

# Antipodean Audits: Neoliberalism, Illiberal Governments and Australian Universities

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**Abstract:** This article explores neoliberalism in Australian universities, in the context of the politics of a higher education 'reform package' introduced by the Liberal-National Party Coalition presently in power in federal government. I focus attention on the relationship between the broader national environment and the local university configuration at the Australian National University and the dialectic between university academics and students as objects of bureaucratic practices and self-auditing subjects in these new modalities of power. I situate the Australian experience in broader global debates about neoliberalism and universities and earlier ethnographies of audit cultures.

**A Vignette, Llewellyn Hall,  
16 October 2003**

16 October 2003: it is a glorious spring day on the campus of the Australian National University: peach blossom and wisteria plumes vie with red flowering gums and purple Hardenbergia vines. I had eagerly hoped to be at home writing this paper, since the NTEU (the National Tertiary Education Union) had called a strike of all academics and students to protest the latest moves in the federal government's higher education 'reform package'. Lectures had been cancelled and staff meetings postponed; we anticipated that the ANU (Australian National University) would be effectively shut down. But the preceding afternoon all staff received an urgent email from the local chapter of the NTEU cancelling the strike at the ANU because of the Vice-Chancellor's commitment to proceeding with a new, and highly favourable, Enterprise Agreement, in defiance of new federal government policies. We were invited not just to come to

work but to attend a lunchtime protest meeting at which our Vice-Chancellor, Ian Chubb, and the General Secretary of the NTEU, Grahame McCulloch, would both address us.

The venue, Llewellyn Hall, is a place more associated with classical music performances and university graduation rituals than a political meeting. But the audience was huge and rather excited. In the main business of the meeting the VC, Chubby Chubb as he is affectionately called by some staff, reiterated what was previously announced to the media, that he would be proceeding with the terms of the Enterprise Agreement recently negotiated between the ANU and the NTEU. He stressed that this agreement would remain silent on the question of 'Australian Workplace Agreements'. Let me explain. In the 1980s, the centrally adjudicated national awards that had hitherto governed the salaries and conditions of most university staff were effectively supplanted by 'enterprise agreements', specific to each institution, thus allowing them

to set salary rates and conditions which varied with local contexts. These new enterprise agreements were the result of an earlier generation of higher education reforms initiated by a Labor government, especially under the aegis of the then Federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins. The present conservative government, a Liberal Party-National Party Coalition,<sup>1</sup> led by Prime Minister John Howard, was determined to go further in such higher education 'reforms': to more thoroughly remake universities in the image of competitive private corporations and to eradicate the traces of collective bargaining among staff, by instituting new 'Australian Workplace Agreements' which would be based on the right of 'choice' of each individual to negotiate their own salary and conditions. The power of unions in the higher education sector, which I should stress are voluntary not compulsory, was to be diminished and almost proscribed. University administrations were not to assist in encouraging union membership, by advising new staff of their existence, nor to help in the collection of union dues from salaries.

Chubb's defiance was not just rhetorical. Proceeding with the enterprise agreement being negotiated, including a clause which declared silence on Australian Workplace Agreements, risked the ANU being declared ineligible for access to the \$404 million additional funds to be made available to the cash-strapped university sector from 2004 to 2005. In a joint controversial policy announcement some weeks before, Brendan Nelson, the minister for higher education, and Tony Abbott, the minister for industrial relations, had made this additional funding contingent on universities accepting this new regime of industrial relations.

But, as VC Chubb and Grahame McCulloch both pointed out, the prevailing system already allowed the negotiation of

individual contracts. Indeed, at the ANU around 30 per cent of staff were already on individual contracts where wages and conditions were more favourable than that of the collective enterprise agreement. (Often this was because their skills were deemed particularly 'valuable', i.e. in monetary terms. These were usually contracts for economists and lawyers, who could attract far higher salaries elsewhere.) The novelty of Australian Workplace Agreements was, rather, that pay and conditions could be *lower* than those achieved in collective enterprise agreements. It would thus have allowed lower pay rates and increasing casualisation of university staff (see Collins 1994). Another controversial aspect of the government's 'reform package' was an expansion in universities' capacities to recruit full-fee-paying students, including those with entry scores below those who could not pay fees upfront.<sup>2</sup> VC Chubb also reiterated his opposition to the new fee regime as degrading of quality in higher education. As I had heard him say to the ANU Research Committee, 'I am not going to pass on a dog kennel to the next generation'.

