was given further expression in the establishment of the Institute of Service Professions (ISP), a research centre offering expertise and leadership to public practitioners and policy makers, while generally seeking to increase public understanding of the ECU's research about the service professions.

*The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002* had stated the university's intention to 'build on strengths... shift out areas of weakness and... move quickly, but selectively into new areas of opportunity'. Transparent planning processes had ensured that the plan surprised no-one, but some within the university had wondered whether planning resolutions could be translated into resolute implementation. The hard work of
revamping ECU’s course offerings removed many doubts. Significantly, a mid-term review of the strategic plan, presented to University Council in February 2001, concluded that ‘ECU can generally be confident that its planning remains relevant, forward-looking and imaginative’, the defining themes of service, professionalism and enterprise having achieved strong acceptance.²⁴ Robyn Quin, an associate professor at the time and a close observer of staff responses to change by virtue of her central involvement in the strategic planning process, posited that the closure of courses and other concrete moves toward alignment were emblematic of the new ECU. ‘The surprise came when it [implementation] actually happened,’ Quin commented. ‘When these things actually “bit”, people realised it was a real plan!’²⁵

The decentralisation of external studies to the faculties at ECU provided a conspicuous example of ‘real plan’ impact. The External Studies Department – established in the institution’s pre-university days – had earned a solid reputation, yet its principal mode of delivery was printed material, which was both expensive and outdated. Difficulties had also arisen in course content and quality while, in many programs, enrolments
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were low. Although the strategic plan specifically committed ECU to the flexible delivery of teaching through the development of information technology, VC Millicent Poole’s move to reduce the volume of external offerings and decentralise responsibility for off-campus offerings sent ripples through the university community. With ECU determinedly improving its capacity for on-line learning and other forms of delivery compatible with the changed market, decentralisation culminated in the closure of the department.26

By 2001, therefore, ECU had firmly established a vision of a differentiated academic profile and adopted plans, strategies and structures to progressively transform vision into reality. Substantive changes had been made – some of them painful for those directly affected. Significantly, however, the university had been able to undertake this work of shaping and streamlining its academic profile without sacrificing its position as Western Australia’s second largest university in terms of total student load (EFTSU). For VC Poole, however, the most important considerations were strategic. At the end of 2001, she wrote:

ECU has established a distinctive place in the competitive tertiary market as a provider of leading courses and education for the service industries and professions. It does not seek to be a comprehensive university covering all disciplines, and the value of finding its strengths and building on them is starting to pay off.27

Among the most positive indicators of success were the Commonwealth Government’s recognition of the university’s differentiated profile through its allocation of extra places under policies outlined in Backing Australia’s Ability (2001), as well as the ECU’s increasing success in attracting overseas students.28 Clearly, ECU’s planned, data-driven transformation was winning friends and influencing people.
7. Providence

“It is not enough to be busy... the question is, what are we busy about?”

— Henry David Thoreau

While a university’s core business may be teaching, learning and research, success in those areas cannot be sustained without diligence in policy and planning areas, proficient corporate services and efficient resource management. Planning processes established by Vice Chancellor Millicent Poole at Edith Cowan University (ECU) had identified a need to respond to external funding pressures with perspicacity and providence. The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002, released in early 1998, pledged that ‘the University will be flexible, responsive to change, service oriented and efficient in delivering support and services’. Moreover, it stated that this would be achieved ‘by introducing improvements in structures and processes’. Concurrent with the work of faculty restructuring and shaping a differentiated academic profile, VC Poole had acted quickly to commission a review of ECU’s corporate services. She also initiated discussion within the senior executive about devising a more co-ordinated approach to policy development.

Late in 1997, a disparate group of policy, research and statistics staff had been assembled under the temporary direction of Associate Professor
Robyn Quin, whose capacity for collaborative leadership and rational corporate thinking was evident in the role of executive officer to the Strategic Planning Group. By 1998 a discrete policy and planning unit was taking shape, with new director Andrew Crevald responsible to Deputy VC Liz Harman. The establishment of an Office of Policy and Planning was formally approved in the middle of the 1999, and it was fully staffed by the end of August.³

The duties of the office were extensive, carrying important implications for ECU’s future wellbeing. Team members were to undertake ongoing environmental scanning for market opportunities, seeking to identify possible strategic alliances as well as potential threats. The office would also take the leading role in future strategic planning, support planning activities within operational units and carry out policy formulation, documentation and review. Finally, it would also become a hub for data analysis to inform university decision-making and fulfil statutory obligations. Within six months, the Office of Policy and Planning had proved its worth across all of these areas, increasing ECU’s capability for quick response to changing demographics, emerging student markets and employment trends; it was also developing a strategic human resources capability.⁴

VC Poole’s determination to equip ECU to meet the needs and expectations of students and other stakeholders in the 21st century also underpinned a comprehensive renewal of corporate services during the 1999-2000 period, with the 1998 report of consultants Ernst & Young providing the foundation.⁵ The consultants’ observation that the university’s administrative divisions ‘generally had a functional focus, rather than a customer focus’ highlighted the need to align corporate services with corporate principles and values. ECU’s strategic plan attached central importance to the notion of providing services to ‘clients’. The university itself would be client-focused, while its staff were to be ‘responsive to both
internal and external clients in a timely, proficient and friendly manner'. No less than ‘all functions undertaken by staff’ would be viewed as ‘providing a service’, whether to students, colleagues or other clients. Ernst & Young noted that achieving these planning aspirations would require ‘significant change in organisational culture because the majority of administrative divisions within the university ‘did not have either a history or philosophy of customer service’. Therefore, ‘careful thinking needed to be given to an appropriate set of change and leadership strategies’.7

Recommendations by Ernst & Young included a major reconstruction of ECU’s administration, reducing eight divisions to three customer service areas and two business support areas.8 The consultants anticipated significant performance benefits through the elimination of duplications and inefficiencies, the combination of like activities to achieve ‘critical mass’, and improved coordination of operational plans and policies.

In 1998, consultants Ernst & Young noted that ECU ‘did not have either a history or philosophy of customer service’. VC Poole immediately initiated ‘a major paradigm shift’.
Moreover, net savings of more than $2 million were expected in the second year of an implementation phase, rising to $6 million per annum thereafter. Clearly such outcomes could not be achieved without upheaval, and Ernst & Young placed great emphasis on the importance of effective change management.

ECU's strategic plan had expressed a commitment to structured change management processes and three consultative committees had been established to assist with industrial issues arising from change. Ernst & Young nevertheless warned of the need for an 'expanded' strategy:

Most importantly, the potential cultural barrier to major change identified at ECU would need to be addressed with strong communication mechanisms to avoid confusion and resistance; by promoting and embedding the concept of an internal client and a service orientation; with education and development to create an organisation well equipped to adapt to current and future changes.

According to Ernst & Young, ECU staff recognised a strong case for change but, less encouragingly, noted 'a level of reservation about the way the change process would be handled'.

With these injunctions at the forefront of her mind, VC Poole launched a period of broad consultation on the corporate services review in January 1999. Over an eight-week period, a handpicked interim project team led by Jackie Moffatt (Manager, Bibliographic Services, Library), with support from Mary Rawlinson (HR and Training Manager, Facilities and Services) and five senior officers from the reviewed divisions, received more than sixty-five submissions from individuals and work groups throughout the university. Surveys were undertaken with customer groups on ECU campuses, staff focus sessions were conducted, and briefings were held with union representatives. On the basis of these and other consultation initiatives, the interim project team prepared three alternative structural
models based on the Ernst & Young proposals and presented them to specially convened meetings of deans and directors. Poole then asked the project team to work with a steering committee to draft a list of principles to guide decision-making on corporate services, to refine and advance a single preferred model consistent with those principles, and to consider implications for faculties and the university’s executive.  

Remarkably, all this was accomplished within a month. In March 1999, VC Millicent Poole approved the release of a discussion paper, ‘Principles and Proposed Structure for University Corporate Services’ for comment by the university community. Whereas Ernst & Young had proposed consolidating eight university divisions into three major customer service conglomerates plus two business support areas, the interim project team and steering committee favoured a total of just four administration hubs – one focused on student services, one focused on teaching and learning, and two carrying out business support services. The discussion paper also proposed a new terminology to reflect ECU’s ‘new philosophy of client-centred services’, with ‘divisions’ to be consigned to history in favour of either ‘service centre’ or ‘support centre’.

To gain external opinion on the proposed new structure for ECU’s corporate services, VC Poole convened a reference group of eight leaders with experience of organisational change in business, education and government. Chaired by ECU Pro Chancellor Kath White, the reference group unanimously endorsed the model put forward, agreeing that they were ‘essential for the University’s future prosperity’. In a written report completed in April 1999, the group encouraged the VC to proceed toward implementation with dispatch, not only to avoid loss of momentum, but also to sooner reap the benefits of change. Members of the reference group were patently aware that issues affecting job security went hand-in-glove with vexation, and recommendations included maximising honest, open and consistent communication, and clearly enunciating values underpinning the change process.
A week after receiving the group’s report, the Vice Chancellor outlined a detailed process for an implementation phase of the corporate services review, to begin immediately; she also announced her intention to appoint a project management group. Executive Director (Finance and Administration) Warren Snell was assigned to establish the two planned business support centres, one with responsibility for human resources, finance, accounts, student administration and shared operations, and the other encompassing such areas as campus services, commercial services and facilities planning. At the same time, Pro VC (Teaching, Learning and Technology) Professor Ann Deden was given responsibility for the design and establishment of the two new service centres, the Student Service Centre and a Centre for Learning Innovation and Future Technologies (LIFT). Deputy VC Professor Liz Harman was assigned to work with Deden on all aspects of human resource management, and VC Poole herself was to chair an advisory committee to monitor progress. Soon afterward, the project management group designated the implementation phase the ‘ECU Service 2000 Project’, abbreviated in the fashion of the day to S2K. Poole told an industry journalist that S2K was ‘a first’ in Australia because it embraced whole-of-university change:

It is a major paradigm shift to a quite different way of running a university... We are encouraging a different entrepreneurial culture which is rather unusual in the administrative operations of a university... We are conscious we have to create a new reputation, a new image, and this is all part of linking it to our strategy of service, professionalism and enterprise, and shuffling off the things that aren’t our core business. It is a massive change and we have to get it right. I am confident that, with the people and processes we have, and the momentum we are building up, we will make it work.

Although Poole and her executive team carefully heeded the external reference group’s change management advice, there was no escaping the fact
that creating a new corporate structure was a mammoth undertaking fraught with difficulty. Poole had anticipated 'fallout from the unions, no matter what we do', but the anxiety and hostility she encountered exceeded her expectations. In a final summation of the S2K project published by the Commonwealth Government’s Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Poole and fellow executives Harman, Snell and Deden described the implementation phase as 'rugged' – a period of 'considerable upheaval' that 'tested the patience of all involved'. The major loci for staff and union consultation throughout the S2K project were three pre-existing committees, the Change Management Consultative Committee, the Academic Staff joint Consultative Committee and the General Staff Joint Consultative Committee (GSJCC). Meetings of the GSJCC were changed from monthly to fortnightly during the consultation and transition period – a period of eighteen months. Poole later reflected:

It took so long because it was a highly consultative process involving staff, unions and external consultants, and in retrospect it should have been done more quickly. On the other hand, if it had happened more quickly, we might have made more mistakes.

ECU's four new front-line service centres effectively came into existence in May 1999, when interim directors were appointed to begin working with the S2K project team to develop detailed staffing proposals and implementation schedules, and to attend to such matters as budgeting, accommodation, technology and training. Simultaneously, a team of human resources staff examined classification structures, competencies, remuneration levels and workforce profiling for the centres, effectively making the S2K project a 'test laboratory' for redesigning staffing policies. Ultimately, more than four hundred and fifty jobs were reclassified – each one involving the preparation and approval of a new position description. Personnel issues were complicated by the contemporaneous challenge of a new round of
ECU's strategic plan committed the university to the notion of providing services to internal and external clients in a 'timely, proficient and friendly' manner.

enterprise bargaining – characterised by Poole as a ‘clever’ ploy by government to set ‘staff against management rather than staff against government’.23 Despite all obstacles, however, the process of redistributing staff to the new service centres began in December 1999 and recruitment through internal and external advertising commenced early in the new year; the new corporate services structure was fully operational from 1 May 2000.24

The ECU Service 2000 Project constituted a major exercise in change management, and dramatically expressed the reconstructed executive team’s commitment to the development of a service culture. It consumed an enormous amount of resources but resulted in a clearer delineation of accountabilities, improved efficiencies, long-term savings and greater alignment with strategic planning goals. The project also involved a significant commitment of senior executive time, VC Millicent Poole
describing it as 'the biggest thing I have ever done', partly because it involved a significant shift in thinking and behaviour across the entire organisation. While Poole admitted having initially underestimated the need to 'make such macro changes', the process of 'talking to people and trusting people' demonstrated the value of collaborative leadership and helped build a team committed to ECU's new strategic direction. In May 2001, Poole commented:

I have a council and senior management team that give me enormous support and enough people who recognise that the changes were very necessary if ECU was to survive and thrive and be in a better position in the 21st century.

At a personal level, of course, change management was taxing for all concerned – and, at times, 'a misery'. Ultimately, however, Poole found it invigorating. 'I certainly have not been weakened by it,' she told a reporter. 'I have been strengthened by it. I found within myself sources of inner strength that I never would have imagined'.

During 2000, Edith Cowan University reached the mid-point of its first five-year planning cycle and commissioned an independent review of its strategic plan. Phillips Curran Pty Ltd presented a report to University Council in February 2001 stating that 'ECU can generally be confident that its planning remains relevant, forward looking and imaginative'. The report also indicated that the university's defining themes of service, professionalism and enterprise remained 'valid and well accepted', both internally and externally, and that public perceptions of ECU were changing. Since Poole's arrival in 1997, much had changed at ECU – and it was getting harder not to notice.
8.

Selling change

"Modest dogs miss much meat."

- English proverb

At the end of 1996, Professor Roy Lourens' last full year as Vice Chancellor (VC), the institutional framework of Edith Cowan University (ECU) included a small public relations unit, responsible to the Pro VC. There was also a research and development unit, responsible to the Deputy VC (Research). The term 'marketing' - a management buzzword of the 1990s - was nowhere to be seen. Lourens had commissioned research on public perceptions but - in the words of his successor, Professor Millicent Poole - 'put this survey in his drawer and essentially left it there'. By the end of 1997, however, there was a new organisational chart and three of five boxes attached to the vacant position of Executive Director (Development) were labelled 'Marketing', 'Public Relations' and 'University Development'. Although the new marketing arm existed in not much more than name, its inception announced that VC Poole ascribed a great deal of importance to the notion of strategic marketing, and would assign it a key role in realising her vision for ECU's future. Marketing had entered the lexicon of the executive - and it was there to stay.¹
ECU's commitment to marketing under VC Poole was succinctly expressed in *The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002*, approved by University Council in February 1998. Within the plan – indeed, as part of the 'defining theme' of 'Enterprise' – ECU vowed to pursue its mission by 'Promoting the University's strengths in local, national and international contexts through community service, targetted [sic.] marketing and publicity'. The strategic plan acknowledged:

In a highly competitive and increasingly deregulated tertiary education sector a university's ability to effectively market its strengths will be of paramount importance... The University's marketing strategy will reflect the key themes of service, professionalism and enterprise, and ensure that a strong and consistent corporate image is widely promoted in the marketplace.

Recognition of the importance of building and maintaining communications with prospective and current students, local and international alumni, and key sections of the national and international communities would underpin all marketing, communication and development strategies within the university. The plan also envisaged the evolution of marketing protocols addressing such issues as style, image, message and layout, to be met at all levels of the institution so that it could 'quickly and effectively develop a clear and recognisable corporate image'.

When Professor John Wood joined ECU as Pro VC (Research and Advancement) in June 1998, he was handed a portfolio that included both 'development' and 'marketing and public relations'. An energetic and animated personality, Wood possessed vast business planning experience and had previously been involved in high-profile public relations campaigns. He brought many valuable marketing and media connections to the executive table, and immediately took up the challenge of rehabilitating the university's lamentable public image.
In spite of prescriptions contained in the strategic plan, Professor Wood remembered that marketing was still 'largely seen in terms of advertising' when he arrived at ECU, and that it was fundamentally 'copy cat' in style. ‘From the [university’s] ties to its insignia,’ Wood recalled, ‘promotion was very much in the University of Western Australia vein, because this was what a university was seen to be about’. In addition, there was little evidence of a unified, whole-of-institution approach – and he paid credit to VC Millicent Poole for recognising the need to embrace marketing in its broadest sense and develop a cohesive marketing plan:

Millicent recognised immediately the need for someone to take on this key role of marketing, advertising, developing [and] fundraising at an executive level... Initially we were concerned with getting a good structure in place. We needed a corporate approach. This has been one of the major contributions Millicent has bought to the university – simple, clear and effective administrative structures across a range of key areas. Marketing was one of these areas.6

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The drive to establish brand recognition for Edith Cowan University included promotion of the name ‘ECU’, incorporated into a stylish and contemporary logo.
With a new director of marketing, Susan Parker, Pro VC Wood began the difficult task of establishing brand recognition for Edith Cowan University. By the beginning of 1999, a Strategic Marketing and Communications Plan had been developed, and implementation began immediately. Budgets were allocated for specific image development and communications activities, initially amounting to almost one million dollars. One of the first and most consequential decisions in the brand development process involved rigorous promotion of the university as ‘ECU’ – with the shortened appellation incorporated into a colourful and contemporary logo. Previously, many had referred to the university as ‘Edith Cowan’ or ‘Cowan’, and the embrace of ‘ECU’ symbolised the VC’s resolve in breaking from the past. Poole recalled:

I was not unhappy to see the university referred to corporately as “ECU”. I had spent time at QUT, where there had been a very conscious decision to use “QUT” rather than “Queensland University of Technology”. QUT thought of itself as being similar to IBM – businesslike, corporate. I had already been inculcated into this way of thinking, and I liked the short professional focus of “ECU”.

