

**Committee of Convocation**  
**Minutes of Meeting**

Held on Wednesday, 15 July 2020,  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom, commencing at 5.30 pm.

---

**1. Welcome**

The President, David Bellair, took the chair, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. The Committee had been in abeyance since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic. John Harcourt acted as Zoom Host, having expended considerable effort to do so on behalf of the members.

**2. Guest Speaker**

There was no guest speaker on this occasion.

**3. Attendance**

a. Members Present:

Anne Ada, David Bellair, Cecily Close (Minute-taker), John Harcourt, Gary Israel, Irene Jablonka, David Janson, John Nelson, Christine Oldham, Beverley Rodan, Stan Sahhar, John Scott.

b. Apologies - Received:

Ros McMillan, Elizabeth Mitchell, Noel Whiting, Eugene Antczak (interested colleague of John Scott).

c. Leave of Absence – as granted:

Nil.

**4. Confirmation of Minutes**

The previously distributed Minutes of the preceding meeting, held on 20 November 2019, were accepted and confirmed with one amendment, proposed by Irene Jablonka, that the words “registration of the” be inserted in the second paragraph of 11 (a). [*Amended minutes, Revision 2, were subsequently circulated to all members by the Secretary.*]

**5. Election of Office Bearers**

It was agreed that the biennial election of Committee office bearers should be deferred until the next face-to-face meeting of the Committee.

**6. Appointments**

It was agreed that the biennial Committee appointments should be deferred until the next face-to-face meeting of the Committee.

## 7. Correspondence

(Refer to the report of the President)

## 8. Membership

### a. Additions and Withdrawals

It was reported that Trefor Morgan had resigned from membership of the Committee on 28 January 2020.

It was agreed that the long leave of absence of Jenny Stillman should not be extended. The President undertook to write to her, explaining this and pointing out that there would be no obstacle to her re-joining, should she wish to do so, in the future.

### b. Leave of Absence

None granted.

## 9. Report of the President

David Bellair advised, as follows.

“I hope you and your families and friends are all well and have avoided the corona virus. I guess most of us are in the vulnerable group. Thank you all for joining this meeting.

Firstly, I would like to thank Gary Israel for suggesting a Zoom meeting.

Secondly, and importantly, I would like to thank John Harcourt for setting up this meeting.

It appears that there is no quick solution to the pandemic, so it seems unlikely that we can have physical meetings and dinners any time soon.”

### Report

1. I attended an event at University House organised by the Dean of Engineering, on February 27, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the launch of an amateur radio satellite built by a group of students from the University. The main dining room at University House was packed for the main event, and those closely involved, including the American who had championed our launch with NASA, had dinner afterwards in the Karagheusian Room. One of those students, now Emeritus Professor Rod Tucker from Electrical Engineering, was instrumental in getting the support of the Dean of Engineering, Mark Cassidy.

2. I wrote to the VC after our November meeting last year, supporting the Library Scholarly Services Accommodation Master Plan (SSAM). Gwenda Thomas, the Librarian expressed her appreciation.

3. Early in December, last year, I wrote to Mark Considine, the Provost, on behalf of the Committee, supporting his *Academic Advising* initiative, to encourage closer personal contacts between staff and students, and he thanked us for our support.

4. I thank Ros McMillan for putting a tribute into the Age for Barbara Hamer who passed away recently. She had been a member and President of this Committee.

5. Early in June, I wrote to the V-C, on behalf of the Committee, expressing our support for him in these difficult times. Not long afterwards, I think, there was an announcement of staff cuts.

6. After the recent Executive Zoom meeting (held on 17 June 2020) I wrote to the Director of the Doherty Institute, Professor Sharon Lewin, expressing our admiration and respect for the work being done at the Peter Doherty Institute.

7. We may be seeing the beginnings of a shake-out in the tertiary sector as a consequence of COVID-19. The probable reduction in income from students from China will have a major impact on the University, and the recent related policy announcements by the Minister for Education, Dan Tehan, have seemed unhelpful and confusing.

8. Former V-C Glyn Davis suggested reforms of the tertiary sector, including the formation of an independent Commission to make long-term plans and, hopefully, that suggestion will not have been forgotten.

9. A recent seminar arranged by the Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) with participation by Frank Larkins and Mark Warburton from the CSHE, and others, showed that nobody seems to know what the Minister is trying to achieve. An advisory group, that includes V-C Duncan Maskell, has been set up to advise the Minister on research funding.

10. A positive step is that the University of Melbourne has just become a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) which urges that published papers be judged on their intrinsic merit rather than on the status of the journal in which they are published. It has been claimed that roughly half of all peer-reviewed scientific papers contain results that cannot be replicated by others and that, therefore, would appear to be suspect.

## **10. Financial Report**

The Treasurer, Christine Oldham, reported that the bank balance of the Committee stood at \$112.89. It was agreed that members should be requested to contribute \$20, each, by direct bank deposit to bolster funds.

The report of the Treasurer was accepted.

Members are reminded that payments to the Committee should be made by bank deposit to: BSB 633-000 Acct No. 141509497.

## **11. University of Melbourne Items of Interest**

John Harcourt reported that, although the Dental Advisory Committee had been subsumed into a new structure, adopted in January, former members were invited to continue to submit items of interest. All teaching was being done on-line and other restrictions were being applied.

Ann Ada reported that the Faculties, with which she is concerned, were going a good job, having switched to a webinar format for the Dean's lectures.

Irene Jablonka recalled that she had distributed information before the meeting on Science Faculty public offerings. She mentioned that she viewed the virtual visit to Burnley Campus. Having previously organised a tour of this campus she found the real-life visit to have been far more enjoyable.

The Zoom seminar from the Melbourne Centre for the Study of High Education, referred to in the President's Report (point 7), is available at its website.

## **12. Key Matters for Consideration**

- a. Actions Update – It was agreed that actions 107 and 108 should be discontinued, but action 85 should be ongoing.
- b. Membership Development – all members were again urged to approach eligible colleagues who might be interested in joining the Committee. Where possible, members should attempt to make contact with their Dean(s). John Harcourt offered to ask the Dean of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences to suggest someone to approach.
- c. Advancing Melbourne 2030 - the President undertook to circulate his readily readable text-only version of the latest report from the University.

## **13. Other Business**

- a. Website

The website has been modified and it was agreed that it is much improved. John Harcourt was thanked and congratulated in respect of this.

- b. Tours and speakers

Irene Jablonka advised that she had been asked to find speakers for the forthcoming lectures on Zoom. She said that Prof Considine had been scheduled to be our April 2020 meeting speaker. Unfortunately, that meeting had to be cancelled due to the government regulations connected with the State of Emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. She said she is now in the process of, once again, contacting the VC and Prof Considine in the hope they can attend a Zoom meeting.

She also reminded members that she has previously sent to members lists regarding virtual Public Lectures and tours arranged by University staff. At this stage, no face to face Public Lectures are planned for this year. She suggested members consider viewing the virtual July Physics Lectures and others on the lists, which were sent.

She mentioned that, due to the situation that exists at the University of Melbourne, with respect to trying to carry on business as usual in these trying times, she is unable

to arrange any face to face tours for the Committee of Convocation this year. She asked that the item relating to pre-meeting tours be left off the Agenda, until further notice.

Irene was warmly thanked for her work in securing speakers.

#### **14. Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee is to be held by Zoom on Wednesday 19 August 2020, commencing at 5.30 pm.

#### **15. Close**

The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.

---

#### **Attachments**

Updated Actions listing.

---