And so Chubb proceeded to outline the highlights of the new ANU Enterprise Agreement: a pay rise of 17.4 per cent over three years (which places ANU in the top tier of salaries in Australian universities); twenty weeks of parental leave (maternity, paternity and adoption leave) and a graduated return to work for mothers in the first year; pro rata superannuation for part-time staff working more than twelve months; 'economic and moral rights' to intellectual property; support for the responsible exercise of intellectual freedom, and a commitment to retain and redeploy staff, to use redundancies only as a last resort. As each of these bullet points was displayed on the PowerPoint screen the audience broke into increasingly rapturous applause. Both Ian Chubb and

Grahame McCulloch seemed delighted with the response and beamed at the television cameras. But, one week later, the offending legislation was passed by the House of Representatives (where the government had a secure majority). Chubb was gambling on the future prospect that the legislation would be rejected, or at least crucial clauses amended before its passage through the Senate, where several senators from smaller parties held the balance of power.<sup>3</sup>

I offer you this opening vignette not just as an ethnographic anecdote, but because I think it distils three important features of neoliberalism in Australian universities. First, the Australian university system is distinctive insofar as its major institutions are public institutions, mandated by government legislation and still supported in large measure by federal taxation. Although there is an increasing reliance on external funding, and some expansion of private universities,<sup>4</sup> private wealth and endowments are far less important than in the United States and even the United Kingdom (although there the autonomy conferred by royal charters and private wealth has been progressively eroded in the last twenty years; see Shore and Wright 2000). This reliance on federal taxes shapes the contours of the Australian debate about ‘accountability’, in both economic and moral senses. Secondly, however, neoliberal policies are not just draconian impositions by the federal government, but are negotiated by active subjects—including university bureaucracies as well as the collective and individual agency of academic staff. Although university executives and employees have perforce embraced the practice and the language of neoliberalism, there are also large and small resistances. Thirdly, neoliberal policies and practices are not just a recent phenomenon, associated with the present conservative government.

Indeed, the foundations of neoliberalism were laid by federal Labor governments in the 1980s. Unlike in the UK where neoliberalism is seen to have its origins in the Thatcher period (Shore and Wright 2000: 63), in Australia it rather originated in the *longue durée* of Labor federal power under Bob Hawke and Paul Keating, from 1983 to 1996 (see Pusey 1991; Marginson 2002).

This was a critical period when governments tried to remake universities in the image of private corporations, and when the old Labor values of access and equity in higher education were eclipsed by the moral creed of enterprise, efficiency and accountability. As elsewhere, there was a proliferation of the language and practices of audit in which ‘the financial and the moral meet in the twinned precepts of economic efficiency and ethical practice’ (Strathern 2000: unpaginated preface). I will turn to these dynamics in a moment, but first a few preliminary thoughts on neoliberalism in Australia.

### **Some Brief Thoughts on Neoliberalism in Australia**

In an important early work, Michael Pusey (1991) charted the massive impact of economic rationalism (or neoliberalism) in the Australian public sector from 1975 to 1990. This was influenced in part by the economic rationalism of both Thatcher in the UK and Reagan in the US, with their cognate ideological agendas of ‘rolling back the state’ and underwriting the divine power of the market. But, as Pusey shows, neoliberalism in Australia has a distinctive character. Neoliberal values increasingly pervaded the philosophies of politicians of *both* the major parties, Left and Right, and thus there was a ‘bipartisan consensus without any electorally effective opposition’ (Pusey 1991: 3).

Equally crucial in his view was the increasing hegemony of neoliberal values among senior public sector bureaucrats in the national capital, Canberra.<sup>5</sup>

Importantly, then, neoliberal policies in Australia were instituted not by a conservative but by a Labor government from the early 1980s. Older protectionist policies gave way to a novel stress on unregulated international trade. The Australian dollar was floated in December 1983. At home financial deregulation, high levels of unemployment, high taxes and interest rates, and burgeoning corporate profits prevailed until the crash of October 1987. Prime Minister Bob Hawke, an erstwhile Rhodes scholar and union leader, instituted accords between government and unions to control strikes and wage increases, and promoted a corporatist ethos which stressed the tripartite alliance of government, unions and corporations. Increasingly, the economic policies of this government privileged entrepreneurial values and the inexorable power of the market. Paul Keating, treasurer to Hawke and later Prime Minister, made portentous speeches about the danger of Australia becoming a banana republic, if the dollar was not floated.