The university’s decision to become ‘ECU’ gave marketing and advertising within Australia a new, sharper and – in marketing parlance – ‘sexier’ focus. Professor Wood described the new visual representation of ECU as a ‘considerable turning point’ because ECU ‘became colourful’. This new portrayal was potent against ‘a backdrop of real differentiation’ – and Wood added that it also had advantages overseas:

The move from “Edith Cowan University” to “ECU” was welcomed by the international folk because it [“Edith Cowan University”] was very hard for agents to say... In fact, I think a lot of the people in the international office were talking about “ECU” well before it became mainstreamed.
In concert with this signal move toward the development of an ECU brand, the university worked to develop greater media awareness of its teaching and research achievements, and to generally find its 'voice' in the sector and the broader community. In 1999, this resulted in a three-fold improvement in media exposure, the financial value of unpaid electronic media exposure exceeding $0.5m and complementing an even more valuable quota of print media exposure. VC Poole played an active role in this work, her credibility as an academic combining with an almost evangelical passion that proved both media-friendly and highly infectious. John Wood explained:

A lot of the VC's own personality traits embody what ECU is all about. Thinking about a parallel example, consider [Virgin CEO] Richard Branson. He is Virgin – he personally represents all that Virgin is. The appointment of a CEO is very important – the CEO must be in step with what the organisation stands for. This has certainly been the case with Millicent. The CEO's personality can "extend" the organisation.11

Millicent Poole understood that promotion involved much more than advertising and was willing to 'talk up' ECU at every opportunity. The VC's approach differed markedly from that of her predecessors but was in complete accord with the philosophies of Susan Parker, the university's first director of marketing, and Lianne Cretney-Barnes, who succeeded Parker in December 1999. This was illustrated soon after Parker's appointment, when Poole was invited to appear in a commercial publication to be called Personalities of Perth. Poole sought the opinion of ECU Chancellor Robert Nicholson, and both she and Parker were surprised to find that Nicholson 'didn't want ECU to have anything to do with it'. According to Professor Poole, Parker immediately came forward and said that 'since the university
wouldn't pay for it, [the] marketing [department] would!' For Poole, the incident demonstrated that marketing 'just wasn't a part of the culture', and she supported Wood's contention that it had previously been viewed 'in terms of advertising'.

Susan Parker was also responsible for a review of all major institutional publications and advertising, moving to achieve increased focus on target markets. During 1999, the staff gazette, on-line news, and student and alumni newsletters were all revised, and guidelines were established for faculty publications. Professor Wood recalled that Parker 'was a real change agent' with an 'incredibly disciplined approach', which led to 'difficult times' in a university community with little previous exposure to corporate-style marketing. 'She assisted in making Lianne [Cretney-Barnes]’s path easier,' Wood opined. ‘When Lianne came along, the relationship did soften because she took a less confrontational approach'.

Cretney-Barnes had been attracted to ECU because 'there was challenge... linked to a willingness, which made it achievable'. During 2000, she led a review of the marketing plan, breaking through to win University Council support after engaging in extensive consultation with the university's faculties and centres. The style of faculty publications had continued to vary in spite of Parker's guidelines, and this posed a particular challenge. Cretney-Barnes remembered:

Every school at ECU thought they were different, and some rejected the whole-of-university approach. I remember one of the first faculty meetings I went to – I took the range of brochures that the faculty produced, and there were volumes. They were a dog's breakfast. The only thing that was the same about them was the logo – but they had different colour schemes and different graphical representations. Some looked like UWA – they were all over the place.
While acknowledging that each school had 'some distinctiveness about it', Cretney-Barnes called upon them to contemplate the benefits of an institutional approach. 'Let's work together,' she would urge. 'Let's sell the one brand.'

This approach was successful, and VC Poole paid tribute to Cretney-Barnes for her patience and persuasiveness: 'Lianne was fantastic the way she worked with the faculties – she brought them on board... It was a huge achievement'.

Poole and Pro VC John Wood were both firm believers in the importance of basing decision-making on data, while Cretney-Barnes was keen to research public perceptions about ECU and gain a clearer understanding of key markets. With these objects in view, the university commissioned Market Equity to undertake a major market research project, commencing in October 2000 and continuing with regular feedback sessions until March 2001. Cretney-Barnes described the results as 'unpalatable'. In spite of many substantial changes since 1997, ECU remained the 'university of last choice' for Western Australian school-leavers at the beginning of the new century; many, indeed, viewed it as something akin to a TAFE college. ECU's wide variety of courses and the range of its delivery options were virtually unknown, while work to establish brand recognition had not yet made an impact.

On a more positive note the research confirmed that ECU was 'seen to be practical', and produced 'career-focused graduates'. All segments of the market attached paramount importance to finding an 'interesting and exciting' career – a distillation of common sense that, from a marketing
perspective, provided a framework for the development ECU’s image and a yardstick for longitudinal measurement of changes in public attitudes. The survey also identified growth potential in the non-school leaver market, aged between twenty and thirty-five. Most importantly, it strengthened arguments for the sustained application of an integrated marketing strategy. Cretney-Barnes described the market research as both ‘confronting’ and ‘a watershed’:

Having the research and data provided us with a really valuable starting point. It meant that we could go to the schools and faculties and say, “This is where we are at – this is what the data is saying.” Had I just gone along and said, “Well this is what I think”, they wouldn’t have paid any attention at all. But the research data provided the necessary evidence and it gave us a starting point for improvement.

Cretney-Barnes and her team immediately set about developing strategies to overcome negative perceptions about ECU; maximising its appeal in the non-school leaver market; and associating ECU with ‘interesting and exciting’ careers. Consistent with The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002, the motif would be ‘differentiation’, a notion the university sought to construct by focusing on areas of strength and capitalising on flexibility of delivery. Advertising would play an important role in the new marketing thrust and – although such campaigns as ‘See you at ECU’ and ‘Thinking for the Future’ had gained satisfactory recognition – Cretney-Barnes appraised ECU’s previous efforts and concluded that they had been piecemeal. She sensed that the university’s existing advertising agency ‘hadn’t got what we were all about’:

I remember one thing they came up with was a sports concept, with people jumping over hurdles in a race. But this wasn’t what we were about. We didn’t want to be seen as if we were in a race, competing – we wanted to be seen as different.
Consequently, ECU’s advertising was put out to tender, a new agency was engaged, and a new campaign was launched: ‘ECU – The Start of a Great Career’.  

This campaign had three measurable objectives: to increase ECU’s share of first preferences; to increase non-school leaver enrolments; and to ‘shift perceptions’ so that ECU was viewed as ‘a real alternative’ to the other Western Australian universities. The university’s media strategy was reviewed in the light of research showing that many within the school leaver and younger mature age markets only rarely read newspapers. As Cretney-Barnes wrote, this led to a new and productive relationship with radio:

We adopted a position of consolidating and dominating, where most of the funds were focused on the one media. Radio was selected as a medium ECU could affordably make our own and was considered the best channel for reaching the target audiences... ECU’s commitment to radio generated such goodwill that three of Perth’s leading FM radio stations responded variously by naming ECU as a sponsor for community news, showing the ECU logo on their website and running a sausage sizzle at ECU’s Careers Expo.

In addition, some of the stations directly promoted ECU’s ‘Great Careers’ website and conducted ‘ambient media stunts’ that complemented the university’s advertising. The value of free on-air credits was difficult to quantify but indisputably significant, and may well have approached a hundred thousand dollars.

‘An exciting year for promoting ECU’: this was the executive’s summary of marketing activities in the university’s 2001 annual report, and statistics indicated that the work of the marketing team was already bearing fruit. The number of calls to the Centre for Prospective Students – which had been placed under the umbrella of the Office of Marketing and Public Relations – had increased dramatically. Since 2000, there had been a 16.1%
Associating ECU with 'interesting and exciting' careers was a key to its marketing success in the years after 2001.

increase in applications from non-school leavers. ECU’s first preference share increased by nearly 1% to 20% in 2001, and many individual programs registered extraordinary increases in enrolments – in psychology, for example, ECU’s market share increased from 30% to 40.5%. Public awareness of the university had also been generated by means of expositions, exhibitions, open days, and presentations to schools and community groups. ECU’s strategic marketing campaign was modified in style and content over the ensuing years, but the central ‘Great Careers’ message was retained. Although radio continued as ECU’s primary medium because of its affordability, the university also ran a series of television advertisements with the message that ‘It’s never too late to change your career by choosing
to study at ECU!" In 2002, a web portal was established for journalists to access media releases and other information relating to ECU, including a database of academic experts available for comment on issues. Other marketing strategies included sponsorships and community involvements, among them participation in the Perth International Arts Festival and the Joondalup Festival.

In tandem with external initiatives, ECU instigated an internal marketing education program ‘to engender an across the board market focus at grassroots level – by winning the minds and hearts of ECU staff’. Quarterly workshops were held to explain the role of the university’s marketing office, demystify marketing strategy and stress the importance of brand consistency. Professional development was provided to frontline service staff; media training was provided to academic staff; and induction procedures were expanded to include marketing awareness. Guidelines governing the use of the ECU logo were established, and the marketing team also placed visual and promotional writing style guides for access by staff on the university’s website. In addition, a photographic library comprised of images consistent with ECU branding was made available for use in promotional material.

Graduations and open days were explicitly identified as image-building activities with presentations modified accordingly, and Professors Wood and Poole soon noted a change of mood among ECU staff. In the late 1990s, any sense of pride had generally been ‘kept quiet... [Staff members] weren’t prepared to be too vocal about it’, but after 2001 more and more individuals felt ready to shrug off the ‘poor cousin’ or ‘Enid Blyton’ mentality – to stand up and be counted. In 2005, Wood commented:

That change of attitude amongst staff is reflected in the number of them that now get involved with ECU Open Day. Initially people were not keen to be involved. Now they don’t want to miss it – they are down there in their ECU T-shirts having a great time.
RAISING EDITH

Professor Poole agreed: ‘People just didn’t have the confidence that what they were doing was being noticed and was worthwhile. There is a lot more pride in working at ECU now.’

VC Poole continued to serve as a tireless ambassador for ECU until her retirement at the end of 2005. She seldom missed an opportunity to speak about ECU activities, initiatives and achievements, and encouraged staff and students to follow suit. She met regularly with government ministers and senior bureaucrats to discuss matters of interest to the university and the wider tertiary education sector, hosted annual forums for industry leaders and led an executive team committed to a busy corporate events program. Poole was also an active member of national and international boards and committees, including the Board of the Australian Universities Quality Agency, the Global Governance Board and the Board of Directors of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). She served as convenor of the New Generation Universities group; as a member of the Business-Higher Education Roundtable (B-HERT); as an executive council member of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP); and as chair of IAUP’s Commission on Technology in Higher Education. She forged strategic links across the globe and was particularly active in building relationships in East Asia, Scandinavia, Africa, Russia and China. In addition, she contributed items and articles to mass-circulation daily newspapers on matters as diverse as International Women’s Day and summer holiday reading. John Wood believed that Poole’s articulate presence on so many platforms and general visibility was ‘terribly significant’ for ECU. ‘It’s all about leadership,’ he commented. For Lianne Cretney-Barnes and her marketing team, Poole was the embodiment of the new ECU. ‘Her contribution has gone beyond “talking ECU up”,’ Cretney-Barnes explained. ‘It’s about being what ECU is all about – being innovative, being prepared to take risks, being passionate and fresh.’
Only a handful of years after her arrival at ECU, Millicent Poole’s transformational agenda had energised the university – but VC Poole understood that actual change, no matter how extensive and significant, was only part of the equation. Changing perceptions was imperative – particularly for a university that, in the middle of the 1990s, was still carrying heavy baggage from its college days and shrinking with the embarrassment of low national rankings and its ‘Enid Blyton’ tag. By early 2003, ECU’s attention to the marketing of its new direction – effectively, ‘selling change’ – was bearing fruit. There was, indeed, solid evidence of a remarkable shift in public perceptions. At 31 January 2003, ECU’s held 27.9% of the market share in first preference applications, an increase of 4.8% over 2002. The share held by market leader Curtin University declined 2.1% to 30.2% over the same period, while the University of Western Australia lost 2.8% of the market to fall to 24.8% and Murdoch University recorded a modest increase of 0.7% to reach 17%. In the same period, ECU achieved a 34.8% increase in enrolments from non-school leavers, following a 16.1% increase between 2001 and 2002. Moreover, market research on the ECU brand revealed that the university was broadly seen as modern, relevant, accessible, service-oriented, flexible and practical.  

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RAISING EDITH

ECU’s marketing accomplishments did not go unnoticed beyond education circles and resulted in a number of awards from the Australian Marketing Institute and the Advertising Federation of Australia’s *Campaign Brief*. In 2001, ECU won a ‘Best Media Strategy’ award from *Campaign Brief*, and was a finalist in its ‘Advertiser of the Year’ and ‘Campaign Effectiveness’ categories. The following year, the Australian Marketing Institute awarded ECU State and Australian titles for ‘Marketing Excellence’ in the category of education. ECU was also named *Campaign Brief*’s ‘Advertiser of the Year’, and was again a finalist in the category of campaign effectiveness. In 2003, the university won two categories of the Australian Marketing Institute’s Western Australian awards, and received the institute’s national award for ‘Internal Marketing’.

Notwithstanding these accolades and encouraging trends in key performance indicators, ECU could ill afford complacency. Conscious that the marketing of its competitors in the tertiary education sector was steadily becoming more aggressive, and also aware of the dangers of ‘brand fatigue’, ECU began developing a brand evolution strategy for the 2005-2009 period. With environmental scanning and consistency with the university’s strategic vision paramount, consideration was given to the brand requirements and marketing objectives of individual faculties and centres; to the development of mechanisms for testing brand health and communicating brand promise; and to maintaining the momentum of internal advocacy. As Professor John Wood pointed out in 2005, the ECU brand was necessarily ‘more than an advertising slogan’, encapsulating ‘the values the institution has, its public face, its personality and its key deliverables’. Promoted to Deputy VC (Students, Advancement and International) during 2003, Wood knew that brand positioning increased expectations across a range of operational areas and made it incumbent on the university to meet them. ‘It’s all a matter of delivering the brand promise,’ Wood commented. ‘We said we are a university that delivers A, B and C – so now we must do it... We have made huge inroads, but there is a still a way to go.’
9.

Citizen and host

"You must come home with me and be my guest;  
You will give joy to me, and I will do  
All that is in my power to honour you."

- Percy Bysshe Shelley

At the time of her installation as Vice Chancellor (VC) of Edith Cowan University in 1997, Professor Millicent Poole stressed the challenges and opportunities posed by internationalisation and globalisation. The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002 articulated a response to these challenges and provided a platform for the development and implementation of strategies to enhance the university's position in the global marketplace.

Poole’s installation speech acknowledged that internationalisation and globalisation were changing economic, political, social and environmental contexts, and that new communications technologies were ‘rapidly creating a situation in which boundaries are irrelevant, and universities must compete on a global scale’. In elementary terms, times had changed:

Once internationalisation in the University context meant welcoming small numbers of overseas students into the institution. Now the term has a much wider meaning. I believe internationalisation will be fundamental to the pursuit of academic excellence and the growth of a rich university culture and critical to the success of Edith Cowan University in the next decade.
The challenges for Edith Cowan University (ECU) were to ensure that its offerings were relevant to international students, to give all students the cultural understanding required of global citizens, and to provide staff and students with opportunities to engage in exchange, collaborative research, off-shore delivery programs and international consultancies. For Poole, location on the Indian Ocean rim and advanced information technology capabilities situated ECU to achieve this anticipated proliferation of international links, and to benefit from them.4

ECU's strategic plan addressed the challenges of internationalising the curriculum and also envisaged active participation in the ongoing globalisation of education. Formally adopted in February 1998, the plan committed the university to 'cultural inclusivity, international relevance and a global perspective'. An international curriculum was to be incorporated into all new courses, while existing courses were to be reviewed and adapted. As a measure of the university's earnest intention, staff efforts in internationalising the curriculum would be 'factored into the assessment of the quality of teaching for purposes of performance review, tenure and promotion'.5 The plan allocated responsibility for internationalisation and 'strategies that will enhance the University's position in the global marketplace' to the Pro VC (Research and Advancement). It recognised significant financial opportunities concomitant with market expansion and stressed the importance of strategic alliances – for example, partnership with TAFE colleges – so that ECU and its partners could build 'a capacity to offer a comprehensive range of post secondary education internationally'. The strategic plan envisaged the retention of populous South East Asian countries as significant sources of enrolment but also proposed diversification around the Indian Ocean rim. In general, ECU aimed

to substantially increase its enrolment of international students both onshore and offshore over the next five years. This will bring
educational and cultural benefits to the University, as well as broadening the revenue base.6

Professor John Wood joined ECU as Pro VC (Research and Advancement) in June 1998 and approached the task of internationalisation with characteristic vigour. Before the end of the 1998 academic year, ECU International had been established under Associate Professor Harold McKnight and charged with responsibility for coordinating international efforts by the faculties and generally managing strategies to enhance ECU's global positioning. Work had also commenced on the preparation of an 'International Plan' outlining specific objectives and strategies to achieve the goals set down in The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002.7 Highlights of 1999 included the establishment of new off-shore programs in Thailand, the launch of a scheme delivering courses in communications and nursing to Norwegian students, and the execution of other agreements relating to a range of programs in Thailand, Hong Kong and China. ECU was also instrumental in bringing together a group of thirty-six Australian and European universities to form the Australian-European Network (AEN) consortium, providing further opportunities for exchange programs and international research partnerships. VC Millicent Poole contributed to the quest of all Australian universities for new international markets as a member of taskforces established by the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee to examine prospects for educational, cultural and commercial collaborations in India and Thailand.8

Maximising student mobility was one of the objectives of the International Plan, and ECU was industrious in cultivating reciprocal exchanges, study tours and internships. The university participated in such networks as University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP) and Hyogo University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (HUMAP), and ECU also played a leading role in extending student mobility schemes into the Indian Ocean region.
through the establishment of University Mobility in the Indian Ocean Rim (UMIOR). By the end of 2000, ECU had entered into bilateral exchange agreements with universities in North America, Europe and Asia, as well as a range of other mobility agreements with governments, businesses and not-for-profit organisations. During that year ECU played host to more than ninety exchange students, while seventy-five ECU students availed themselves of overseas study opportunities. The university also awarded scholarships to six students under the AEN exchange program.\(^9\)

In the 1998-99 period, growth in international fee-paying student enrolments at ECU was adversely affected by an economic downturn in Asia, but valuable groundwork enabled the university to achieve exceptional results in the early years of the new millennium. In 2000, ECU’s total of 2,193 international students represented an increase of 36% over 1999 enrolments, and total offshore enrolments increased by an extraordinary 123%.\(^{10}\) Fortified by such achievements, the university also entered into an agreement with Scottish Knowledge, a consortium of Scottish universities and private sector organisations established to market distance education products around the world. In spite of high expectations, however, ECU’s three-year relationship with Scottish Knowledge delivered few benefits and, in the longer term, stood only as a symbol of the institution’s enthusiasm for international networks and on-line learning.\(^{11}\)

Edith Cowan University subsequently established a phenomenal record of growth and achievement as an international educator. In 2000-01, forty-four memoranda of understanding were signed with universities in China, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. In addition, a quality review program developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was adopted, commit-
ting the university to regular internal and external peer review. 'Quality is at the core of ECU’s international and commercial activities,' the university reported in 2002, and this was underlined by its development of a proforma for the quality review of offshore programs. The proforma assessed offshore activity in terms of administrative arrangements; courses (onshore equivalence, recognition, localisation); learning (resources, student feedback); teaching (quality, unit transparency, assessment); student support (counseling, information, appeals/grievances); support for partner institution staff (resources, guidance); and financial viability and risks. In 2004, the Australian Universities Quality Agency commended ECU for quality improvements in relation to bilingual activities, for the level of support it provided to international students in Western Australia, and for the thoroughness of its system of checklists and reviews for offshore teaching programs.

'I believe internationalisation will be fundamental to the pursuit of academic excellence and the growth of a rich university culture,' affirmed VC Millicent Poole in 1997. Much would be achieved during the next decade.
Fee-paying International Students at ECU (Onshore and Offshore), 1995-2005

Source Countries for Onshore International Enrolments at ECU, 2005

- Malaysia 9%
- China 10%
- Norway 8%
- Kenya 8%
- Hong Kong 7%
- Indonesia 7%
- India 6%
- Singapore 6%
- Zambia 4%
- United Kingdom 2%
- Other 33%
Revenue from international students helped position ECU to manage the inexorable withdrawal of government funds from tertiary education, while the university’s strategy of diversifying source countries enabled it to ride out downturns in individual overseas markets. John Wood distilled the diversification philosophy in 2005, reminding that ‘the international market is a composition of different markets’. ECU’s International Plan was periodically reviewed and updated, both onshore and offshore enrolments having far exceeded projections outlined in its 1998 strategic plan. ECU International Plan 2003-2007 described the approach of the university in relation to international activities as twofold – it could not be understood ‘simply in terms of revenue generation’ because it additionally embraced ‘the internationalisation of Australian students and staff’. This occurred not only as a product of curriculum development, but was a product of experience – in particular, the experience that local and international students have in interacting with the curriculum and each other.

By 2004, ECU had 3,886 international students – an increase of 114% since 1998. The students were drawn from more than eighty countries, and approximately 40% of them were enrolled in postgraduate programs. ECU was recognised as a Western Australian market leader for onshore international students from Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Norway, Seychelles, Sweden, Uganda, the United Kingdom and Zambia, and ranked first in Australia for on-campus students from Ghana, Malawi, Seychelles, Uganda and Zambia. Acknowledging that international expansion had been rapid, the university worked to consolidate overseas relationships after 2003, signing fewer agreements but working to deliver additional programs with existing partners. Some of this work was being undertaken by faculties, which were successful in forging a multiplicity of partnerships and agreements relevant to their teaching programs.
Five years into the 21st century, the vision outlined in VC Millicent Poole's installation speech had been realised. While busily engaged with staff and faculty structures, academic profile, the delivery of corporate services, marketing and a myriad of other important issues affecting not only performance but survival, ECU had progressively developed a more outward orientation. Under Deputy VC (Students, Advancement and International) John Wood, it continued to look beyond state and national borders for international opportunities to attract quality students and export quality education. In the terms espoused by Professor Poole in 1997, internationalisation had become 'fundamental to the pursuit of academic excellence and the growth of a rich university culture'.

PROFESSOR Millicent Poole’s first visit to the metropolitan campuses of Edith Cowan University (ECU) had left her with the distinct impression that the physical work of building a university had barely begun. In 1997, the major campuses Churchlands and Mount Lawley had the look and feel of moth-eaten government secondary schools. They were functional – but little more. Poole had long been interested in the power of architecture to make defining statements, enunciate values and express concepts – and the messages being uttered by ECU were, at best, self-deprecating. Only the Joondalup campus had excited Poole. It seemed to suggest a future. It represented room to move, to grow, to dream. Poole’s assessment of Joondalup played a significant part in her decision to accept the position of Vice Chancellor (VC) at ECU and remained central to her thinking on campus management as she began the work of positioning the institution for the 21st century.¹

At the time of Poole’s arrival, the most vexing campus-related issue was Murdoch University’s proposed annexation of Bunbury. VC Poole fought
for retention by ECU, believing that the consequences of relinquishing a $20m asset had not been sufficiently analysed, and that ‘disaggregation would follow very quickly’. She argued that decisions relating to campus consolidation or disposal ‘must be informed by reasoned argument and sound educational values’ – guided by ECU’s own strategic planning rather than ‘a challenge to its sovereignty’. The expeditious resolution of this issue after a State Government decision in favour of ECU was morale-boosting and ‘symbolic’, and it enhanced the new VC’s credibility as she addressed issues relating to the university’s metropolitan campuses at Churchlands, Claremont, Joondalup and Mount Lawley.

Less than a week after Poole’s arrival at ECU, she had been visited by Andrew Branston, the university’s director of facilities and services. Branston showed Poole some master plans for campus development – a new Science building was already planned – but alerted her to the fact plans were all but worthless in the absence of a strategic plan defining academic plans and settling consolidation issues. Poole recalled:

It was always my plan to have a strategic plan of course, but his angle was more a view of buildings and spaces... So it was Andrew Branston and his team [that] pushed me to think about architecture and master plans. Andrew wisely came and said he needed to interact with a strategic plan to develop a building plan – literally in Week One. So I resonated with this. This was the way we needed to do things.
Poole therefore put construction of the proposed Science building 'on hold' while her Strategic Planning Group examined the efficiency and desirability of maintaining all five university campuses and provided the broad development framework Branston had been seeking.6

With the completion of The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002, strategic consolidation was placed firmly on the ECU agenda. A key decision was made to 'consider the future of the Claremont campus, including the possibility of sale or lease' to fund capital developments on other campuses. The strategic plan also indicated that operations at Churchlands would be gradually scaled down, that Mount Lawley would take up the delivery of education courses, and that Joondalup would become the ECU flagship:

Joondalup will be the major campus of Edith Cowan University in the coming years and the site of the Chancellery. Given its size,
proximity to TAFE and the Health Campus, the Joondalup campus will become the heart of an extended educational precinct... To the extent which [sic.] it is practicable, Joondalup will be the site at which new programs are offered.\(^7\)

The Bunbury campus would continue to be developed through local partnerships, an exploration of niche markets and a particular focus on ‘the needs and opportunities of the region’.\(^8\)

These general principles provided a robust framework for strategic decisions relating to campus profiles and development as ECU positioned itself to survive and thrive beyond the end of the twentieth century. The suggested disposal of the historic Claremont site and the diminution of Churchlands were radical propositions conforming with Poole’s ‘strategic thinking’ mantra. They could not be achieved overnight and would not be universally applauded. Recalling this period in 2005, Andrew Branston commented: ‘There were just as many voices against campus consolidation as there were voices in support.’\(^9\)

Nevertheless, work began immediately. During 1998, University Council approved a five-year capital development plan that included a provision for relocation of the Chancellery and central administration from Churchlands to Joondalup. The university also engaged a group of planners specifically to review the strategic development of ECU campuses giving consideration to facility requirements, engagement with local communities and the development of precincts linking ECU with other education providers.\(^10\) In addition, the Bunbury campus was renamed ‘South West’ to emphasise its regional role and, in June 1998, there was an exciting government announcement carrying important implications for the Joondalup campus.\(^11\)

The Western Australian State Government’s announcement related to the establishment of a new $35 million Police Academy at Joondalup, to be located on a nine hectare site comprising portions of land held by ECU, the
The establishment of a Police Academy at Joondalup after a joint bid by ECU and the West Coast College of TAFE reflected government confidence in the future of the developing educational precinct.

West Coast College of TAFE and the Crown. This considerable coup ensued from a joint bid by ECU and the West Coast College of TAFE to attract the development, and there is little doubt that co-location reflected the confidence of government – and, indirectly, the Western Australian community – in the future of the Joondalup educational precinct. The decision gave ECU an opportunity to deliver teaching and other services to the Police Department on a commercial basis, and rewarded the university's strength and commitment as a provider of education to the service professions. It also underlined ECU's enterprising approach to cross-sector relationships, VC Millicent Poole describing the project as 'a fine example of the mutual gain strategic alliances with other agencies can provide'.

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Notwithstanding the Police Academy announcement, some observers and employees remained sceptical about ECU's plans. As Poole recalled, 'People doubted [that] campus consolidation and the relocation to Joondalup was ever going to happen – they thought it was all talk, that it would never be pulled-off'. Poole's leadership, however, was already establishing a pattern in which talk was shadowed by action. While lengthy dialogues were indeed required on a plethora of intricate issues connected with campus management, scepticism evaporated as the development of the Joondalup campus remained a conspicuous priority for ECU over the next five years. In 1999, construction commenced on a $28 million Science and Health building, completed in 2001 and providing what Professor Patrick Garnett described as 'state-of-the-art teaching and research facilities'. In 2000, design work commenced for a $50 million project dubbed 'Campus West' –

'State-of-the-art teaching and research facilities': the Science and Health Building at Joondalup, completed in 2001.
the central features of which were two buildings for the Faculty of Business and Public Management and a grand signature complex housing the Chancellery, the central administration, a conference centre, an art gallery, a visitors’ centre and a bookshop. Existing facilities were refurbished and the construction of a new Education building commenced late in 2001. Other achievements of this period included the completion of a state-of-the-art call centre for lease to the private sector; the development of a successful proposal to exchange a portion of ECU’s Joondalup land for a more strategically located parcel that extended toward the Joondalup city centre; and the establishment of the Joondalup campus as a venue for open air film screenings as part of the Perth International Arts Festival.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, the State Government approved the transfer to ECU of a nine-hectare tract of State forest adjoining the Joondalup campus – at no cost to the university.\textsuperscript{16}

That all this was accomplished in the face of a succession of delays in determining the future of the Claremont and Churchlands campuses was extraordinary. The sale of Claremont – a symbolic farewell to ECU’s teachers’ college beginnings – proved contentious, and was staunchly resisted by a number of older staff members and the university’s alumni.\textsuperscript{17} In 2001, however, the State Government announced its support for campus consolidation by sanctioning ECU’s access to proceeds from the disposal of Claremont and Churchlands – an entitlement denied when the Western Australian College of Advanced Education, the university’s immediate predecessor, disposed of Graylands in 1979.\textsuperscript{18} Professor Wally Cox –
appointed Executive Dean of the Faculty of Business and Public Management in July 2001 – was assigned responsibility for divestment of the university’s assets at Churchlands and Claremont, and also for overseeing alterations to land tenure at Joondalup. Cox was eminently qualified for such tasks following a long management career in government departments, public utilities and redevelopment projects.19

By the end of 2002, land use options for the nineteen-hectare Churchlands site had been fully explored and the university had announced plans for a high-quality residential development. Rezoning and planning approvals were finalised in 2004, and the campus was scheduled to wind down at the end of 2005 in preparation for land releases in 2006.20 Various options for the disposal of the Claremont facility were also explored after 2001, but almost four years elapsed before VC Poole could formally announce the transfer of the campus to the University of Western Australia in a deal that safeguarded the site’s built environment and educational heritage.21

In the meantime, ECU’s ambitious construction program proceeded apace. The Faculty of Business and Public Management moved into its new Campus West buildings at Joondalup in the 2002-03 summer vacation period, and the Chancellery building was completed six months later. The 2003 calendar year also witnessed the opening of the $5.6 million Education building at Joondalup, while a $3.2 million campus services building was completed in 2004. By the end of 2004, design work had also been carried out on a new library and technology centre for the Joondalup campus, as well as a Health and Wellness building, each expected to cost approximately $35 million. At Mount Lawley, new theatre facilities were built at a cost of almost $8 million, and a new recreation centre was constructed in partnership with Mount Lawley Senior High School. Both of these buildings were officially opened in 2004, and by then construction had also commenced on a $6.5 million building to house Kurongkurl Katitjin, ECU’s
School of Indigenous Australian Studies, for completion in 2005. The regional status of the South West campus at Bunbury, meanwhile, was emphasised by a $2.7 million student housing development, completed in 2002 and officially opened during 2003.22

This building program was extraordinary for its magnitude – but it was also remarkable because of its disdain for grey conformity. In short, Poole’s vision of ECU’s differentiated future was reflected in an embrace of architectural innovation. As Andrew Branston explained:

We were trying to project a high tech, cutting-edge image for ECU – obviously the physical environment needed to support this. We had a choice – do we perpetuate the sort of environment that we already had?... Or, do we really try to communicate a message through our buildings about the sort of University we are? I think everyone, including myself, were well out of our comfort zone. We relied heavily on the consultants we were dealing with to come up with something different and innovative and, by definition, this was risky. We looked at the drawings and plans and hoped they were going to pull it off, but it wasn’t until we had spent the [money]... a few years later that we were sure... I remember talking to the previous architect, who had done a lot of the earlier work, and he said to me that we were heading toward a “Luna Park solution”. We knew there was this risk, but we moderated it to the point where we felt that we had got away from a monotonous environment but not overdone it. The briefings that we gave our architects were for innovative buildings that communicate a certain message about what this university aspires to be.23

According to Branston, Joondalup’s Science and Health building ‘really broke the mould’ – and was rewarded for doing so with an award from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (WA).24 It was the Chancellery
building, however, that best symbolised ECU's new dynamism and confident embrace of a future based in Perth's north metropolitan region.

The Chancellery building at Joondalup was designed by leading Sydney architectural firm FJMT, best known for its design of Australia's new Parliament House in Canberra. Masts of steel and recycled timber projected outward from a central colonnade and graduated to the vertical, reaching for the sky and pointing to a future of challenges and possibilities. The masts were said to symbolise ECU's outward focus and express 'how aspirations can be progressively achieved through a lifetime of learning'.25 The effect was spectacular, the contrast with the college-style buildings of the old ECU unmistakable. In her speech at the official opening in October 2003, VC Millicent Poole made clear that the building's radically contemporary design reflected ECU's sense of self and mission in the 21st century:

"Buildings don't make a university, but they do create an environment in which people strive to be the best": Vice Chancellor Millicent Poole, pictured in 2004 outside ECU's signature Chancellery building.
Buildings don’t make a university, but they do create an environment in which people strive to be the best at what they do. My sincere hope for the future is that this Chancellery building and its environs will epitomise Edith Cowan University at its best – looking ahead, reaching out, connecting with people and making a quality contribution to a better world.26

In keeping with the ECU’s growing stature as a global education provider, Poole also hoped that the building would become an international icon, manifesting the essence of a university with distinctive offerings and remarkable achievements.27

Physical regeneration underscored the organisational transformation of ECU in the Poole era – and, in turn, helped change public perceptions of the university. Relinquishing the stately sandstone of Claremont and travelling north from uninspiring headquarters in Churchlands to exciting new buildings in Joondalup clearly identified ECU as a university ‘on the move’.28 Renewed attention to the South West campus, new buildings at the Mount Lawley campus and a continuing emphasis on the development of educational precincts through partnerships contributed to this progressive, enterprising image. Moreover, in the new built environments of ECU there was no place for the ‘poor cousin’ mentality that had prevailed just ten years earlier. As VC Poole noted in 2005, the construction program was ‘a boost to morale’:

People feel proud... It’s like anything: people like to be in a nice space. With the quality of the space, the buildings and culture, they feel proud of ECU, proud to bring overseas visitors... It’s all part of branding and cultural change – to make staff and students feel proud of ECU. It is a state-of-the-art environment.29

ECU had repositioned itself in every sense. It was moving on, reaching out and feeling fine.
11.
A stronger voice

"Let us never negotiate out of fear.
But let us never fear to negotiate."

– John F. Kennedy

In 2001, Edith Cowan University (ECU) released a one-page advertisement to the print media under the heading ‘10 Years Young, 100 Years Old’. This advertising highlighted the fact that ECU was celebrating its tenth birthday and was one of Australia’s newest universities, with ‘refreshing energy and innovation’, while also acknowledging its ‘century-long history’ in teacher education through predecessor institutions.¹

This type of duality was not unique to ECU, Commonwealth Government reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s having propelled all former colleges of advanced education into a unified national system of higher education through the creation of a new generation of universities.² There had been no silver spoons. Forced to compete with long-established universities for funding and recognition in an increasingly deregulated environment, new universities had needed to build on strengths from past lives and display unprecedented energy and enterprise. These imperatives had underpinned the 1997 argument of Professor Millicent Poole, as ECU’s new Vice Chancellor (VC), that the university needed to ‘reposition itself
strategically in the increasingly competitive, deregulated and global higher education environment'. They were subsequently reflected in *The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002*, and in Poole’s subsequent drive to align all aspects of university business with the plan. As other universities grappled with similar issues, dialogues and alliances emerged, crystallising in 2002 with the formation of a network of new generation universities, with ECU a founding member and Poole a driving force.

The Australian New Generation Universities (NGU) group resulted from a proposal from Professor Jan Reid, Vice Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney. Already, older Australian universities (including the University of Western Australia) had advanced toward coalition by establishing a ‘Group of Eight’, while an Australian Technology Universities Network had been formed by former institutes of technology (including Perth’s Curtin University). Reid perceived that the emergence of exclusive networks held the potential to further disadvantage Australia’s newest universities, and also recognised clear advantages in benchmarking and information sharing between kindred institutions. She therefore worked within an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) program supporting management in higher education to convene a conference at Lilianfels in the Blue Mountains, New South Wales.