### **Neoliberalism in Higher Education**

In higher education, older Labor values stressed access and equity, exemplified in the Whitlam government's commitments to no university fees and to scholarships for students from working-class families in the early 1970s. This transformed the class and gender composition of undergraduate and graduate students in that generation. I was a beneficiary of that process. But when Labor returned to power in 1983, under Prime Minister Bob Hawke, these values were increasingly eclipsed by a new stress on corporatism, economic efficiency and accountability.

The values of access and equity justified the massive expansion and a unified national system of all tertiary institutions (in the process upgrading many colleges to universities). This was ostensibly to move tertiary education from an elite privilege to an accessible right for all with academic merit. But this dramatic expansion was accompanied by other measures, which rather compromised access and equity. Tertiary fees were introduced along with the new system of HECS (Higher Education Contribution Scheme), whereby fees could either be paid upfront or deferred and paid later by students, when their income reached a certain threshold. This diminished the numbers of young tertiary students from working-class backgrounds and mature-age women, both of whom had been entering universities in large numbers in the previous decade.

Associated with these major changes was the pervasive spread of neoliberal languages and practices (see Watson 2003). Education was increasingly referred to as 'training', even in courses where vocational orientation was minimal. University vice-chancellors were enjoined to act like CEOs of private corporations and to instil the values of efficiency and entrepreneurialism among their staff. Universities were provoked to compete with each other not just for students but for quality staff. Financial decentralisation was implemented, so that ever smaller academic units became 'cost centres' and competed with each other for performance-based allocations. Cooperation with private corporations was strenuously urged and academics were enjoined to seek greater external funding from industry and private foundations in Australia and overseas.

Yet despite the rhetorics of a small state and reduced state intervention, the federal government increasingly intruded into the internal workings of each institution with a series of auditing practices that moni-

tored the performance of both individual staff and collectivities. These involved large national reviews of undergraduate and graduate education and a range of measures to assess the quality and quantity of research. Most of these entailed a process of annual reporting to the Commonwealth department overseeing higher education, currently called the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). This greatly increased the bureaucratic burdens on all staff at a time when staff:student ratios were dramatically declining and when higher education funding was being reduced in real terms (see Coaldrake and Stedman 1999). All of these policies and practices were legitimated by recourse to the pervasive ideology of accountability, empowered by the moral injunction to account for the dispersal of dollars deriving from Australian taxpayers. Students were enjoined to co-pay for their own tertiary education, since this was assumed to be the basis of later class privilege. These processes, set in motion during the *longue durée* of Labor government from 1983 to 1996, were intensified when the conservative coalition government came to power, under John Howard. Under the previous Minister for Education, David Kemp, and the present incumbent, Brendan Nelson, lesser state provision was routinely accompanied by greater state intrusion (see Kemp 1999; 2001; Marginson 2002).

### **Formulaic Performances: The New DEST Regime in Research**

As a result of policies announced under Kemp's white paper of 1999, *Knowledge and Innovation*, a new performance-based system of funding research was introduced. This established two funding schemes: the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS) and the Research Training Scheme

(RTS), the combined aim of which was to 'recognise and reward those institutions that support excellence and diverse research activities and provide high-quality research training environments'. These became operative from 1 January 2002. The Department of Education, Science and Training now funds universities according to formulae based on undergraduate and graduate student enrolments and completions, competitive external research grants awarded and publications. I will not bore you with the arcane complexities of these formulae and their interaction. But I do want to detail the parameters of the formulae for the IGS and the relative weighting of its components. Allocations are based on

- research income (collected nationally through the Higher Education Research Data Collection [HERDC]), weighted at 60 per cent;
- commonwealth-funded research student load (excluding international students), weighted at 30 per cent; and
- research publications (data also collected through HERDC), weighted at 10 per cent.

I note the hefty weighting towards success in gaining income from competitive research funds (including the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council funded by the Commonwealth) and the greatly increased importance of *Australian* graduate enrolment and completions ('research training' in the new parlance). These figure in both the IGS and RTS formulae and have become crucial areas of growth for all universities, a feat more easily accomplished by research-intensive universities, such as my own. The increased importance conferred on research training was, however, accompanied by stringent new

regulations on the period for which graduate students could be funded. Efficient and parsimonious ‘training’ was deemed newly critical; there had to be a faster ‘throughput’ of students. Thus, for doctoral students the period considered to be ‘on course’ was reduced to a maximum of three and a half years. Students still completing their theses beyond that time were not supported by scholarships, and moreover should not be counted as enrolled. Cost centres were to be penalised for late-completing students, since the large sums of money paid to universities on completion (and then passed, after taxes, onto academic units) were not paid in these instances. I have elsewhere intimated the impact of these new policies on graduate education in anthropology in Australia (Jolly and Jamieson 2002; and see more generally Marginson 2002).

The other feature of these formulae I want to highlight here is the tiny weight attached to publications. These account for a miniscule 10 per cent in one formula (the IGS). The rationale for this is that publications are much harder to count and assess than student numbers or grant dollars. This is clearly the case. There are huge problems in assessing the quality and not just the quantity of publications: for example, in agreeing on what the most influential presses and journals might be in each field, in using citation indices as an index of influence, and on adjudging the relative values of different genres of publication—books, journal articles, chapters, creative works, patents—which are often divergent across different scholarly fields. Still, the weighting of publications to a mere 10 per cent of one formula risks demeaning this important academic responsibility (even as research publications remain a crucial index of *internal* performance and a privileged, perduring criterion in promotion—see below).

Although DEST seems to have reduced publications to an unreliable or a refractory measure of performance, that has not hindered the collection of vast archives of information on research publications. There is an extraordinarily detailed national system for recording publications, counting their relative weight and auditing the collection of that process. Each year, throughout the months of November and December, academics all over Australia are engaged heavily in the processes of annual reporting to their institutions and in the collection of DEST data. This entails not just a simple list of the books and papers published in each cost centre but also marshalling them into serried ranks of significance and numerical value: refereed single-authored books, journal articles, chapters in edited collections, conference papers, patents and refereed designs are all considered and ranked. Conference papers can be counted if they have been refereed, but books intended for teaching, like undergraduate textbooks, cannot. This is rationalised by the logic that they are mere summations of existing knowledge rather than creations of new knowledge (a rationale that might exclude some journal articles too!). ‘Items written for the general population, or translations of previously published work, or collections of previously published work’ are expressly excluded. Edited books and creative works are difficult to include. Books must be published by commercial publishers, not university or government departments. To give you a sense of the ‘tyranny of numbers’ entailed in such exercises I offer the ANU summary of these DEST specifications, and a specific example of the methodology for how to weight a book chapter (Appendices 1 and 2).

As well as this process of compilation and adjudication, there are also complex ‘rituals of verification’ (Strathern 2000: 3), whereby ISBN or ISSN numbers must be

recorded, the number of chapters in edited collections noted, the editorial pages which assure journals *are* refereed stored, and statements signed by all authors accepting their responsibility for the sole or joint authorship of all this new knowledge. I am extremely fortunate to be assisted in this compilation by a superb and meticulous research assistant and dedicated workers in our central administration. But the months of November and December are still enormously cluttered with the onerous demands of these reports and associated audits. These reports are compulsory. If they are not given to government on time, funding can be withdrawn and past allocations may need to be repaid.

Let me now consider how these funding formulae imposed by DEST resonate internally in an institution—the one I know best, the ANU. Here we see both echoes of and dissonances from the language of accountability emanating from DEST.

### **ANU Echoes and Dissonances: Planning and Performance Reviews and Promotions Criteria**

Such echoes and dissonances from DEST funding formulae are perhaps most evident in the annual processes of planning and performance reviews and promotions. Both require academic staff to report their achievements under several criteria: research, teaching, service to the university and service to the community. Both also require the academic to engage in that process of ‘self-auditing’, which involves both forward projection (plans for the future) and backward projection (accounting for what has been achieved and what has not). The planning and performance review is an annual requirement for all staff in association with their academic supervisor. The latter is enjoined to review the staff member’s performance in a spirit

of dialogue and mentoring (see Shore and Wright 2000), but the process is imbued with the potential of great bureaucratic power—since the supervisor can make a positive or a negative report, can support pay increments and promotions or not, and at worst can report inadequate performance which might ultimately lead to redundancy. The staff member has the power of a rejoinder on the comments of the supervisor, and perhaps the immediate supervisor’s comments will be countered by differing opinions of their own supervisors. Such reviews are perforce kept in confidence, even from the university auditors, according to Professor James Fox, presently Director of the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (pers. comm., November 2003). Still, auditing constructs extremely hierarchical patterns of academic dialogue, rather than being an innocent project of self-reflection and ‘strategic planning’.

Promotions are less directly dependent on the opinions of academic supervisors, since they can be initiated by the individual and ultimately depend on the collective adjudication of both local and central promotions committees. In my experience of serving on one such committee for several years (the Central Promotions Committee delegated by BIAS [the Board of the Institute of Advanced Studies]),<sup>6</sup> my sense is that such committees are extremely hard-working and do their best to make judicious decisions on the basis of mountains of material presented: applications from candidates, reports from academic supervisors, directors and deans and, of course, the all-important anonymous referees.