Opened on 21 June 2002 by the Commonwealth Government’s Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, the conference attracted delegates from around Australia as well as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Canada. The government had recently embarked on a review of higher education encompassing such issues as funding, curriculum, teaching resources, research, modes of delivery and community relevance, and, according to Professor Poole, Nelson’s presence was ‘important symbolically’. In acknowledging the significance of new generation universities and applauding their role in the economic and social development of Australia, however,
Nelson was preaching to the converted. The foundation of the Australian NGU group at the conference reflected a commitment by newer tertiary institutions to more effectively assert their relevance, to claim recognition and access to higher levels of funding. The NGU group would comprise Edith Cowan University, the University of Canberra, Australian Catholic University, Southern Cross University, the University of Western Sydney, Charles Darwin University, Central Queensland University, the University of the Sunshine Coast, the University of Ballarat and Victoria University. Professors Jan Reid, Millicent Poole and Peter Sheehan (Australian Catholic University) were to be its inaugural convenors.8

The objects of this new alliance – drafted in an intense and inspired couple of days by Reid, Poole and Sheehan – were comprehensive and purposeful. Poole recalled that ‘we started on the back foot’ and needed to examine basic likenesses and shared aspirations. ‘We had to see what our commonalities were,’ she explained, ‘and [consider] what might we do together to strengthen our institutions and our presence on the national or international scene’.9 In very broad terms, the NGU group resolved that it would contribute to Australia’s economic, social and cultural agendas, support both public and private investment in the knowledge economy, and consistently promote a higher education system that was responsive to contemporary community needs. Earnestly committed to equity, NGU members would work to enhance social inclusion and eliminate discrimination so that all students might enjoy ‘a comparable experience’ of higher education in Australia.10

The defining mission of the NGU group, however, was expressed in a number of goals that evinced the value of diversity in education and sought just recognition for the work of NGUs in building differentiated profiles. The NGU group would ‘support the creative transformation of an education nation which fosters diversity and seeds emergent fields’. It would ‘support
the development of diversity and centres of excellence which define quality and strength wherever they might be', member institutions having 'a particular role to play in the emergent areas of national and regional significance'. Finally the NGU group wished to oppugn the entrenched notion of a 'pecking order' within the tertiary education sector, which accorded primacy to older universities with long-established research infrastructures and traditions. NGUs declared their right to 'participate in the sector in ways which do not reinforce age and attributed prestige as driving factors in the allocation of resources'.11 This range of interests ensured that the NGU group was, from the outset, considerably more than a forum for the exchange of ideas. Clearly, strategic cooperation gave NGU group members a more effective voice within a sector that was increasingly obliged to lobby government. According to Poole:

As a founding member of Australia's New Generation University group, ECU supported 'the creative transformation of an education nation which fosters diversity and seeds emergent fields'.

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It was about building new networks so that we could be more visible, so [that] we have access in sharing promotion, sharing strategies... [and] to see what has happened in other countries, to see if there were opportunities or dangers that we needed to navigate... [and] to search for compatible partners for benchmarking.\textsuperscript{12}

Millicent Poole and the other NGU group convenors were acutely aware that the effectiveness of the alliance would ultimately rest on research substantiating the contribution of NGUs to higher education in Australia, and worked hard over the next few years to identify areas of differentiation and strength. Research commissioned by the group suggested that, in general, NGUs in Australia were constituted as universities in the 1980s or 1990s and were relatively more reliant on Commonwealth funding as a result of lower income from investments, endowments and other ‘inheritances’. They typically performed well in undergraduate teaching, tending to focus on the ‘knowledge economy’ professions – such as education, nursing, management, business and information technology. NGUs were frequently major players in the delivery of professional development programs and were often active in applied research and the delivery of consultancy services.\textsuperscript{13}

Notwithstanding the success of NGUs in achieving a significant market share of international students, many were expressly committed to serving particular communities or regions, a considerable number having been established to serve (or, in ECU’s case, choosing to grow with) developing urban frontiers or semi-rural communities. Through regional engagement, tertiary institutions actively contributed to the quality of life, culture, knowledge and social capital of a region, as well as its economic development – a contribution increasingly recognised by Australia’s three tiers of government. Central to this contribution was the notion of mutuality – genuine partnerships with local industries, government agencies and voluntary organisations to create healthy, integrated communities.\textsuperscript{14}
More often than not, NGUs also made significant contributions to maximising participation in higher education by enrolling high numbers of part-time students, non-school leavers, former TAFE students, socio-economically disadvantaged students, Indigenous students, students with disabilities and students from regional areas. According to a paper prepared by NGU group convenors Reid, Poole and Sheehan,

New Generation Universities have tended to serve a different demographic than many other institutions. This has occurred both by design and by default. NGUs attract a majority of first generation students and those from migrant or lower socio-economic groups. Their students are often ‘earner-learners’ or mature age entrants. Noticeably and visibly, NGUs support and foster diversity. They support diversity on their own campuses, but they also support vibrant diversity in the higher education sector as a whole.

Consequently, NGUs were often regarded as ‘institutions without walls’. They embraced innovation in course delivery and applied research, developing approaches that both catered to their diverse student populations and placed them at the cutting edge of broader contemporary changes in the theory and practice of higher education. As Professor Reid wrote in 2003, ‘All [NGUs] would agree they share a common cause of working at the frontier of educational innovation and enfranchisement and multi-disciplinary enquiry.’

For Millicent Poole and ECU, active involvement in the Australian NGU group proved valuable and timely. Poole’s characteristically positive and forward-looking approach made her an effective champion of NGUs around Australia; in 2002, for example, Minister for Education Nelson visited ECU and she was pleased to ‘outline directly to him our strengths and aspirations’. In the ensuing twelve months, the Commonwealth Government’s review of higher education became the subject of such
widespread debate that Poole observed: ‘It has been a rare and welcome experience to witness the whole country debating the direction of universities’. VC Poole declared that ECU was ‘enthusiastic, confident, yet in some ways wary, about the shape of this debate’ because it had ‘already proved itself flexible and focused’. She took every opportunity to emphasise that ECU’s strategic planning, based on environmental scanning, had anticipated the government’s push for greater enterprise and community engagement in education:

I argued passionately in a range of forums – both within and beyond ECU – that our institution was well aligned with many of the key themes woven into Dr Nelson’s review... For instance, ECU has embraced diversity; it has honed specialisation; it has cultivated pathways, precincts and partnerships by positioning itself at the hub of highly relevant, community, commercial, educational and research partnerships. ECU’s commitment to the knowledge-based services and professions is a distinguishing hallmark of differentiation within the sector. Likewise, ECU values its engagement with community and with aspirants for university who have traditionally been disadvantaged. We also stress the need to maintain a strong research agenda for a variety of critical reasons. The review presented ECU with an opportunity to capitalise on changes to its profile and performance and then to attempt to lock in government support for a role which strives to meet a range of needs and aspirations within Australian society in innovative, cost-effective and high-quality ways.

One of Poole’s perennial concerns was inequity within the funding system, which had remained unchanged throughout ECU’s first decade. Changes to academic profile meant that, by 2003, the university needed to fund a base funding shortfall of up to $6 million every year, and Poole argued for the abandonment of a ‘one size fits all’ approach in favour of a
Research indicates that New Generation Universities typically perform well in teaching and tend to focus on the 'knowledge economy' professions.

funding model reflecting the particularities of institutional requirements. While this would be an ongoing crusade for all NGUs, Poole’s optimism that base funding would be ‘brought somewhat closer to the level that might be expected’ was vindicated, to some extent, when ECU received an eight per cent increase in base funding from the Commonwealth Government in 2004. In the same year, ECU secured the sixth-highest allocation of new Commonwealth-supported places in Australia – rising progressively from 440 in 2005 to more than 1,200 in 2008. Wrote Poole:
The Government explicitly recognised the case for extra places in universities which needed to expand developing campuses and meet demand in rapid growth zones of Australia. This is where the New Generation Universities, for which I have been the key advocate during 2004, contribute strongly to Australia’s higher education system.22

Strategic change management within ECU had enabled it to take a leadership role among New Generation Universities in Australia and, by 2005, achieve greater recognition of the value of diversity within the higher education sector. Relatively unfettered by entrenched conservatism or institutional constraints, NGUs had demonstrated an inclination and capacity to adapt and respond to opportunities as they arose. This stance was exemplified by VC Poole when she wrote: ‘Rather than becoming a critic of the changing funding situation and fight a rear-guard battle to resist it, ECU sought to take a lead and shape our [sic.] own future.’23 Alliances between NGUs early in the 21st century had enabled them to give particular emphasis to strengths in the areas of innovation and enterprise, and it would be remarkable if benefits did not ensue from this in the future. While Poole acknowledged in 2005 that the effectiveness of the NGU group had been diminished by the emergence of new alliances – notably, the Innovative Research Universities group and a coalition of regional universities – she maintained her belief in the importance of a collective industry voice. ‘I think it’s been valuable,’ she reflected. ‘And I think it will be valuable’24
12.

Raising Edith

"There is nothing permanent except change."

– Heraclitus (540-475 BC)

In the decade after 1995, Edith Cowan University changed almost beyond recognition. 'Enid Blyton' was put to bed and a booming ECU brand took her place, developed and marketed on the muscular back of observable transformation. Professor Roy Lourens, Vice Chancellor (VC) from 1993 to 1997, had described ECU as 'a university in rapid transition' and had recognised the need to establish a 'sense of direction'.¹ Lourens' successor, Professor Millicent Poole, had wasted little time in seizing that nettle.

In the spring of 1997, when the Strategic Planning Group appointed by new VC Poole began consulting widely on future directions for Edith Cowan University (ECU) with a view to developing its first five-year plan, there were undoubtedly some for whom 2002 seemed light years away. Strategic planning required careful reckoning, telescopic vision and no small amount of faith – but even the most exquisitely engineered plan could not propel the university to its chosen destination. The implementation of The Edith Cowan University Strategic Plan 1998-2002 required a leadership team determined to achieve lift-off, and a whole-of-institution commitment
to ongoing change. From the outset, the Chancellor and VC had made clear that the strategic plan was a ‘working document’ – not just a wish-list. As Chancellor Robert Nicholson wrote, it was ‘not a static document’ but ‘establishes a planning cycle requiring constant renewal’.2

One century closed and another dawned with noses pressed to the grindstone. By 2002, the final year of ECU’s first strategic plan, the work of many had made a ‘working document’ work. Change had been felt in every corner of the university. The alignment of processes, procedures and policies with broad strategic goals had largely been achieved. A cycle of planning and review was in motion, and ECU could stand tall as the model of a re-engineered, repackaged New Generation University. Keen to ‘build on this evident momentum and provide a strong foundation for reinforcing ECU’s achievements and distinctiveness as an enterprising and modern university’, VC Poole and the university’s senior executive initiated a new planning phase to develop a blueprint for the 2003-2007 period.3 If 2002 was an endpoint, therefore, it was – more importantly – a starting point. It was a time to refocus, look forward and again raise the bar.

By coincidence, 2002 also marked the beginning of ECU’s second century as an educational institution, and was therefore a time for looking back. Significantly, the authors of a centenary publication identified transformation and adaptation as central themes in the history of an institution that had ‘never stood still’. Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne referred to ECU’s ‘changing guises’, and to ‘all its creative and energetic responses to shifting public demands and government policies’.4 The commencement of a new planning cycle provided compelling evidence that, under Poole’s leadership, ECU had no intention of ever ‘standing still’, and was intent upon staying ahead of the game.

ECU’s internal environment had changed considerably since work began on the first strategic plan. The concept and purposes of strategic
planning were more widely understood, many staff having contributed to the original planning process, or to implementation, alignment or operational reviews. The existence of a shared vocabulary eliminated the need to preface discussions with the seemingly endless round of explanation and justification that had characterised the 1997 process. In addition, outcomes of the first strategic plan were observable and measurable, and had engendered both pride and trust. In 1997, division and upheaval at senior executive level had contributed to tension within the rank and file, while a sense of common purpose characterised the strategic planning process of 2002. Senior management was conscious of the need to prevent ‘planning overload’ in a workplace that had already demonstrated such commitment.
to change and – with Phillips Curran Pty Ltd again commissioned to assist – a more streamlined process using existing line management and committee structures was adopted.\(^5\)

The result was *ECU Strategic Plan 2003-2007: A Stronger ECU*.\(^6\) Endorsed by ECU’s Academic Board in September 2002 and approved by University Council in October after a period of consultation within the university community and external stakeholders, it conformed with the spirit, direction and commitments of the first plan while offering a sharper focus around five strategic priorities. These were:

- Enhancing teaching, learning and research
- Engaging with the professions and professional life
- Building partnerships, pathways and precincts
- Improving outcomes for students and staff
- Strengthening enterprise and the resource base.\(^7\)

Each of these outlined specific strategies to be implemented over the ensuing five years to build on progress already made and further advance the university.\(^8\) Quality assurance and improvement were to be a particular focus. ECU’s first strategic plan had committed the university to ‘robust procedures for assuring and measuring quality performance across management, teaching, research, and community service’.\(^9\) Early in her tenure as VC, Poole had worked with executive officer Robyn Daniels to review the quality assurance movement generally, and to engage consultants to advise on the application of quality principles within ECU.\(^10\) Subsequently, performance evaluation had become part and parcel of all institutional activities with quality controls, benchmarks, standards, performance indicators, measurable outcomes and efficiency all entering the realm of the commonplace. In 2002, VC Millicent Poole nominated quality as a priority area of policy and action, establishing a Quality and Audit Committee (from two pre-existing committees) to report and make recommendations to
University Council, as well as a Quality Reference Group ‘to enable debate and discussion regarding ECU’s approach to quality and to facilitate communication across the University’. Deputy VC Liz Harman played a leading role in driving the quality wagon, which had embarked on what Poole later characterised as ‘a hard and painful journey... [with] many blind alleys and dead ends’.

A significant outcome of this focus on quality was the development of ‘Quality@ECU’. Launched in August 2002, this was essentially a modification of the Australian Business Excellence Framework setting down a quality agenda for ECU, to be supported by three-year rolling plans and specifically addressing quality issues in the context of the university’s strategic priorities. Quality@ECU source materials, for use in promoting quality throughout the university, were also developed, while staff forums were held to ensure that quality principles were ‘embedded in the outlook and activities of all staff’. Reflecting the fact that VC Poole’s quality initiatives were developed parallel to the development of ECU Strategic Plan 2003-2007: A Stronger ECU, an appendix to the plan set down a general framework for future planning and explicitly linked planning to quality processes and performance monitoring.

The framework outlined in this appendix specified that ECU would be guided by one strategic plan having a five-year horizon – but accommodating revision, if necessary, within a shorter period. Beyond that, there was to be a second tier of rolling plans, comprising functional plans and organisational unit (faculty/centre) operational plans, each having a three-year horizon. Finally, there were to be individual work plans forming part of the university’s ‘Management for Performance’ process. During 2003, this framework was elaborated to assist internal planning and facilitate better sequencing in a quality cycle referred to as ‘Plan-Do-Review-Improve’ (PDRI). Features of ECU’s structured system of functional and operational plans included the cascading and alignment of strategic planning goals to
university-wide functional plans and faculty/centre operational plans, as well as correlation between budgeting and other planning processes. Relationships between planning and review mechanisms were defined within the PDRI cycle, and links were established between operational plans and individual work plans (through the Management for Performance process). In addition, there were agendas and calendars providing all staff with a clear guide to their obligations within each academic year.\textsuperscript{16} Another achievement of 2003 was the implementation of a key performance indicator (KPI) framework, which would become a vital tool assisting University Council and the executive team in monitoring progress in relation to priorities of the 2003-2007 strategic plan.\textsuperscript{17}

During the 2003 academic year, ECU also commissioned a second Guided Self Assessment (GSA), undertaken within the Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF) and intended 'to provide an external measure of plans for strategic and organisational change, to identify gaps in strategic planning and to provide a mechanism for continuous improvement'.\textsuperscript{18} ECU's first GSA had been carried out in 1999 as an opening gambit in the establishment of a quality agenda, therefore providing a useful baseline for the 2003 study – the results of which were described as 'highly favourable'. With improvement noted in every dimension of the ABEF, the university was acknowledged for its 'shared executive and senior management leadership processes to articulate and derive organisational direction'. The GSA observed that 'direction and sense of purpose' were more clearly understood, and made mention of ECU's 'quality framework driving review and improvement processes'. Planning was more integrated, and there was 'increased ownership and involvement' in it, as well as an increased focus on feedback.\textsuperscript{19} ECU could lay claim to being the first Australian university to apply the ABEF across the whole institution – a brave initiative for which Poole gave credit to policy and planning director Andrew Crevald. Poole also acknowledged the role of Professor Andrew Taylor, a distinguished poet who
‘did a lot of work on the language of the ABEF to make it more palatable’ – thereby reducing resistance and rendering the process ‘a good litmus test’ of institutional commitment to quality principles.20

Meanwhile, work was proceeding toward the completion of a benchmarking framework, completed in 2004 as ‘an important aspect of ECU’s approach to quality’ and intended to ‘clarify arrangements that individual faculties and centres might put in place to engage in meaningful benchmarking in priority areas’.21 During 2004, presentations to staff promoted the framework and sought to identify potential barriers to implementation. It was significant and timely, therefore, that ECU also played host to the Association of Commonwealth Universities’ University Benchmarking Program in 2004, providing strategic overviews and logistical support as well as participating in discussions relevant to its strategic priorities. In addition, a number of visiting facilitators were prevailed upon to share expertise with ECU following the conclusion of formal proceedings.22

Professor Harman had taken up the position of Vice Chancellor at Victoria University in October 2003, resulting in the appointment of professors Patrick Garnett and John Wood to the positions of Deputy VC (Academic) and Deputy VC (Students, Advancement and International) respectively.23 Garnett’s standing at ECU was second to none, and his responsibility for the quality portfolio ensured that focus and momentum were maintained after Harman moved on. This task was made easier by several other key appointments, notably those of Dr Susan King as executive director of ECU’s Governance, Policy and Planning Services, and Alison
Thair as quality coordinator. Garnett, King and Thair all played important roles in positioning the university for the eventual culmination of VC Poole's quality initiatives – an external audit by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in March 2004. 'We've been so lucky to have such good people to underpin what we are doing,' Poole reflected in 2005.24

AUQA had been established during 2000 to conduct audits of higher education institutions and monitor internal quality assurance practices.25 VC Poole had pressed for ECU's first AUQA audit to be brought forward, Susan King remembering: 'We protested but she said, “No, lets go early and get it over with.”'26 Preparation commenced prior to Harman's departure, and Poole made clear that she viewed the audit as a critical step in the establishment of 'new foundations' for ECU, a university with a 'rebuilt reputation'. At the end of 2003, she wrote:

New foundations are important because I believe ECU is now entering its third major transformation. The first began 12 years ago when university status was first afforded the institution. The second captured the period from 1998 onwards when our first Strategic Plan set the goals for repositioning ECU by refining competitive strengths, reforming services and rationalising structures and sites. In this third era, ECU is moving to capitalise on a rebuilt reputation, fresh funding opportunities, a major investment in accommodation and facilities, a raft of partnerships, growing demographic and societal alignment with the University's offerings, strong market penetration and enhanced global reach.27

In order to do this, Poole emphasised, ECU was bound to 'continue to lift the standard of its full range of activities' – including program delivery, scholarship, research, community and professional engagement, staff development, student experiences, marketing and resource management. She spoke of immersing 'every part of the University in innovation and
improvement' and therefore contended that the AUQA audit was essential:

It has been important that we both engage – and demonstrate how we engage – in a mind-set of continuous quality improvement. In the highly competitive environment in which ECU operates and in the increasingly complex and knowledge-saturated world, this University’s future depends on differentiation, distinction and delivery of valued outcomes. Nothing we have done in the past will, by itself, ensure success. Only by laying down new foundations, shaped by sharp strategic thinking, can we expect to build a sustainable future.28

Dr Susan King testified that preparations for the AUQA audit – which included the development of a comprehensive performance portfolio, required to be submitted in December 2003 – ‘put the pressure on’.29 When the audit panel arrived in March 2004, moreover, it consulted with more than two hundred and fifty staff members, students and stakeholders. The ensuing report, released in October, was described by ECU as ‘reasonable and fair’.30 In fact, it was a triumph – a ringing endorsement of the university’s concerted efforts in the areas of planning and alignment over the previous seven years.