But there is a dissonance between the criteria used for promotion and those used by DEST in its formulaic assessments of performance. The criteria differ for those engaged in undergraduate teaching, graduate education and research, and those engaged only in the latter two activities

(staff in the IAS [Institute of Advanced Studies] and, increasingly, research-only staff funded by the ARC [Australian Research Council] and other bodies). For the latter staff, there are four crucial criteria: research output and grant success; graduate education; service to the university (administration, committees); and service to the profession and community. Staff are at liberty to vary the percentages allocated to each in relation to their own perceived strengths and weaknesses. But, the overwhelming significance given to winning research grants and to educating graduate students in the DEST formulae is not reflected in the internal promotions criteria. As we might properly expect of an institution that is proud of its international research reputation, the pre-eminent emphasis here is on research publications, both quality and quantity, as reflected in the words of referees, book reviewers and, especially apropos the natural sciences, citation indices and patents. It is only at more senior levels of academic appointment that winning large external research grants is seen as crucial and given comparable credit. And even there, scholars might potentially be promoted to senior positions, even if they have devoted very little time to graduate education.

Thus, although there are both external and internal audits, there is a dissonance between the criteria favoured by DEST and those privileged in internal university decisions. I personally rather favour the far heavier weighting given by the ANU to research publications, since large research grants are not so important in themselves but, rather, provide the means to *do* quality research and to publish. Still, the gap between the national formulae by which we are funded and the local formulae by which we are assessed and promoted makes for cognitive dissonance for individual academics, administrators and the collectivities of the institution. I now turn

to the particular challenges that the federal government's 'reform package' poses for graduate education in anthropology.

### **The Fate of Graduate Education in Anthropology—In Australia and at the ANU**

I have elsewhere written in some detail about the impact of these new DEST provisions on graduate education in anthropology in Australia. Let me quote from an earlier paper co-authored with Tina Jamieson. On the basis of a national survey that we carried out, of students enrolled in higher degrees in anthropology in Australia in 2000, and a comparison with the situation in the US, we concluded that

Compared to laboratory or library-based research, ethnographic research, especially when done in an unfamiliar locale in a foreign language, poses immense challenges for completion in three and a half years. With increased government emphasis on faster completion times, there may be pressure to shorten the period of fieldwork to allow for the necessary analysis and writing within three or three and a half years. (...) Rather than consolidating a move towards an innovative nation we would be 'dumbing down' by accepted international standards. The model of the doctorate in anthropology graduate education needs critical review, but a reduction in the time for field research and analysis would be a regressive, not a progressive, move (Jolly and Jamieson 2002: 57).<sup>7</sup>

At the ANU we are fending off the more deleterious consequences of the DEST formulae, through an internal bureaucratic accommodation that allows slower completion times in fieldwork-based disciplines like anthropology. But this entails a minimal change from a cut-off at three and a half years to four. Other strategies are also being devised to increase the pace of completion: a more intensive and collective phase of theoretical and methodological preparation for the field; a preference

for students who arrive well prepared in terms of language and cultural immersion in their proposed field site; and a proliferation of thesis-writing groups designed to assist students, alongside the advice of supervisors and advisors on panels. Still, graduate student representatives reported increasing levels of stress among doctoral scholars because of the new surveillance and punishment regimes about completion times. Some also felt that the expectations that they had for greater autonomy as graduate scholars were being compromised by increased expectations of attendance at the proliferating series of seminars, which were in effect coursework, although not officially designated as such.

Another unfortunate effect of the new DEST formulae is the differential weight it gives to Australian and New Zealand versus overseas scholars. The ANU has a long tradition of attracting high-quality overseas students, from North America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific, especially. These are supported by special scholarships (IPRS [International Postgraduate Research Scholarships] and ANU scholarships) the stipends for which are comparable to the APAs (Australian Postgraduate Awards) available to Australian students. But overseas students, unlike Australian and New Zealand citizens, must pay tuition fees up front, and so they need to compete not just for stipends but for fee-waiver scholarships, which are increasingly rare. Moreover, in the DEST formulae, overseas students prove not to be so valuable in the budget as local students. They are not counted in an ongoing way as part of those students who are undergoing 'research training'. It is only when their degrees are completed that funds flow, in a trickle over several years, to the relevant institution and ultimately, in reduced amounts, down to the level of department or centre where the work was done. And so in recent rounds at the ANU we have been

witnessing a dramatic decrease of scholarships available for overseas students (from seventeen in 2003 to thirteen in 2004) in comparison to an increasing number of those available to Australian and New Zealand students. VC Chubb is adamant that every such student with a first-class honours should receive either an APA or an ANU scholarship. This seems reasonable enough, but the divergent trends in the numbers of international and national scholarships has the potential to compromise the principle of merit by a stress on the criterion of nationality in the funding of talented students. This disparity is reinforced by changes in migration policies which require international students to leave two weeks after submission of their thesis, unless a job is offered in Australia.

### **National Research Priorities: Naturalising the Privilege of the Natural Sciences**

Another invidious effect of the government's new 'reform package' is the widening of the gap between the natural sciences and humanities and social sciences in terms of sheer research dollars awarded by government. This was compounded in the process of setting 'National Research Priorities', first for the ARC (Australian Research Council) in 2001 and then in 2002 for all government sources of research funding.<sup>8</sup> Those established by the ARC in 2001 were exclusively in the natural sciences, and privileged nanotechnology and reproductive biology. In the first instance, the Education Minister Brendan Nelson declared that in 2002 the priorities would be confined to the natural sciences, and that humanities and social sciences priorities would be established later in 2004. But, when that occasioned howls of protest from the Academies of Humanities and the Social Sciences and many acade-

mic staff, it was decided to try to incorporate them alongside the natural sciences. In the end their inclusion proved residual at best.

The process of establishing these priorities in 2002 involved seemingly open and public processes of consultation (electronically through websites and in public meetings) and frantic behind the scenes lobbying, especially of the government-appointed Chief Scientist and the committee of experts chosen to advise on National Research Priorities. If the internal process of establishing these priorities at the ANU was an accurate reflection, the work involved was immense: a hugely complicated collection of diverse suggestions coming from every academic area; a sieving for overlap and duplication; and then strenuous attempts to meld them into four cognate themes, with text drafted by four committees, established to work in association with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. As is the case with most of Nelson's reviews of higher education, over the last year or so, the time frame given was pre-emptory and the bureaucratic effort involved frantic. As it transpired, the four priorities suggested by the ANU came very close those finally announced by government. These were ultimately more like moral statements about the fragility of collective futures, rather than robust or researchable projects (see Strathern this volume). They were: An Environmentally Sustainable Australia; Promoting and Maintaining Good Health; Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries; Safeguarding Australia.

### **Keeping the Bureaucratic Peace or Making Bureaucratic War?**

In conclusion let me try to situate this very specific material about Australian universities and my admittedly parochial case

study of my own institution, the ANU, in the context of our broad themes about audit cultures and the politics of accountability. There is little doubt that Australian higher education is, as elsewhere, increasingly pervaded by neoliberal values and subject to the hegemony of 'audit cultures'. As elsewhere, here too economic efficiency has become a new morality. But the way in which the politics of accountability is negotiated has a particular national character, and the language of the audit, perhaps has an antipodean inflection.

First, I want to stress again the importance of neoliberalism in higher education originating from a Labor government rather than from a conservative one. This bipartisan political consensus not only makes opposition difficult, as Pusey (1991) argued, but neoliberal Labor antecedents in a way license the present conservative government to go even further. This can be seen in my opening example, in the present political struggle to make further funding contingent on a new industrial relations regime, where opposition to the collective bargaining power of unions is sanctified by recourse to the idea of individual 'choice'. But the large gap between the conservative neoliberal rhetoric about reduced state power and the sanctity of the individual and the reality of the massive growth of state surveillance and quotidian intrusion in the higher education sector is becoming more obvious and politically sensitive.

Secondly, in comparison with the situation in the UK described by Shore and Wright (2000), government intrusion into the internal practices of universities has not been so mediated by the use of councils or regulatory bodies staffed by academics themselves—as in the work of the committees of Academic Audits (AAs), Teaching Quality Assessments (TQAs) and Research Assessment Exercises (RAEs), that 'panopticon of inspections' experi-

enced in UK universities from the 1990s. Although there is much debate at present about adopting a version of the UK model, federal governments have regularly rejected the idea of a higher education council and rather, have imposed their will more directly through the use of the auditing requirements policed by DEST and through the periodic realignment of funding formulae based on such 'performances'. This uncertainty, of course, has generated anxiety, but not always normative compliance. Indeed, spirited complaints about the dramatic reduction of academic autonomy and cynicism about the fluidity of funding formulae are regularly expressed by senior executives such as vice-chancellors as much as by other academic staff. The AVCC, the council of all Australian Vice-Chancellors, is saturated by the rivalry and competition that government policy wilfully provokes, but there have also been important moments of collective criticism and resistance. The use of a more direct 'coercive accountability' may in a paradoxical way reduce normative compliance.