The AUQA audit report contained twenty-three commendations recognising ECU’s strategic growth, particularly noting its diverse and differentiated programs and its focus on the service professions. ‘The history of ECU is one of strong commitment to teaching and to students’, the panel observed. ‘This commitment is clearly evident today.’31 AUQA also credited the university with good practices in its core and enabling processes. Remarkably, the panel’s key findings might well have been mistaken for an upbeat speech from the ECU’s own Chancellor:

ECU is to be applauded for the significant progress it has made on a range of fronts in recent years. It has clearly grown in stature and now offers diverse and differentiated programs which make it the second largest university in WA. Strategically, ECU had developed
a strong identity as a university focusing on the service professions. This identity is firmly embedded within the university community’s practices and strategic thinking and the wider public perception. The university is to be congratulated for achieving such unity of purpose.32

Clearly, this reflected great credit on ECU’s leadership, from University Council to the Chancellery group and the Academic Board. AUQA specifically commended ECU leaders ‘for establishing a clear strategic focus, which provides strong guidance for the university’s internal efforts and helps present a distinctive image to the university’s external communities’.33

Subsequently, ECU developed strategies to manage opportunities for improvement identified during the AUQA audit process, with implementation and monitoring continuing throughout 2005.34 While ECU’s quality management initiatives afforded VC Poole deep satisfaction – ‘We were a trailblazer – data driven, outcome driven, tough and hard’ – the leadership team’s approach was to simply ‘get on with the job’.35 Strategic planning had progressively developed a task-oriented environment in which change was recognised as a natural and vital aspect of institutional life. Poole understood that successful change management brings only fresh challenges, and that there was no justification for complacency. In a broad sense, the perpetuation of strategic planning and integration of quality programs expressed ECU’s commitment to institutional self-realisation. Continuous renewal required a collective sense of purpose, the stretching of shared goals and consistent organisational willingness to embrace innovation and enterprise. Accomplishment provided a foundation; maintaining momentum was critical.36

It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that ECU’s history in the early years of the twenty-first century teemed with examples of 1990s reforms being revisited and, wherever advantageous, revised. Faculty reconfiguration in 1998, for example, had been a major achievement with highly successful
outcomes – but this did not prevent the creation of a new faculty in 2003. The establishment of the Faculty of Communications and Creative Industries under Professor Robyn Quin reflected changed internal circumstances while also demonstrating ECU’s responsiveness to strategic opportunities.37

In 2002, an independent review of the faculty structure identified improvements in many areas since 1997, including the establishment of appropriate levels of ‘critical mass’, the generation of interdisciplinary initiatives in teaching and research, and the archiving of units, and rationalisation of course offerings. The review also noted that ECU’s themes of service, professionalism and enterprise increasingly underpinned course-related initiatives and the development of specific research opportunities.38 It was apparent, however, that extraordinary growth within the Faculty of Communications, Health and Science had created an imbalance between faculties, and that separation of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA) from other creative arts areas militated against interdisciplinary synergies and collaboration. Meanwhile, data analysis and environmental scanning pointed to the fact that creative industries were growing at twice the rate of other sectors in advanced economies. When Poole and Harman considered these issues during 2002, it became apparent to them that the creation of a new faculty comprised of WAAPA, the School of Visual Arts and the School of Communications provided a solution. Co-location at Mount Lawley, moreover, would create an interdisciplinary cluster dedicated to the development of new programs in such areas as product design, computer games, animation, digital arts and music, and fashion.39

The creation of a new faculty following earlier radical change underlined ECU’s commitment to differentiation, enterprise and reinvention. As former Prime Minister John Curtin once counselled: ‘The great university... should look ever forward; for it the past should be but a preparation for the greater days to be.’40 Millicent Poole prepared for retirement as Vice Chancellor at the
end of 2005 secure in the knowledge that Edith Cowan University was looking ‘ever forward’. In 1997, at the time of her installation as VC, she had spoken of reading signs, forecasting challenges and planning for change. Decisions based on a sense of the future, she said, would secure a strategic advantage over the competition.\(^{41}\)

Within the framework of Australia’s newly unified system of higher education, Poole’s predecessor as VC, Roy Lourens had identified the need for ECU to work on ‘differentiating itself from other universities’.\(^ {42}\) Poole had built teams within teams and – in her own words – ‘used adversity to get our ship in order’. Collaborations had provided the key, vindicating Poole’s long-held belief that ‘you have to recruit people with confidence who can work in a team rather than “lone rangers” who can’t pull together when it really counts’.\(^ {43}\) In 2005, a postgraduate study of the effectiveness of improvement strategies within one ECU faculty observed:

One interesting and unexpected outcome of the analysis is the conception of the whole university as a collaborative team. The 1990s were in many ways turbulent times... Participants in this study, however, acknowledged and appreciated the people in executive and leadership roles, and trusted that senior staff would provide an appropriate framework for teaching and learning... [T]here was a sense that the University had come together in the face of counter-educational external pressures.\(^ {44}\)

Policy and planning director Susan King made a similar assessment, while emphasising flexibility. Dr King opined that one of ECU’s greatest
strengths was 'its willingness to utilise the skills, talents and interests of staff in a variety of ways, in different positions and divisions'. In short, she stated, 'We are more flexible than other places'. This environment had been supported by a leadership program launched in 2000 and a staffing renewal strategy implemented from 2001, which together positioned ECU to develop a staffing profile aligning human resources with the university’s strategic goals,
and enhanced leadership across the organisation. VC Poole emphasised: 'An enterprising university pays attention to equipping people in management positions with the skills they need to manage change, people, quality and risk in an increasingly commercial and competitive environment.'

Edith Cowan University's decade of transformation had laid the foundations for survival and growth well into the twenty-first century. Professor Millicent Poole's eight years at the helm – more than half of ECU's life as a university – had been intensely busy, uncommonly productive and frequently difficult. Several years earlier, she had commented: 'You don't become a vice chancellor because you want to be loved. You just want to be respected, and to know you're efficient and doing your job well.' Poole's approach to change management had been purposeful and resolute. Considerable previous change had been reactive, forced upon the institution from outside – and the continuing diminution of public funding for higher education might well have perpetuated that cycle. Diminished apprehensions about change and an embedded cycle of strategic planning, however, had established new patterns and secured an exciting future. Armed with the potent core values of service, professionalism and enterprise, ECU was committed to shaping its own destiny as the consummate New Generation University.
INSTALLATION ceremonies are a ‘rite of passage’ in the Academy. They mark transition and change. In the spirit of this tradition I will speak about the changes and challenges that face us in framing the future of Edith Cowan University. As C.P. Snow said: ‘A sense of the future is behind all good policies’. Unless we have it, we can give nothing either wise or decent to the world.’ I embrace the opportunity to lead Edith Cowan University into the future with its eyes and mind wide open.

The future
To begin with, we must reject the cliché that we can never know what the future holds. While that may be true in a personal sense, it is unproductive to accept the adage as a good reason for not forecasting challenges and planning for change. The successful universities will be those attuned to political, economic, environmental and social trends. They will be able to read the signs of the future, acknowledge and allow for uncertainty, and make decisions that will achieve a more desirable future state of affairs. Such universities will secure a strategic advantage over the competition.

The idea of a university seeking a strategic advantage reminds me of a story I heard years ago while in Massachusetts. The bridge connecting Boston and Cambridge is commonly known as the Harvard Bridge. The story goes that when it was built the state offered to name the bridge for the Cambridge school that could present the best claim for the honour. Harvard submitted an essay detailing its contributions to education in America, concluding that it deserved the honour of having the bridge named for the institution. MIT did a structural analysis of the bridge and found it so full of defects that they agreed that it should be named for Harvard.

Trends define the context in which the organisation functions. In order to identify and create strategic competitive advantages we must first identify critical trends,
particularly emergent ones, and forecast their future direction. Secondly we must derive implications for effective planning, and construct plans to take advantages of the opportunities they offer or ameliorate their consequences if they may impact negatively upon the University. In order to do this we must look widely in the social, technological, economic, environmental and political sectors locally, nationally and internationally.

Critical trends and their challenges

Globally there is a re-examination by society of the value and purpose of higher education. Government demands for review of the higher education systems – the Dearing Report in Britain, President Clinton’s Address to the Nation in February 1997 and the West Review in Australia reflect this questioning of the objectives and benefits of university education. The last decade has seen at least ten major reviews of higher education in Australia making it surely one of the most reviewed sectors in the nation. The number of reviews, I suggest, indicates that the Australian community is unsure of, perhaps even unhappy with, the traditional role of universities and is seeking change. One such change is a demand for a stronger and more visible alignment between higher education and economic development. I would argue that universities have always contributed to the public good but acknowledge that perhaps our contributions have not always been visible, timely or relevant. There is a new emphasis on an ‘enterprising nation’, on ‘efficiency and effectiveness’, ‘performance and productivity’, ‘global competitiveness’ and measurable standards of excellence.

This emerging focus of higher education as an instrument in economic development is in potential conflict with liberal traditions which hold as their core value ‘knowledge for its own sake.’ Furthermore liberal education rested on the assumption that knowledge and truth were objective and attainable. Modern developments in philosophy such as critical theory, relativism, feminism, new historicism and post structuralism seriously contest these assumptions. Far more worrisome than the undermining of traditional views of knowledge is the relative absence in the emergent discourse of any discussion about the social fabric, the need for social reconstruction, or the value of human endeavour.

I do not resile from demands that Australia be a more economically competitive nation. I accept that universities have a major role in supporting economic development and wealth creation. I positively embrace any attempt to shift Australian cultural values from the ‘land of the long weekend’ mentality in which sporting achievements are lauded while scientific achievements are ignored and entrepreneurial and creative achievements viewed with suspicion. I commend the shift from the ‘Lucky Country’ to the ‘competitive, clever country but I will continue to fight for the recognition of the intrinsic value of higher education. Education is an intellectual, social and cultural enterprise as well as an economic one and the worth of these activities must be defended.
The challenge for Edith Cowan University is to integrate key social and intellectual values into its curricula, research, community services and alliances at the same time as it responds courageously and strategically to the new policy parameters. ECU must frame its future in such a way as to be distinctive, esteemed and competitive without ever losing sight of its history and namesake who cared so much about social justice and social responsibility.

Another direction that will impact upon the way we frame our future is the well-advanced trend toward globalisation and internationalisation. These two intimately connected movements are transforming the economic, political, social and environmental dimensions of nations, industries and universities. Globalisation and internationalisation are both producers of, and forces in, the development of new communications technologies and are rapidly creating a situation in which boundaries are irrelevant and universities must compete on a global scale. Once internationalisation in the University context meant welcoming small numbers of overseas students into the institution. Now the term has a much wider meaning. I believe internationalisation will be fundamental to the pursuit of academic excellence and the growth of a rich university culture and critical to the success of Edith Cowan University in the next decade.

The forces of globalisation and internationalisation offer challenges and opportunities for Edith Cowan University. The challenges are to offer curricula of relevance to both local and international students, to give students the cultural understanding and sensitivity they will need as global citizens and to give staff and students the opportunities to actively participate through exchange, collaborative research, off-shore programs, inter-institutional links, joint consultancies in the international environment. There are opportunities afforded by our geographic location on the Indian Ocean rim and our early development of the Virtual Campus. A sophisticated technology base will be crucial to maintaining and expanding our international links.

It is likely too that technology will at least partly underpin the way in which we meet the challenge of demands for lifelong learning, customised courses, desk top and flexible delivery. Rapid advances in technology pose both a threat and an opportunity for Australian universities. They make it possible for Australian students to enrol in overseas institutions at what may be a lower cost. Furthermore technological advances create the possibilities for organisations other than traditional universities to offer instructional packages of great sophistication and appeal, independent of location.

The challenges posed by the potential of advanced communication technologies for the University are numerous. The shift from a manufacturing to a knowledge based society means we will need to look at new ways of linking learning and working in order to provide educational opportunities to match the needs of students. Strategically this
will mean developing educational opportunities through inter-institutional collaboration and interdisciplinary cooperation with an emphasis on partnerships and alliances with government, industry, school and TAFE education and community organisations. We will need to re-examine our assumptions about teaching, learning and research, to recognise and use a scholar/practitioner model in developing advanced programs of study for those already in the workforce, to be attuned and responsive to market needs. The key to future success is to be client centred, not institution centred. A marketing focus must be brought to bear much earlier in the development of programmes and products in order that we be sure we are meeting client needs.

Another powerful and I believe welcome force which will determine the future of Edith Cowan University is the call for quality in teaching, research and scholarship. The Quality reviews in their original form have finished but the demands for continual improvement, proof of performance against targets and measures of success have not quieted. There has been a shift in emphasis from process measures to outcome measures. I forecast that the quality agenda will grow in influence and that issues of quality will be the key markers of difference between institutions. We will enhance the quality of teaching at Edith Cowan University by making learning a top priority, by respecting and rewarding good teaching and providing opportunities for all staff to improve their teaching skills. I firmly believe that lecturers want to be good, even excellent teachers, and it is the responsibility of the University to help them achieve this goal.

Quality in research and postgraduate education must be assured and demonstrated. The PhD is one of the key determinants of a university’s academic standing and therefore we must be confident that all our doctoral programs operate at a level of indisputable quality. We cannot afford to be, nor do we want to be a doctoral supermarket. Every postgraduate programme must enjoy a level of distinction even if this means we must eliminate some programmes.

Currently the West Review is considering how universities should be funded in terms of the national interest and the community’s capacity (or willingness) to pay. I believe that one core value – ‘scholarship’ – will be re-affirmed by West and his team. The challenge in framing our future will be to adopt a strategic market position in relation to each of the Carnegie Foundation’s four scholarships:

- the scholarship of discovery (research)
- the scholarship of integration (overviews and state-of-the-art)
- the scholarship of application (applying knowledge to real life problems)
- the scholarship of teaching (being up-to-date and learned in your field)

The last trend which I will identify, and it is one well known to all of you, is the move towards restricted government funding, increased competition, and a growing reliance on a user pays concept. Where once the Government provided about 90% of
university funding in 1983, it now provides about 57% (DEETYA Selected Higher Education Finance Statistics, 1995). The HECS scheme, which is a user pays mechanism, has probably reached its limit unless it is to do severe damage to access and equity and great harm to the science and engineering disciplines. No doubt funding pressures will increase, as will government expectations that higher education reduce its dependence on the public purse and diversify its funding base. This coupled with the user pay philosophy will put great pressure on universities as we compete for students, corporate sponsorship and grants. All universities will try to generate income through exploiting intellectual property and expertise, and cut overheads through fee for service charging policies. ECU is not a wealthy university and its operating costs will rise as we try to attract and retain high quality staff through promotion and recruitment. Strategically ECU must expand its revenue sources and to do so we will need to become more enterprising, more imaginative and more entrepreneurial. We will need to become more outwardly focused and explore alternative possibilities for raising income. I will not pre-empt what those possibilities might be but I can see opportunities in sponsored and contract research, joint ventures with industry, executive education programmes, non-degree instructional programmes, customised training, technical assistance centres. We need to work with our Alumni both here and internationally and draw upon their expertise, experience and loyalty for help in creating a sustainable resource base.

There are tensions, even contradictions, in the external policy environment which will inevitably be reflected in the internal environment at ECU. We will not deal with these tensions by having one side batter the other into the ground but rather by focusing on strategic positioning, informed and rational decision making in a climate of accommodation and tolerance.