Third, however, I do not wish to downplay how audit cultures have become 'business as usual' in Australian universities. Here, too, the dialectic of 'external subjection and internal subjectification' is clearly at work. Here, too, 'seemingly dull routine and bureaucratic practices' have had profound effects on social life in universities (Shore and Wright 2002: 57). Our professional lives as anthropologists and as scholars have been dramatically remoulded by the way in which we are perforce engaged in processes of self-auditing (see Argyrou 2000 on 'self-accountability'). But I suspect that the configuration of this dialectic has a rather different shape in Australia than in UK or the US. At present there seems to be more risk of bureaucratic war being unleashed by aggressive neoliberalism than of keeping the bureau-

cratic peace. And, with the return of the Coalition government to federal power on 9 October 2004, it seems that aggressive neoliberal attacks on universities are sure to intensify.

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## Notes

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1. In the spectrum of Australian politics, the Liberal Party is right wing or conservative. In comparison with political parties in the UK, it is closer to the Tories than to the Liberal Democrats. The National Party is a party grounded in rural Australia, which particularly represents the interests of farmers and graziers. The Liberal-National Party coalition, in power since 1996, has adopted strong policies against refugees, joined the war on terror and the war in Iraq, eroded gains made in the area of native title and reconciliation with indigenous Australians, promoted private medical insurance at the expense of the nationalised health system Medicare, and while increasing support for mothers who stay at home, has made child care almost prohibitively expensive for working parents. It may move to restrict abortions in this term.
2. The legislation also aimed to reduce the size of university governing councils and to prohibit members of parliament from serving on them. It also proposed to charge students real rather than nominal interest rates on their loans under the HECS scheme, but to increase the threshold of income at which loans would be paid back to \$A35,000 per annum (Higher Education Supplement, *The Australian*, 5 November 2003).
3. Subsequently a Senate inquiry into the proposed legislation recommended outright rejection by senators. The federal government tried to woo the votes of independent senators from Tasmania with enticements and concessions to universities in that state. (Higher Education Supplement, *The Australian*, 5 November 2003). The legislation was subsequently passed in

that parliamentary session, with dramatic amendments. However, the government was returned after an election on 9 October 2004 with an outright majority in the Senate. It is envisaged that legislation 'reforming' the present state of industrial relations, outlawing student unions, further increasing student fees, introducing teaching-only universities and concentrating the power of higher education at federal rather than the state level is likely to be introduced in the next year or so. Brendan Nelson remains the Minister in the Parliament.

4. There are presently three private universities in the national system: Bond University in Queensland, Notre Dame in Western Australia and the multi-campus Australian Catholic University. However, since the signing of the Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2003/4, Carnegie Mellon is establishing a university in Adelaide from 2006. This, rather than an internal concentration of research funds, may be the main reason for the government proposal of 'teaching-only' universities.
5. Pusey based his study in large part on interviews with 215 public servants from the Senior Executive Service, comprising nearly half of that population in the key Commonwealth departments. He stressed that such top public servants not only implement policy but help to formulate it, broker political interests and articulate national ideals and goals (Pusey 1991: 2). The senior officers in the high-prestige departments of Prime Minister and Cabinet and Treasury and Finance were typically younger male economists, educated in elite Protestant private schools and then in departments of economics where the curriculum was dominated by neo-classical theory and technically oriented practice. Pusey found that these influential young men had strong commitments to 'less state provision' and 'more individual initiative'.
6. I always joked with colleagues as to the aptness of this acronym, since this Board was very male dominated. On many occasions I was one of only three or four women present in a room of about forty colleagues.
7. Our comparison with the US was strategic since this reduction in fieldwork time has already occurred in the UK. However, the three-year limit on the doctorate there is to some extent ameliorated by the potential of additional funding for a year of language and cultural immersion (Tim Bayliss-Smith, personal communication, October 2004).
8. See Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia 1998a and 1998b, and Australian Academy of Humanities 1998, for earlier reflections on such gaps.