I cannot conclude without reference to the University’s greatest and most important resource, its staff. Competition among universities in recruiting and retaining high quality staff will intensify. Edith Cowan University will be competitive in this arena. Major transformations will occur over the next five years in academic work practices, most of them stemming from the trends I have described. The challenge will be to re-skill and reassure staff, build their confidence and sense of ‘can do’ and provide avenues for professional, organisational and personal development. A four year-old child once taught me a lot about a ‘can do’ philosophy. I was minding my small niece and to keep her amused I gave her some crayons and paper. She scribbled happily away and, trying to show an interest, I asked her about what she had drawn. “It’s a picture of God”, she said waving a mass of squiggly lines at me. “But nobody knows what God looks like”. “They do now”, she triumphed. The staff can give the University a sustainable competitive advantage if they rise to the new possibilities and meet the challenges of change.
Leaders at ECU will need to be environmental scanners, strategic thinkers, opportunity makers and takers with the skills and vision to advantageously position the institution and its constituent parts in a deregulated, competitive, international and exciting environment. As Bosworth aptly put it: the leader has the 'key task of reading the trends and positioning the enterprise to respond to them within the limits of its resources, present or future, inherited or earned'. Strategic leaders, whether academic, administrative, or financial, will need to re-think their ways of operating and let go of aspects of detailed administration to assistants. The challenge for the leader is to gather strategic intelligence on his or her area of expertise, to know not only where the field is moving but also where the student market is moving, what the employment trends are and what their competitors are doing.

Conclusion
I have argued that the traditional values of higher education are being challenged while change is accelerating at an unprecedented rate. ECU, along with other institutions will need to make strategic choices about its preferred future. These choices must give ECU a differentiated position, a distinctive brand which will ensure a sustainable competitive advantage in the era of the global university. Critical to achieving such a position will be ECU's ability to re-configure, drive and set priorities about:

- internationalisation
- strategic partnerships
- its deployment of new technologies
- its interpretation of scholarship
- its enhancement of quality
- enabling leadership

Although we face uncertain and difficult times we must take control of our futures and create a sustainable competitive position for ourselves. Robert Kennedy pointed to the responsibility we share in framing our future when he said: "The future is not a gift. It is an achievement."
Re-framing higher education: mind the market

Edited extract of a speech delivered as the Buntine Oration
by Professor Millicent E. Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University
Canberra, 28 September 1998

Together we represent some thousands of years of experience at every level and in every sector in education. We work in what, on the face of it, appear to be very different sectors of education, but our similarities are much greater than our differences. First, we share a long term and consuming interest in, and commitment to, education. Secondly, we work in a sector which is subject to more intense scrutiny, public criticism and conflicting demands than any other in Australian society. Thirdly, there is the ‘tie that binds’ – schools and universities have a mutual investment in each other’s well-being and effectiveness. For the university, schools are the market from which we draw students. For the schools, the university is the destination sought by a substantial number of students.

I will briefly sketch the current state of higher education, identify the major forces impacting upon it, and describe the sorts of responses I believe that higher education needs to adopt in order to survive and prosper into the next century. Underpinning my address is a single central theme – the need for universities to forge alliances and partnerships with schools, industry, the vocational training sector and other educational providers not only for their own competitive sustainability, (nationally and internationally), but also for enhancing the employability of their graduates. The time when universities could regard themselves as somehow aloof from other sectors in society has gone. The future will see universities actively pursuing interdependent and mutually supportive relationships with both educational and non-educational organisations.

Evolution and change

The first point I want to make about the current state of higher education is that it is increasingly market driven. The second point is that this market-orientation is not a phenomenon of the economic rationalism of the late twentieth century. History informs us that the first students of Bologna University hired their own teachers to instruct them in fields which would ensure their employability in the professions – as ecclesiastics and civil servants. Indeed academic robes with their long sleeves were discreet pockets into which satisfied students would drop coins to pay for their instruction. This medieval version of the contemporary user pays philosophy, euphemistically referred to as a student centred approach to funding, was a market driven approach.
From their beginnings universities have been market driven. The university was a medieval creation of the 10th and 11th centuries. It evolved as a response to the professional, ecclesiastical and government requirements of society. Initially the medieval university provided the professional training for priests, but later expanded to include law, medicine and theology. The study of the humanities developed very slowly and the universities maintained for many centuries their medieval role of serving the practical requirements of their society. The pursuit of knowledge for its own sake did not become a major force in European scholarship until well into the 17th and 18th centuries. Until this time all scholarly activity tended to be devoted to religion, vocational and other perceived needs of society.

The scientific revolution began a fundamental transformation of society and its institutions in the 19th and 20th centuries. The Prussian reformer Wilhelm von Humboldt envisioned a university in which the unity of teaching and research, along with the freedom of teaching and learning would produce a scholarly and scientific elite equal to the challenges of the modern world.

The idea of an Australian university

Australian universities are modern universities, the first of them established in 1851. They drew from both the British version of the liberal arts as conceived of by Cardinal Newman and the model of the modern research university which evolved out of von Humboldt’s reforms of German higher education. Coaldrake and Stedman argue that the most influential models adopted for Australian universities were those of the secular and scientific institutions that arose from nineteenth century utilitarian reforms. They go on to insist that since their inception Australian universities have been viewed as primarily professional training institutions. This view is challenged by Reid, who argues in ‘Higher education or education for hire?’ that the Australian university more closely followed the American land grant model than the Oxford and Cambridge models. Evidence to support Reid’s argument may be found in the commitment to community service which is prominent in the mission of nearly every Australian university. However, for the purposes of my argument, the distinction between the two views is largely irrelevant, because both imply that, inherent in the idea of the Australian university, is the notion that it should serve the public, either through the training of professionals or some form of outreach to its host community.

My purpose in offering this brief history of the evolution of the university is to argue that individuals, the State and its institutions have always been focussed on graduate employability and serving the needs of society through training professionals. However the policy framework through which these aims are realised has changed dramatically in the last couple of decades.
Expectations of government and public: shifting policy frameworks

There have been major policy shifts in the period in which you and I have worked in education. Some will remember the 1960s and 1970s when the sector was growing—when universities, colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology were associated with a discourse of opportunity, abundant resources, state planning, social intervention, and equality of provision. In the 1980s and 1990s the discourse shifted to ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ and to greater accountability. In more recent times, there is a new philosophy underpinning the public sector generally, viz. financial stringency as a discipline to be applied to the sector; a user-pays philosophy (based on the premise that education is both a private and public benefit); diversification of the funding base to shift the cost from the public to the private purse; and deregulation of the sector.

More than ever before in history, the current expectation of government is that universities will play a key role in contributing to the wealth of the nation. Indeed, many of the Dawkins’ reforms of higher education were built on that premise. Yet increasingly there has been an inability or perhaps a refusal by governments to accept that university education brings other public benefits which are impossible to quantify in the manner so loved by economic rationalists. I want to suggest that universities serve a broad cultural and social function. They are a site in which conflicting ideas and values can be articulated and explored without threat to social cohesion. This function is fundamental to democracy and yet it is in danger of being lost in the attempt to make universities serve only the immediate economic needs of the nation. I will return to this point later, but for now I want to stress that I do not believe a concern for the wealth of the nation must necessarily exclude a concern for the health of the nation.

The next point I want to make about the current state of higher education is that the community (whether it be the Australian public or the government) views it with some disfavour. This dissatisfaction exhibits itself in a number of ways. Sectoral reviews are one indicator that the public is not convinced that they are getting a return on their investment. In the last decade the university sector has been subjected to numerous reviews. Furthermore, government intrusion, public suspicion and employer scepticism are not limited to Australia. The United States State legislatures have been expressing dissatisfaction and suspicion towards higher education. The UK and European moods have been no different.

Another indicator of public dissatisfaction is the resounding silence with which the public has greeted the cuts to government expenditure on higher education. Where once the Government provided about 90% of university funding in 1983, it now provides about 57%. At the last election the employer body, the academic staff unions and the student unions were in accord, probably for the first time in history, in demanding that one or other major political party commit itself to improving funding for higher
education. Neither party took any notice. For this election the polls show that health, employment, and welfare are more pressing issues and one headline reads 'Voters leave education on shelf'.

Public dissatisfaction coupled with funding cuts has prompted some analysts to describe the current state of higher education as being at crisis point. The factors creating the crisis for universities will be well known to you because most of them are impacting equally upon the schools sector. They are:

- Increased competition for the public dollar from other public sector areas such as health, transport, law enforcement and welfare.
- Increased costs. Universities, like schools, are labour intensive industries and sustained economic development has pushed up salary costs.
- Increased competition between Australian universities, and between universities and other educational providers for local students. There is growing fear too of the potential competition from overseas universities delivering degrees to Australian students via distance delivery.
- The loss of overseas markets. In response to government insistence that universities wean themselves off public funding, Australian universities have successfully entered the fee paying international student market. The current economic crises in Asia have adversely affected this market, and it is probable that the worst is yet to come.
- Rapid and far reaching changes in market expectations. The rapid growth of knowledge based industries, the demand for retraining, coupled with flexible delivery options, and high student expectations, are making unprecedented demands on universities' resources and the capabilities of their staff.

If the current state of education is in crisis, what might the future look like? Predicting the future is always a risky business but Hans van Ginkel attempted it in a challenging account called 'University 2050: The Organization of Creativity and Innovation'. To van Ginkel, what matters is 'the form and framework in which we allow creativity and innovative power to reach their full potential'. He acknowledges that what a university will look like in 2050 'will depend to a large extent on how society looks then, both at an economic level and in socio-political terms'. He presents four scenarios for the next twenty-five years:

- balanced growth (an optimistic scenario of sustainable development of 3%)
- global crisis where everything goes wrong (financial, economic, geo-political)
- global shift (eg. to Asia Pacific rim)
- European renaissance, reflecting regional resurgence.
Regardless of the scenario which evolves, van Ginkel argues that science and scholarship will survive and globalisation will bring greater unity to higher education. His argument is that: ‘Universities will become increasingly interlinked and bound to one another ... The network one belongs to will become increasingly important. It will contribute directly to the awareness of a university and its international position. It is possible that international networks may form the bases of the university of the future’. Indeed, he predicts that universities will become international businesses.

I have quoted from his work at some length because it resonates with my own views about the need for universities to forge links, strategic alliances with other universities, with schools, businesses, professions, and commercial organisations. Through such alliances universities will reassert their role as an integral element of society, enmeshed in an array of linkages with other strong institutions. The model of the aloof ivory tower or isolated monastery devoted to contemplative scholarship is not appropriate in the digital age where networking is both a strength and a necessity. The Business/Higher Education Round Table Policy statement of July 1998 – ‘Higher Education in Australia: The global Imperative’ also argues for greater interaction across the sectors. ‘To gain the greatest possible economic and cultural advantage for the nation, we need stronger interaction and cooperation between universities and business and industry and, as appropriate, national and state government organisations. This applies to graduate preparation, research and staff interaction’.

An alternative response

I will turn now to the sorts of responses I think universities should be making to the challenges they face. I mentioned earlier that educational policy analysts refer to a crisis in higher education. Some years ago, one of my international students explained to me that the Chinese ideogram for crisis combines the signs for ‘danger’ and ‘opportunity’. In universities we have considered the dangers from every angle, but I do not think that we have yet explored all the opportunities.

A primary task in the coming years will be one common to schools and universities. Both must face the challenge of teaching students how to learn. In fact, I predict that ‘learning how to learn’ will become the major formal function of education regardless of level in the knowledge society. It is a concept that has been revitalised in the service of lifelong education, which in turn is increasingly being viewed as the precondition for individual and societal survival in an economy characterised by rapid technological change, continual labour market restructuring, knowledge obsolescence, and multiple careers. The European Commission’s White Papers on ‘Growth, Competitiveness and Employment’ and ‘Teaching and Learning: Towards the Learning Society’, the OECD report ‘Lifelong Learning for All’, and the West Report, ‘Learning for Life’, show the importance and high expectations placed on the concept worldwide.
Indeed, graduates of the future will need to be self-starters, self-confident risk-takers, and leaders who can exhibit foresight and vision. They will need to be creators and innovators, capable of change over the life course.

All of us will need to become knowledge navigators. In the next century, the 'knowledge-intensive economy' or 'digital economy' will replace the labour intensive and capital-intensive economy of the twentieth century. This revolution is already well advanced and the pace will increase and present major opportunities for universities in 'managing knowledge' and in becoming knowledge-navigation institutions or knowledge-brokers.

This scenario provides multiple opportunities for universities to re-think what they teach, the way they teach, and the way they assess. It gives us the opportunity to build and re-shape the best of what we offered in the past, while creating new curricula and new modes of delivery, and flexible integration of work and study, ie. we are re-framing to allow creativity and innovative power to reach their full potential in the digital age and the knowledge-intensive economy.

A likely consequence will be the development of more high quality professional schools, which will need to engage with the real world problems of the organisations for which they seek to train graduates, and therefore must seek to involve in partnerships external organisations and practitioners in their curriculum design and delivery. For the university, the professional schools will be their most important link to the market, a public demonstration of their willingness and ability to respond to what the market needs. Higher education will be seen as a driver of economic competitiveness, initially in terms of national development and capability building, and then in terms of sustainable competitive advantage.

The 'crisis for universities' to which I referred earlier has had at least one positive and, I think, exciting outcome. Universities are rapidly and fundamentally changing their relationships with schools and the vocational education sector.

The public demand that universities 'mind their markets' is forcing universities to reconceptualise schools and the VET sector as partners in the educational enterprise. One of my priorities in my first year as Vice Chancellor of Edith Cowan University has been to forge a new and radically different relationship with the local TAFE colleges and schools. We are trialing alternative entry mechanisms which privilege school based selection of students for university entry. Underpinning this approach is our belief that teachers are better judges of both a student's performance and potential than a public examinations system or interviews by university staff.

We are pulling down the invisible boundaries between our co-located institutions which divided secondary, further and higher education, to build an educational precinct in which facilities and expertise can be shared, seamless course pathways developed and
overheads for marketing, maintenance and security lowered. These directions are clearly consistent with those contained in the recent report by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training entitled 'Today's Training; Tomorrow's Skills'.

The strategic partnerships from co-location can offer market advantage of distinctiveness and spin-off synergies. For example, ECU and the West Coast TAFE College put in a successful joint submission for the Police Academy to be co-located. This offers the potential for advanced training and research in policing and justice studies, in forensic psychology, in new approach to youth and addiction studies. Another of our precincts in Bunbury is co-located with a hospital and health campus and our partnership has led to a distinctive market competitive product – rural and community health, and social work geared to rural and remote communities.

The most powerful strategic alliances, however, will be global. They will involve collaborative agreements designed to transfer skills, but within a framework of multiplying and protecting intellectual property. Speed will become important in knowledge transfer across markets. Globalisation will mean, for university as well as business, a capacity for:

• multiple technologies (hard and soft)
• collective learning (multilevel, multifunctional)
• sharing (across businesses and geographical boundaries)
• team formation from multiple cultures (to contextualise products)
• collaboration and knowledge transfer (across multiple business units and geographical locations)
• networking

One of the most innovative approaches to higher education re-framing is the Western Governors University. Its goals are access, cost reduction, technology based learning, and the award of competency based degrees. WGU faculties do not develop content or teach courses, but instead contract with thirty party providers, establish networks and broker programs from existing providers. Other new forms of alliances are between consortia of universities, various multinational companies representing the convergence of computing, communications, consumer electronics and entertainment, together with state and federal government agencies. The goal is market share and distinctiveness and high quality.

Like it or not, Australian universities are entering an environment in which markets for educational services are increasingly contestable. Elizabeth Harman, however, sees competition and competition policy as an opportunity for universities, despite increased competition from new providers, foreign suppliers using internet-based distance delivery, and foreign entrants taking advantage of partnerships with local
suppliers. She argues that competition can be used as a constructive force that can benefit society as a whole, even protecting vulnerable areas in higher education if this can be demonstrated to be in the public interest.

The challenge for universities is to move into innovative and creative partnerships with other providers to maintain their competitiveness

Research

A prime function of a university is research, and here too partnerships and alliances between university, industry and the professions will become increasingly important. The future of publicly funded research has already been signalled. It is marked by the establishment of national priorities, increased concentration and selectivity in the allocation of funds, an emphasis on the commercial returns of research, and rewards for collaborative research. It is the last aspect, cooperative research, which brings as yet largely untapped opportunities for universities. I predict that there will be a growth both in the scale and importance of collaborative research both across international borders and across the different sectors of our economy. While international co-authorship and citation have been a feature of university research for generations, industry-university partnerships are a relatively recent addition to the research role of universities. An OECD study has found that industry-university cooperation is on an upward trajectory in major university systems worldwide.

Cross-sectoral collaborative research has the potential to bring major benefits to universities. First, apart from cost benefits, it aligns the research effort of universities with the needs of the market. Furthermore it keeps universities in the market. There is a very real possibility that with the growth of the knowledge economy, the knowledge businesses will move into the niche markets which could be or have been occupied by universities. There is evidence that such a shift is imminent in Britain. On March 11 1997 the Financial Times ran a story on British Aerospace's announcement of its intention to establish its own university.

The value of intersectoral cooperation in research and development becomes even clearer when we look at the growing dominance of complex technologies in the global markets. In 1970, 60 percent of the world's top exports were essentially simple products that could be manufactured through simple processes. Today that same percentage of the world's top exports is complex products that require complex manufacturing systems. University research is critical to the nation's ability to innovate in this area.

In research into the innovation of complex technologies, and the creative transformation of existing knowledge, there are opportunities for the social sciences to reassert their importance and value. It is only through the integration of research in engineering, science and the social sciences that we can answer such questions as:
How do organisations come to understand the need for innovation and change?

How can new products and processes be most effectively designed to meet customer needs?

How does technological change affect organisational change?

I predict that international and particularly cross-sectoral cooperation in research will continue to grow at an accelerated pace to the benefit of us all. The challenge for universities is to recognise and seize the opportunities. Secondly I believe that research across the science and social science disciplines will become better integrated and more co-dependent with science and technology for the betterment of both.

If this does not occur there may well be real dangers for universities. Van Ginkel, for example, predicts that universities may lose their pre-eminence in research. He argues that the diminished importance of research is a much older phenomenon than might appear: ‘Scientific discoveries and research have often come to fruition beyond the bounds of the university ... It was not until the last century that von Humboldt’s philosophy led to attempts to bring research within the bounds of the university’. The key role of universities will be to train scientists and scholars ‘to make breakthroughs in research within, but often outside, the universities’, ie. the external market will absorb and be the key driver for R&D. Indeed, Clark Kerr of the University of California, Berkeley, has posed the question ‘Will the University be swallowed up by business and government? Will company training and company laboratories simply take over the role of the university?’. Gould goes further and suggests that universities will need to use cyberspace to redefine their marketplace as virtual learning and research environments are developed to meet the demands of a global society, no longer defined by temporal and geographical bounds.

Community service

I want to return now to a point I made earlier about the university’s role in maintaining and improving the quality of the society it serves. In recent years the University’s role in community service has become mainly one of raising revenue through the provision of short courses. While such activities are necessary it is not the most effective way to demonstrate to the society that universities contribute to the public good. May I suggest that this is one area in which we might usefully return to the lofty ideals of Newman and von Humboldt and argue for the return of the ‘public intellectual’. Within the universities we have highly competent, knowledgeable and relevant staff yet they remain relatively silent on some of the most pressing social problems faced by our community at this time. Academics need to re-establish their position as social critics, as people who help to re-frame the creativity and innovation of the communities which they serve. Some, of course, do so. But the numbers are few.
Eva Cox, for example, has argued that there has been a weakening of the ‘social fabric’ of Australian societies, the breakdown of a ‘civil society’ and increased fragmentation, separation and alienation. One great tradition of universities has been to be ‘socially critical’ and to contribute to cultural and social knowledge, practice, and expertise. There has been a lessening of this in recent times. Indeed Marginson talks of the ‘end of universities’ and ‘nation-building’. He saw post-war Australian universities as ‘a product of economic, cultural and social investment by government’. There was ‘consensus on the importance of their scientific and economic contribution and on provision of opportunities to the population’. This consensus has broken down and he talks of a deepening crisis. The lessening of government commitment to nation-building is part of a philosophical commitment to small government and to corporatising and privatising public social, intellectual, physical and other infrastructure assets:

‘Perversely, the purpose of ‘good government’ now seems to be to undo the nation-building projects and institutions of the previous period; semi-universal health care, low-cost university education, industrial arbitration, national broadcasting and nationally managed telecommunications’.

He goes on to argue that economic orthodoxy demands this, so that Australia can play an effective role in the global economy. Yet as he shows in his various analyses, other nation states with a commitment to deregulation, marketisation and fiscal restraint, are not dismantling their nation-building institutions (eg. French, Japanese, Singaporean, the Malays). Indeed these countries are committing heavily to higher education research and development, for global economic competitiveness.

A recent Glion declaration, drawn up after heads of US and European research universities met earlier this year to discuss challenges facing higher education as it enters the new millennium, reaffirmed: ‘universities as ‘learning communities’ and calls on academics to recognise their unique responsibilities towards their communities, regions and global society. It affirms that teaching is a moral vocation, involving development of the whole person, that scholarship is a public trust ... because it contributes to general human understanding, and that alliances within universities and between universities and the outside world are crucial for the well-being of society’.

Conclusion
In Australia, market messages are being transmitted concerning the goals and directions of higher education and its relationship to graduate employability and to national economic competitiveness. Equality and equity (issues of the 1960s and 1970s) have been overtaken by a concern with economic survival and global competition. New terms have entered the discourse, foreign to Humbolt or Newman viz. ‘knowledge workers’, ‘knowledge navigators’, ‘student as customer’. There is little discourse concerning the
pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, the transmission of the most valuable cultural knowledge, or the transmission of caring and humane social values. Nor is there much evidence of the 'public intellectual' or the social critic. The national vision has shifted from the construction of a socially just and equitable society to a vision of an economically competitive and industrially restructured society in which economic imperatives increasingly drive higher education. Such trends are exacerbated by the pace at which the digital economy is transforming all that we do.

One of my concerns is that in the current agendas, the intrinsic value of universities as part of the social fabric or national intellectual and cultural infrastructure is being lost. This is particularly true for the humanities and social sciences which are being marginalised by funding policies. The same is true of the visual and performing arts, which are dependent on state and federal government support. They are being squeezed at a time when, with the convergence of the new technologies, and the education and entertainment industries, they are poised to make both cultural and economic contributions to society, while producing graduates who are 'practising thinkers and thinking practitioners'. Higher education is a social, cultural, and technological enterprise which underpins Australia's future as the recent AVCC media lobbying campaign stated so graphically – 'Poor Funding, Poor Future'. Higher education, indeed education generally, must be defended by all of us. It is a valuable human activity in its own right, whether in association with business and industry, or with science and technology. It is also a valuable social enterprise contributing to both the wealth and the health of the nation.

As educators it is our collective responsibility to develop a vision for the future which extends beyond the mind as market. True, we have an obligation to be responsive to current economic uncertainties and global competition. But, we need to take the longer-term view, and to look beyond present preoccupations of government and business. We need to respond to social change. Indeed we should be leading it as public intellectuals and professionals. All of us as educators should be seeking new opportunities to re-frame creativity and innovation in a networked, global and digital economy. However, we must also struggle to maintain the value of what has gone before in terms of the best values of university education. Collectively, as educators and citizens, we must constantly re-vitalise the social fabric of our society, valuing the civil, the creative, the innovative, and the enlightening. Above all, we must ensure that the nation-building role of education, its contribution to the cultural and intellectual infrastructure of society, is never diminished by the market.

My advocacy for all of us in education is based on the importance of transmitting and enriching our cultural heritage. This heritage will change as it has from medieval times, to post-industrial, to digital. But the enduring continuities are the framing of
environments to facilitate individual creativity and innovation across the life-span. The contribution of graduates to the professions and to our society then will continue to be within an ethos of community service and responsible professional practice.

Let all of us in education collaborate, network and forge strategic alliances and networks to build both the cultural and economic infrastructure of our nation so that we are strongly and competitively positioned to realise the diverse opportunities for creativity and innovation awaiting us in the next millennium.
Tonight we look ahead.

As C.P. Snow said: 'A sense of the future is behind all good policies. Unless we have it, we can give nothing either wise or decent to the world.'

Today, Edith Cowan University unveils a structure as bold and distinctive as our vision for the future of higher education in Western Australia.

The building's design and construction reflect ECU's sense of itself and its mission. It is dynamic, different and innovative. The Chancellery Building, in its post-modernist design, locates this University firmly in the 21st century. The soaring masts, the asymmetric design, the marriage of wood, steel and glass: they all symbolise our confidence, our aspirations and our international outlook. The building, like the University is exciting, sophisticated and different.

At the same time, in its extensive use of local jarrah and the red brick of the streets of Joondalup, the building reaffirms the University's ties with the community of Western Australia. The colonnade formed by the upward-tilting masts faces the city of Joondalup and symbolises our commitment to being the university of the northern suburbs.

Some universities are struggling with the expectation that they be at the same time institutions of the global and local communities. Edith Cowan University has embraced this challenge.

ECU has taken its responsibility to educate students to participate in the new global economy seriously. We are partners in European and Asian educational consortiums and a member of international research networks. We are in partnership with IBM, the world leader in computing technology. We deliver programs in Europe, India, Africa, China and Asia. ECU welcomes students from around the world and provides opportunities for our own students to experience university life in other countries. This is a truly international university.

Alongside our extensive international reach we have been steadily building local networks with the professions, the community and other educational providers. The collocation of the headquarters of ECU alongside the West Coast College of TAFE and the WA Police Academy is not a happy accident, but the realisation of an aim to build a world-class learning community. A new generation university such as ECU recognises the
value of its local networks. We have successfully forged mutually beneficial relationships with the school, health, arts and business communities in Western Australia.

Underpinning the University’s success in creating both international and community networks is its commitment to its mission. What ECU does, and does better than anyone else, is to produce graduates for the knowledge-based, service professions. Knowledge is inexhaustible and the service professions are growing at a greater rate than any other sector of the economy. We understand that the driving force behind the 21st Century is knowledge. The new economy depends upon knowledge-intensive products, converged communications rather than transportation, on the marketplace and ultimately on an educated population. These are needs we have proved that we can serve.

This is why the recent re-focusing on higher education at the national level in Australia is particularly welcome. Universities have been under great pressure for more than a decade to adequately meet new needs and challenges in a knowledge-based economy and a society daunted by uncertainty and complexity.

Looking ahead, as I said we would tonight, there is hope on the horizon. The Government’s structural reforms to universities should enhance our overall prospects of better serving future needs.

I feel compelled to stress on occasions such as this that universities are not poorly managed in this country. It is worth reminding ourselves that universities are primarily about discovering and disseminating knowledge and advancing social enterprise. If we are doing things right then we do much more than train people for jobs – we teach them how to ask the ‘What if’ questions. In order to do this we need research and teaching in the educational, health, business, sociological and cultural domains.

This building symbolises wider, more inclusive and aspirational values and reminds everyone that this University is engaged in important pursuits of great value to society. In every sense, we help create the future because we belong there. As one of Australia’s new generation universities, we do not take into account age or attributed prestige in defining our place in the world. We are focussed on outcomes, not inputs. We will be judged on what we produce.

Within these walls, the University’s destiny is shaped; within the shadow of these rich architectural features, generations of able, talented people will expand the boundaries of knowledge; within sight of this towering structure, the communities of northern Perth will recognise a place open to the world and in it a centre of leadership and excellence in ideas, know-how and understanding.

There are very many people to thank. Our architects, FJMT and Spowers; our builders, John Holland Pty Ltd; our many contractors and suppliers; our own University management and staff, especially in the Architect’s Office but also in the executive and
corporate areas; our Council. All have shown tremendous commitment to transforming an ambitious plan into a spectacular reality.

Buildings don't make a university, but they do create an environment in which people strive to be the best at what they do. My sincere hope for the future is that this Chancellery Building and its environs will epitomise Edith Cowan University at its best: looking ahead, reaching out, connecting with people and making a quality contribution to a better world.

Although we face uncertain and difficult times, we must take control of our future and create new possibilities. Robert Kennedy pointed to the responsibility we share in framing our future when he said: 'The future is not a gift. It is an achievement.' ECU has achieved much and will contribute to and help shape the future of higher education in Western Australia.

Thank you.
APPENDIX 4
Diversity of the student body and social cohesion

Edited extract of a speech by Professor Millicent E. Poole
Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University
Presented to the 12th General Conference
of the International Association of Universities
Sao Paulo, Brazil
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Introduction
I recently attended a conference which coincided with celebrations to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the University of Turin. Coming from a newer institution in Western Australia, I was struck by the differences between the two universities. I was reminded how much the higher education sector has changed. Like the overwhelming majority of universities, for much of its history Turin would have been an elite institution, with an exclusive, largely homogenous group of students. My own University, Edith Cowan University, is a New Generation University with a history very different to that enjoyed by Turin.

Major shifts in government policy in Britain, Australia, Canada and Europe throughout the 1980s and 1990s saw a dramatic change in the higher education landscape. The so-called ‘massification’ of education led to an influx of new institutions (many previously colleges of education, polytechnics or technology institutes) and a correspondingly large increase in student numbers. It was into this environment that Edith Cowan University was born.

As one might expect, such changes in student numbers and increased participation rates has led to a change in the demographics of the student population – both within ‘New Generation’ Universities and across higher education generally.

But just how much diversity do we now find within the student body? Has the increase in participation been successful? Does diversity matter?

The role of universities
It is well recognised that universities have an essential role in the maintenance and development of social and economic wellbeing. The building of the higher education sector in the 1980s and 1990s was driven by a belief that the university was a primary tool of modern nation building. UNESCO recognises the fundamental role that education plays in personal and social development. In its report ‘Learning: the Treasure Within’, UNESCO identifies education as one of the primary means for the
‘development of understanding and more harmonious interaction which facilitates the reduction of poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war.’ The OECD has established a correlation between the level of educational attainment with economic development, but it goes further, and links participation in education with forming the basis for building the positive values that form the cornerstone of social capital (such as reciprocity, trust, acceptance and cooperation). Lofty claims, but in the current environment who could dismiss their importance?

The International Association of University Presidents has within its mission the objective of promoting the development of curriculum, research and service devoted to peace and stability. Wharton identified two characteristics of higher education that equip it for a role in developing understanding and tolerance. Firstly, research requires an open mind and the ability to consider conflicting points of view and secondly, universities treasure their attitude of tolerance by promoting academic debate and contention of issues.

Higher education therefore has a role in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding. If we are to capitalise on this powerful responsibility, universities need to take a leadership role in providing opportunities for engaging citizens in debate and inspire tolerance and an appreciation of diversity. Through such engagement comes understanding and respect for others.

Current debates on whether education is a public or private good lose sight of the broader role of education. In Australia, the private benefits of education are given prominence, with an ever increasing emphasis on ‘user pays’. Universities throughout the developed world are focused on similar issues with an emphasis on their role in economic development, commercialisation, competition and quality.

Whilst the full impact of this focus on user pays is yet to be felt, I fear one of the consequences will be the reduction in participation amongst those groups already under-represented in the sector. Whilst this will continue to promote disadvantage in those groups, more importantly it will impact on the social cohesion which higher education seeks to promote.

Diversity of the student body
A diverse student body exposes all students to a broader range of individuals. Without this contact, what one learns about the ‘other’ is based on second-hand information, stereotypes, parental prejudices or media images.

Diversity is important as it not only ensures that those that may otherwise be disadvantaged have the opportunity to participate, but equally important it ensures that those who are ‘advantaged’ will have the opportunity to work and study with people who come from very different backgrounds to their own. Thus opportunities for

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developing understanding and mutual respect can be created. Inclusion, not exclusivity is essential if universities are to achieve their potential as builders of social capacity and social cohesion.

The Kennedy Report notes that individuals who are disadvantaged educationally are also disadvantaged economically and socially. The Report recognises that for the economic and social goals of education to be truly realised ‘participation must be widened, not simply increased’. Access to lifelong learning is a critical part of this social capital building. Education and the upgrading of skills, if accessed by only a few, will lead to the polarisation of the knowledge and skills trajectory for the majority of our citizens.

In economic terms, those excluded from the education system will simply fail to keep pace and will fall further behind. Universities have long known what governments need to rediscover: the value-added, transformational power of learning and knowledge creation, and its application for the benefit both of the individual and of society.

Some countries are leading the world in using higher education as a social lever. South Africa’s approach to quality, for example, is anchored in a transformational agenda for the country based on social inclusiveness and capacity building. University education in South Africa is literally transforming the country into a more confident, equitable and progressive society.

Access and increased participation across all sectors of our community are essential. To fail to recognise this will disenfranchise and alienate whole groups within society, and hinder economic development. Diversity among students takes many forms – socio-economic status, ethnic or cultural origin, geographical location, linguistic and experiential background, age and gender. In a country like Australia the participation of our indigenous groups is a particular concern.

Our notion of diversity need not be restricted to recognised equity groups. Poverty, poor health and family disintegration impact on individuals and their ability to engage in learning. Refugees and asylum seekers have specific needs that are often ignored or overlooked. To this list could be added part time students, remote students and the growing number of ‘earner-learners’ present within the system. The move towards ‘lifelong’ learning and greater ‘professionalisation’ also impacts upon the diversity of the student body as more second career students and mature learners join our student body.

As part of the process of expansion of access to higher education, groups of students who were traditionally excluded from higher education are entering university in greater numbers than ever before. Some non-traditional groups have increased in number so that they are in fact no longer a minority. Women for example now make up over 50% of enrolments in Australian universities. But there remains much to be done.

Schuetze and Slowey’s work on ten OECD countries shows that increased numbers have not resulted in wider access for all groups. There are still many sectors of our
communities under-represented in higher education. These include older people without traditional entry qualifications, people from lower socio-economic groups, those living in remote or rural areas, those from ethnic minorities or immigrant groups. The authors conclude that high participation rates do not therefore automatically translate into equality of access. On the contrary, the massification of higher education has assuredly not led to the elimination of disadvantage and inequality.

In the school education sector there are international comparisons which draw attention to differences between the quality of school performance across countries, and to the equitable distribution of performance across social groups within those countries. The OECD's study *Knowledge and Skills for Life*, for example, compares quality and equity in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy across 26 participating countries. Countries where the mean score in reading literacy was well above the mean for all countries included Finland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Among these highly literate countries, however, there were differences in the level of equity, expressed as the amount of variance within countries in reading literacy. Whereas Finland and Canada were both high equity (lower variance countries), Australia and New Zealand were low equity (higher variance) countries. It would be interesting to know whether such differences in quality and equality exist across social groups in higher education.

Schuetze and Slowey also confirm evidence from the research of the Australian New Generation Group of Universities which shows that diversity of the student body is greater in newer institutions, than in the older, more established universities. Schuetze and Slowey associate this with more flexible programs and modes of delivery that better meet the needs of non-traditional groups. In Australia the data shows that New Generation Universities have the most diverse student populations, with higher than average proportions of the following:

- Part time students
- Students aged 25 and over
- Indigenous students
- People with disabilities
- People from a non-English speaking background
- Women in non-traditional areas
- People from rural and isolated areas
- People from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds

It is a truism that socioeconomic circumstances are a precursor to education outcomes. Disadvantage begets further disadvantage for individuals, communities and regions. The role of New Generation Universities in providing opportunities for those who might not otherwise participate in higher education is therefore essential to social
wellbeing and the development of social capital. To address this, greater participation and greater diversity of the student body is essential.

Before leaving the topic of diversity of the student body, I would like to mention the importance of the internationalisation of education. The last ten years in most ‘developed’ countries has seen an explosion in international student enrolments. These students are drawn from around the world – for example at my own university we have students from over 80 different countries.

The increasing number of international students has brought with it some real opportunities for our domestic students to be exposed to different cultures, traditions and ways of thinking. On the whole, this has been a success story. Over the last decade, international education has become one of the most dynamic global service industries.

There are however warning signs that we should heed, and which inform the discussion on diversity. There have for example, been incidents of community backlash against the perceived ‘over representation’ of certain groups. Post September 11 has seen challenges to the notion that internationalisation is a benefit – in the US leading to a tightening of visa requirements.

The way forward
If we accept that diversity and equity of access is important, and that there are still groups who remain under-represented in our universities, what steps might we consider to improve the diversity of the student body?