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## Appendix 1: Summary of DEST Specifications for the Main Categories

All publications must meet the following requirements:

- previously unpublished
- scholarly research i.e. pure basic research, strategic basic research, applied research or experimental development, written for the academic community
- claimed author/s were members of staff or students at the ANU when the research leading to the publication was conducted
- was published in 2003

### A1: Book

- must have an ISBN and be bound or packaged and offered for sale
- published by a commercial publisher whose **core business** is publishing
- unlikely to be included if it's a textbook, edited book, creative work, translation, anthology, revision or new edition

### B1: Book chapter

- the book must have an ISBN and be bound or packaged and offered for sale
- published by a commercial publisher whose **core business** is publishing
- unlikely to be if it is part of a textbook, creative work, translation or anthology
- the chapter is not a revision or new edition
- unlikely to be included if it's an entry in a reference work, foreword or brief introduction

### C1: Journal article

- the Journal has an ISSN
- the Journal is refereed, shown by
  - its inclusion in *ISI*, *Ulrich*, or the ANU journals list, **or**
  - the journal states that contributions are refereed or peer reviewed **or**
  - the editor states that contributions are refereed or peer reviewed **or**
  - a referee's assessment indicating the full paper was assessed
  - the article is an invited article in a refereed journal
- unlikely to be included if it is a professional article, newspaper or magazine article, advisory, letter to editor or book review

### E1: Conference publication

- full written version of conference paper (not an abstract or extended abstract)
- published (volume of proceedings, book, journal, monograph, CD Rom, organisational web site)
- conference of international or national significance
- refereed—either:
  - publication states full papers refereed or
  - organiser/editor states full papers refereed or
  - referee's assessment indicates full paper assessed or
  - keynote address
- unlikely to be included if it's a handout available to conference attendees only, minor conference, poster presentation

## Appendix 2: DEST Specifications, Book Chapter Calculation Methodology

### Calculation of Weighting

To count book chapters, use the following methodology.

The calculation should be done for each author, then aggregated for all authors at the university, to obtain a total score for contributions to the book.

The first chapter contributed to by an author is given a value of 1. Remaining chapters in the book contributed to by the same author are scored on a pro-rata basis.

#### *Step 1*

Identify a chapter to which the author contributes alone, or with as few other contributors as possible.

The value of that chapter for the author is 1 divided by the total number of contributors to that chapter.

#### *Step 2*

The value of the remaining chapters for the author is calculated by adding the share of each remaining chapter contributed by the author, then multiplying by 4 and dividing by one less than the number of chapters in the book.

#### *Step 3*

The total value of the book for the author is derived by adding the figures derived from step 1 and step 2.

#### **Example A:**

In a book of 16 chapters, author A contributes 1 solely-authored chapter.

#### *Step 1*

The value is 1 divided by 1 equals 1.

#### *Step 2*

There are no further chapters to count.

*Step 3*

1 plus 0 equals 1. Author A's contribution is worth 1.

**Example B:**

In a book of 16 chapters, author B contributes 2 chapters alone, 1 chapter in conjunction with 1 other author, 1 chapter in conjunction with 2 other authors and 1 chapter in conjunction with 4 other authors.

*Step 1*

One of the chapters contributed alone should be counted here. The value is 1 divided by 1 equals 1.

*Step 2*

The author has contributed a whole, a half, a third, and a fifth respectively to four of the fifteen remaining chapters in the book. Thus the value of those other chapters is  $(1+0.5+0.33+0.2)*4/(16-1) = 0.54$ .

*Step 3*

The total value of the book for the author is 1.54 (1 derived from step 1 plus 0.54 from step 2).

**Example C:**

In a book of 21 chapters, author B contributes 1 chapter in conjunction with 1 other author and 1 chapter in conjunction with 2 other authors.

*Step 1*

The chapter contributed with 1 other author is the one with least contributors. Choose this chapter for step 1. The value of this chapter is 0.5 (chapter value of 1 divided by 2 contributors).

*Step 2*

The other chapter contributed is worth 0.33 multiplied by 4 divided by 20 (20 being the number of chapters remaining after the one given credit in step 1), equals 0.07.

*Step 3*

The total value of the book to the author is 0.57 (0.5 derived from step 1 plus 0.07 derived from step 2).

**Example D:**

In a book of 21 chapters, author D contributes 2 chapters in collaboration with 1 other, 3 chapters in conjunction with 3 others, and 1 with 4 others.

*Step 1*

Count a chapter shared with 1 other here. Value 0.5.

*Step 2*

The value of the other chapters is  $(0.5+0.25+0.25+0.25+0.2)*4/(21-1) = 0.29$ .

*Step 3*

Total value is  $0.5+0.29 = 0.79$ .

If authors C and D are contributors from the same university to the same book, the university will be credited with 1.36 (0.57+0.79) in category B from that book.

DEST has placed a spreadsheet on the web site which universities should use to calculate automatically the value of an author's contribution to an edited book.