An OECD report on diversity, inclusion and equity identifies four basic interpretations of equality which can be applied to education policy and practice:

- Equity of access or equality of opportunity
- Equity in terms of learning environment or equality of means
- Equity of achievement
- Equality in using the result of education or equality of application

Equity of access requires us to address the issue of whether all groups of individuals have the same chance of progressing through the education system. Equity of learning environment asks whether disadvantaged individuals benefit from a learning environment that is equivalent to that enjoyed by more advantaged students, in terms of the level of experience of their teachers and the quality and quantity of their resources.

Equity of achievement asks whether all students master, with the same degree of expertise, equivalent skills and knowledge, and leave with the same level of qualifications. Equality of using the results of the education system requires groups of individuals to have the same chances of using their acquired knowledge and skills in employment and the wider community.
A first step is to recognise and plan for diversity. At the centre of the challenge is creating equitable provision for diverse student populations. The goal should be inclusion, leading ultimately to improved social cohesion. Quoting Rawls, the OECD argues that institutions need to be biased in favour of the disadvantaged.

At my University we offer a University Preparation Course as an alternative entry pathway. The University Preparation Course requires an extra six months of study and will prepare students for university level study by teaching the required skills for academic success with an emphasis on the student becoming an independent learner. The course is particularly valuable for non-traditional students who through a combination of factors have not followed a school-university pathway.

In addition, our Aspirations Program is run through a number of high schools in Perth which do not offer Tertiary Entrance Examinations. The participating schools are those which have a strong enrolment of students from indigenous, low socio-economic, migrant or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds. The very fact of their attendance at their local high school means that these students would not otherwise have an opportunity to apply to university. The Aspirations Program provides this chance.

In considering the participation of students from non-traditional religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds, Tatum suggests that diversity is necessary in order to move us beyond the cycle of prejudice and racism. In order to provide truly inclusive environments, Tatum states that institutions need to affirm identity (students need to see themselves reflected in the environment around them) build community (encourage a sense of belonging to a wider community) and cultivate leadership (leadership requires the ability to interact effectively with people from very different backgrounds).

A more diverse student body has major implications for curriculum, teaching and learning and research.

One of the key challenges which the massification of higher education has brought is the need to meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse group of students. Traditional modes of study and instruction in highly disciplined specific awards are not able to meet the growing demand of the student body for flexibility, method of delivery and nature of the educational experience.

The challenge for us is to design curricula and learning environments, in order to provide the flexibility and inclusivity which a diverse student body requires. For example, we must recognise that increasing numbers of students are working during their studies. A model which requires students to sit in a lecture theatre for an hour at 9 o'clock each Monday morning is not going to meet the needs of a large number of our students. Our experience has been to promote the use of the internet and a web-based course management system to ensure that students who are unable to attend classes have access to all necessary coursework materials and information.
Some of our faculties have established extensive peer mentoring systems whereby new-to-university students are paired with experienced university students. The mentors ensure that the newcomers are made aware of the resources available to them and assist them in settling into university life. For our new students, most of whom are the first in their family to attend university, the mentors offer a non-threatening and supportive introduction to higher education. Where mentor programs are in place we have recorded significant improvements in retention to the extent that one of our programs received national recognition in the Prime Minister’s Teaching Awards.

Incoming international students are similarly supported by staff and students. Student volunteers operate a ‘meet and greet’ service at the airport, conduct the new arrivals to their accommodation, assist them in procuring telephone cards, opening bank accounts, exchanging currency and buying provisions. More experienced students in the senior years act as ‘buddies’ to the new students and guide them through an academic orientation program and a parallel social induction into Australian life and culture.

One of our most successful programs in supporting equity and diversity has been the Kurongkurl Katitjin (which means ‘coming together to learn’ in Aboriginal dialect) regional project. This initiative is aimed at training indigenous primary school teachers in Geraldton, a regional town 500 kilometres from the University. The service model adopted is described as ‘Supported External Delivery’ and involves: alternative pathways for entry, providing a safe place for learning, local co-ordination and administration, regular visits from academics from Edith Cowan University, intensive class contact, local indigenous support staff, and packages of external materials mirroring the city course. The program has resulted in an increase of over 400% in the number of Indigenous people accessing higher education in the region and an increase of 300% in the number of Indigenous teachers in primary schools in Geraldton. These outcomes make this program one of the most successful programs in Australia for Indigenous student completions.

The focus in our discussion has been on curriculum and delivery and time does not allow for a discussion of research. Suffice to say for the moment that our research must not only inform the teaching that we do – it must also provide practical, real outcomes for our communities in ways that will enhance social capital. This means that there must be a place for the humanities, and for social research programs and for the arts. Australia once aspired to be the ‘Clever Country’ – I would like to think that we now want to be a ‘Wise Country’ because this implies an understanding and depth of reflection that cannot be achieved only through investment in science and technology.

Conclusion
In summary I have argued that education, and higher education, is essential for the building of social capital and for social cohesion. To achieve these benefits, however, this
education must be available to all sectors of the community, not restricted to a chosen few. Massification has led to a great increase in the number of individuals who now access university. But it has not created a student body which matches the degree of diversification of our communities. Non-traditional groups are still for the most part under represented. The challenge therefore remains for us all to consider our systems, our teaching and learning, our student support mechanisms and our research activities to support the participation of non-traditional students. Universities must fulfil their role of building social cohesion and to do this we must ensure that all sectors of our community have an opportunity to participate.

The job we do is too important not to.
Notes

INTRODUCTION: TWO UNIVERSITIES

1. *The Australian*, 27 October 2004. This article, written by ECU marketing director Lianne Cretney-Barnes, is citing 1998 research on public perceptions of Edith Cowan University.


3. ECU statistics provided directly to the author, July 2005.


8. See Millicent Poole, ‘Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation’ (Edith Cowan University Installation Speech, 4 September 1997); Appendix 1. See also Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne, *The Campus That Never Stood Still: Edith Cowan University 1902-2002* (Edith Cowan University, Perth, 2001), p. 180.


CHAPTER 1: PRELUDE TO TRANSFORMATION


4. ibid., 119.


7. ibid.

8. ibid., pp. 213-17.

9. Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., p. 117.


13. ibid., pp. 29-32. See also Doug Jecks’ memorandums to WACAE staff nos. 28/1989 and 40/1989; ECU archives ref. 01022/01, Box 1.


18. ibid., pp. 125-8.
19. ibid., 126. See also Dawkins, *Higher Education: a policy statement*, p. 28. For
evidence of an ad hoc approach to planning in the 1991-94 period, see ECU, *Vision
20. Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., pp. 128-30. See also Edith Cowan University, *Annual
22. ibid.
23. ibid.
graduation ceremony, ECU Bunbury campus, 10 July 1993, quoted in Bolton and
Byrne, op. cit., p. 136.
25. ECU Department of Institutional Research and Statistics, *Statistics 96* (Edith Cowan
University, Perth, 1996), p. 5. See also Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., p. 136.
27. Edith Cowan University, *Annual Report 1994*, p. 3. See also Bolton and Byrne, op.
cit., pp. 141-2.
p. 142.
p. 9.
31. Roy Lourens interviewed by Geraldine Byrne, 12 June 2001; quoted in Bolton and
Byrne, op. cit., p. 133.
32. Robert Nicholson interviewed by Geraldine Byrne, 23 June 2001; quoted in Bolton
and Byrne, op. cit., p. 132.
33. Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., p. 133. See also comments by Patrick Garnett, Deputy
Vice Chancellor Academic, in minutes of ECU group session ‘Strategic Vision and

CHAPTER 2: WATERSHED

1. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
See also Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne, *The Campus That Never Stood Still:
2. ‘Curriculum Vitae, Millicent Eleanor Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan
University, July 2003’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
3. See Chapter 2. See also J.S. Dawkins, *Higher Education: a policy statement*
(Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1988), and Don Smart and
Janice Dudley, ‘Education Policy’, in Christine Jennet and Randal G. Stewart (eds.),
4. "Curriculum Vitae, Millicent Eleanor Poole".

5. ibid., and "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

6. "Curriculum Vitae, Millicent Eleanor Poole".

7. "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005" (transcript); "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005" (transcript); and "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 12 May 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

8. "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

9. ibid.

10. ibid.

11. Millicent Poole interviewed by Geraldine Byrne, 8 August 2002; quoted in Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., p. 179.

12. "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

13. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, "Transforming ECU: Voices of Change" (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.

14. Millicent Poole, "Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium" (Paper presented to University Council, 31 July 1997 – ref. UC53/4), Appendix 2; ECU file 97/4265-02.

15. Comments by Warren Snell, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

16. "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01. See also "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.


19. "Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005" (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

20. Millicent Poole, "Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation" (Edith Cowan University Installation Speech, 4 September 1997); Appendix 1.

21. ibid.

22. Comments by Bill Louden, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

23. Comments by Ron Oliver, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

24. Comments by Pat Garnett, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


26. Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

27. Comments by Warren Snell, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
28. ibid., and comments by Pat Garnett, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., pp. 146-7.
29. Professor Deryck Schreuder to Poole, 16 July 1997; personal correspondence held by Millicent Poole.
30. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
31. Comments by Bill Louden, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Warren Snell, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
32. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
33. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
34. Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 3: WHEELS IN MOTION
1. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
2. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 14 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
3. See Chapter 2. See also Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
4. Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
5. See Millicent Poole, ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium’ (Paper present to University Council, 31 July 1997 – ref. UC53/4), Appendix 2; ECU file 97/4265-02.
6. Poole, ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium’; ECU file 97/4265-02.
8. See Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
11. ibid. See also Poole to Director, Human Resource Management, 13 August 1997; ECU file 97/4265-02.
12. Comments by Warren Snell, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Bill Louden, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
13. Poole, ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium’, Appendix 2; ECU file 97/4265-02.
15. ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
16. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
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17. ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
18. Quin interview, 11 April 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
19. Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’; ECU file 04/1555-01. The survey was carried out by consultants Ernst and Young.
20. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
21. Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
22. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
23. Comments by Robyn Daniels, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
24. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
25. Comments by Robyn Quin, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
28. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
30. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
31. Comments by Millicent Poole, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Robyn Quin, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
34. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
35. Comments by Pat Garnett, group discussion, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. 36. ibid.
37. ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 4: BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION
1. Comments by Robyn Quin, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
2. Geoffrey Bolton and Geraldine Byrne, The Campus That Never Stood Still: Edith Cowan University 1902-2002 (Edith Cowan University, Perth, 2001), pp. 179-80. See also Millicent Poole, ‘Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University
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into the New Millennium' (Paper present to University Council, 31 July 1997 – ref. UC53/4), Appendix 2; ECU file 97/4265-02.
4. ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
5. ibid.
11. Millicent Poole, quoted in Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
13. Poole, quoted in Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’; ECU file 04/1555-01.
16. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005 and 14 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
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24. ibid. See also Dixon and Tracey, 'Transforming ECU: Voices of Change'; ECU file 04/1555-01.
25. Comments by Robyn Daniels, group discussion, 8 August 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
28. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005' (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
29. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005' (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
30. See Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 5: MAKING HEADWAY
2. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 14 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
3. ibid.
5. Comments by Ron Oliver, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
7. ibid.
8. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005' (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
10. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
12. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, 'Transforming ECU: Voices of Change' (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
13. Comments by Pat Garnett, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
14. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
15. ibid.
17. ibid., and comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
19. ibid.
20. Millicent Poole interviewed by Geraldine Byrne, 8 August 2001; quoted in Bolton and Byrne, op. cit., p. 182.


23. ibid., pp. 16-17.

24. ibid., pp. 18-20.

25. ibid., p. 21.


27. See comments by Janice Tracey in Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 6: SHAPING AND STREAMLINING

1. See Chapter 5.


3. Edith Cowan University, *Annual Report 1999*, p. 20 and pp. 35-6, and VC’s 2nd Annual Report to University Council, July 1999; ECU file 94/2370-70. For more on the marketing of ECU, see Chapter 8.

4. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.

5. ibid. See also Edith Cowan University, *Annual Report 1999*, p. 20.


7. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.

8. ibid.


10. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

11. Comments by Bill Louden, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

12. Comments by Ron Oliver, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

13. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


16. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01. Note that Poole attributes this observation to Bill Louden.
17. See ECU Academic Board resolution A19/98.
18. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 9 February 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
19. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
21. Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 2001, p. 29. See also Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
22. Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
26. See comments by Pat Garnett, Bill Louden, Ron Oliver and Millicent Poole, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
28. ibid. See also Commonwealth of Australia, Backing Australia's Ability: Real Results, Real Jobs (Department of Industry, Science and Resources, Canberra, 2001).

CHAPTER 7: PROVIDENCE

2. See Chapter 5. See also Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 1999, p. 34.
5. See Millicent Poole et al., ECU Service 2000: A client-centred transformation of corporate services (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra, 2000), p. 15. See also Chapter 5.
7. Poole et al., ECU Service 2000, p. 10.
8. See Chapter 5.
10. ibid., pp. 33-4.
11. ibid.
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11. ibid., pp. 21-2.
14. ibid., pp. 24 and p. 36.
15. ibid., pp. 35-7.
16. ibid., p. 25.
18. ibid. See also ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 27 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.
19. Poole et al., ECU Service 2000, p. 24 and p. 49.
23. See also Poole et al., ECU Service 2000, pp. 43-8.
24. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005’ (transcript), and ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 27 January 2005’ (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 8: SELLING CHANGE

3. ibid., pp. 33-4.
4. ibid., p. 33.
5. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.
7. Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 1999, p. 35. See also comments by John Wood, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. The logo was developed during
1998 and the 1998 annual report carried it – along with the official university crest – on its cover. From 1999, annual reports carried only the modern ECU logo.

8. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


12. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


14. Comments by John Wood, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

15. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


17. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

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21. ibid., and comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Market Equity, ‘Providing Knowledge and Insight to Maximise Marketing Effectiveness: A Qualitative Evaluation’; ECU file 05/71.


23. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


25. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


27. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


32. ibid.


34. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
35. Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU’; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also ‘Curriculum Vitae, Millicent Eleanor Poole, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University, July 2003’; ECU file 04/1555-01.


37. Comments by Lianne Cretney-Barnes, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


40. Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU’; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also ECU files 04/1347, 04/1520, and 04/1672.

41. Comments by John Wood, meeting, 31 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 9: CITIZEN AND HOST

1. Millicent Poole, ‘Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation’ (Edith Cowan University Installation Speech, 4 September 1997); Appendix 1.


3. Millicent Poole, ‘Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation’ (Edith Cowan University Installation Speech, 4 September 1997); Appendix 1.

4. ibid.


6. ibid., pp. 22-5.


10. ibid., p. 11 and p. 28. See also Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 1998, p. 21, and Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 1999, p. 27.

11. Comments by Millicent Poole and Patrick Garnett, meeting, 6 June 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.


21. See Millicent Poole, 'Framing our Futures: Change and Differentiation' (Edith Cowan University Installation Speech, 4 September 1997); Appendix 1. See also Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 2002, p. 25.

CHAPTER 10: TRAVELLING NORTH

1. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 19 January 2005' (transcript); 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 1 March 2005' (transcript); and 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 12 May 2005' (transcript); ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Chapter 2.
2. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 8 August 2005'; ECU file 04/1555-01.
5. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 12 May 2005'; ECU file 04/1555-01.
6. ibid.
8. ibid., p. 27.
11. ibid., pp. 9-10.
12. ibid., p. 9, and University Council minutes, 18 June 1998; UC file 94/2370-71. See also comments by Andrew Branston, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
13. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


17. ‘Strategic planning phase – notes by Robyn Quin, April 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.


20. ‘Churchlands Campus Redevelopment: Important Information for Staff and Students’ (ECU leaflet, June 2005).


26. Millicent Poole, ‘Speech to commemorate the opening of the Chancellery Building, 18 October 2003’; ECU file 03/247. See Appendix 3, Millicent Poole, ‘Unveiling a vision’.


29. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 12 May 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.

CHAPTER 11: A STRONGER VOICE

1. ‘Edith Cowan University – 10 Years Young, 100 Years Old’ (ECU advertisement, 2001); See *Campus Review*, 26 September 2001.

2. See Chapter 1.
3. See Millicent Poole, 'Setting the Strategic Direction for Edith Cowan University into the New Millennium' (Paper present to University Council, 31 July 1997 – ref. UC53/4); ECU file 97/4265-02.


5. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, 'Transforming ECU: Voices of Change' (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.

6. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 22 February 2005'; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Dixon and Tracey, 'Transforming ECU'; ECU file 04/1555-01.


9. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 22 February 2005'; ECU file 04/1555-01.

10. Dixon and Tracey, 'Transforming ECU'; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also Appendix 4, Millicent Poole, 'Diversity of the student body and social cohesion'.

11. 'Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 22 February 2005'; ECU file 04/1555-01.

12. ibid.


14. See M. Poole, J. Reid and P. Sheehan, 'New Generation Universities', and K. Sproats, 'Regional and community development: A position paper to the University of Western Sydney Board of Trustees', University of Western Sydney, 2002.


RAISING EDITH


23. ibid., p. 16.


CHAPTER 12: RAISING EDITH

1. See Chapter 1.


3. Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 2002, p. 43 and p. 44.


5. Meredith Dixon and Janice Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU: Voices of Change’ (draft background paper); ECU file 04/1555-01.


7. Edith Cowan University, Annual Report 2002, p. 44.

8. See Edith Cowan University, ECU Strategic Plan 2003-2007: A Stronger ECU.


10. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 10 March 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.


12. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Susan King, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


20. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 10 March 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


24. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 10 March 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01. See also comments by Susan King, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


29. Comments by Susan King, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.


33. ibid.

34. ibid., p. 47.

35. ‘Meeting with Vice Chancellor, 10 March 2005’; ECU file 04/1555-01.


37. Quoted in Dixon and Tracey, ‘Transforming ECU’; ECU file 04/1555-01. Part of this quotation also appears at the entrance of Perth’s Curtin University of Technology.


41. See Chapter 2.
42. Edith Cowan University, *Annual Report 1993*, p. 2. See also Chapter 1.
43. Comments by Millicent Poole, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
45. Comments by Susan King, meeting, 25 May 2005; ECU file 04/1555-01.
46. See Dixon and Tracey, 'Transforming ECU'; ECU file 04/1555-01.
47. Millicent Poole, speech at the 'EQUIP for Leadership' policy launch, 7 December 2000; quoted in Dixon and Tracey, 'Transforming ECU'; ECU file 04/1555-01.
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