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## Australian News

# Kevin Rudd – Annual Burgmann College Lecture Burgmann College

2009 Annual Burgmann College Lecture  
Burgmann College  
Australian National University  
27 August 2009

Thank you for the Honorary Fellowship and for that welcome.

I acknowledge the First Australians on whose land we meet, and whose cultures we celebrate as among the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

As we all know, this college is named after Ernest Henry Burgmann, the Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn for almost a quarter of a century from 1934 to 1960 - "Burgie", as he was known to most.

He had a couple of other nicknames, too.

The tabloids dubbed him Australia's "Red Bishop" in the 1930s and 40s.

Almost every newspaper in the country called him a "meddlesome beast" in 1954.

But that was only because a young wire journalist misheard the government Whip in the House when he described Burgmann as "a most meddlesome priest" during a rowdy parliamentary exchange.

Burgmann believed there was a role for Christian engagement in the political and public and intellectual debate. He was part pastor, part prophet, part political activist, 100 per cent stirrer - and a man of religion who was passionate about education, about social justice, and about politics.

Throughout the Great Depression, Burgmann was a constant burr in the side of government, prodding them to help the masses of unemployed, who had lost their jobs through global forces beyond their control and through no fault of their own. Agitating governments to supply people in rural and regional Australia with basic services like water and electricity. And urging all Australians to realise that their destiny no longer lay with the British empire but with the Asia-Pacific region of which they were part.

In the 1950s, he was named in parliament after publicly advocating a "no" vote against Menzies' referendum to outlaw the Communist Party.

His partial autobiography, *"The Education of An Australian"*, was in the top 10 bestsellers in 1944.

Yet it still came as a surprise to the Anglican members of the inter-church committee which founded this college when "Burgmann" easily won the vote for the name of this College.

Burgmann was a man of great passions, but education was among his greatest passions - a passion shared by the Government that I lead.



KEVIN RUDD



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The Government recognises education's leading role in laying the foundations for long-term recovery from the global economic recession.

We are currently dealing with the worst set of global economic conditions since the Great Depression, and we have been wrestling with enormous macro-economic changes thrown up by the global financial crisis.

The good news is that Australia has so far weathered this crisis better than most countries. Of all the major advanced economies, we have had the strongest growth, lower unemployment than all but one of those economies, the lowest deficit, the lowest debt levels, and we are the only major advanced economy to avoid a technical recession.

That's because the Government took strong, early, decisive action in financial markets, in stimulus plans and in nation-building for recovery to cushion Australia from the worst of the global downturn and support Australian jobs.

Maintaining macro-economic growth against the rest of the world is one thing. Continuing to move ahead with micro-economic reform is another.

In my recent essay, I wrote about our productivity growth agenda to drive Australia's future global competitiveness. We are targeting five key priorities to lift long-term productivity growth:

Ending the blame game with the States and Territories –with a process of regulatory and competition reform through the COAG process;

Reforming the process for development of productive national infrastructure and lifting the national investment in the infrastructure of the 21st century;

Investing in innovation, particularly through the national high-speed broadband network;

Tax reform, beginning with the most comprehensive review of the tax system in more than three decades; and

Investing in an education revolution, to build the most highly skilled, best trained and best educated workforce in the world.

These are all ways to drive long-term productivity growth. Education builds a more productive workforce and empowers individuals to reach their full potential.

It begins in early childhood where the foundations for future skills are formed.

The American Nobel Prize winning economist and Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, James Heckman, has long been an advocate of early childhood education. Heckman's research has shown that early childhood education has positive outcomes in areas ranging from crime rates and teenage pregnancy to health and salary levels.

As Heckman notes, the evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of the Perry Preschool Project in Michigan showed that low-income children who were receiving quality child care and early education services experienced substantially better life outcomes than those who did not have the benefit of early learning opportunities.

The study found that through to age 40, and this is in US dollars, there was a return of \$17 for every \$1 spent. That is an extraordinary return on investment, and it shows the extraordinary importance of education.

Education investment is where good economic policy meets good social policy, offering better lives and better opportunities for a generation of young kids.

As Professor Heckman recently said, investment in early education during times of economic adversity is "the best type of stimulus package". That's because it provides both an immediate boost to jobs, and long-term benefits to the economy. And that's the thinking that has underpinned the Government's investment in the education revolution, an increased investment in education of around 50 per cent more in real terms over the current five year period compared to the previous five years.

Analysis by the Dutch economist Erik Canton suggests that an increase by one year of the average education level of the labour force would increase productivity by 7 to 10 per cent in the short term and by 11 to 15 per cent in the long term, and research by the OECD shows that if average education levels of the working-age populations were increased by just one year, the economy would be 3 to 6 per cent larger.

Education is also critically important to address the risk of social disadvantage. We know that the most vulnerable

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workers in an economic downturn are those who are the least skilled, who face the longest period of unemployment and the greatest difficulty in finding secure full-time work.

Creating the best-educated, best-skilled, best-trained workforce in the world is the core vision of the Australian Government's productivity agenda. The Government's vision for the education revolution starts with early childhood education and progresses through primary to secondary.

Since the 2007 election, the Government has:

Doubled the investment in Australian schools to \$62.1 billion;

Undertaken the biggest school modernisation project in Australia's history;

Invested almost \$1 billion to enable universal pre-school for all children by 2013;

Committed \$2 billion to guarantee a 1:1 student to computer ratio for students in Year 9 to 12 in every school in the nation;

Begun rolling out state-of-the-art Trades Training Centres across the country;

Invested \$550 million to attract and keep the best and brightest teachers;

Responded to the Bradley Review of higher education with additional funding of \$2.2 billion and uncapping the number of university places.

One of the proudest reforms of past Labor Governments is the way they have opened up educational pathways for successive generations of working people who otherwise would never have had those opportunities - from basic schools and skills training in the early 20th century, to the major training programs for soldiers returning from war in the 1940s, and of course to the Whitlam Government's decision to open up universities to all Australians, regardless of their background or income.

As a result of that decision, a generation of working class kids got the opportunity to have a university education, many of them, the first kid in the family to have that chance. Even today, I meet people who are now in charge of industries, departments and public institutions who tell me that they have got to where they are because Gough Whitlam unlocked the university gates and let them in. And I often say to them – me too.

But the challenge of making university accessible to every young Australian didn't end in the 1970s. Significant challenges still exist today.

There can be no education revolution without a matching revolution in equality of educational opportunity for all Australians, whatever their background, wherever they come from. Central to the Government's education revolution is a determination to make opportunities available to all Australians.

From early childhood to schools to higher education, our reforms have focused on providing all young people, but particularly those with lesser means, with access to the opportunities high quality learning offers.

In this financial year alone, we are spending \$3.6 billion on early childhood education and child care. This will support some 800,000 working families across our nation.

We have made child care more affordable for all families by increasing the Child Care Rebate from 30 to 50 per cent of parents' out-of-pocket expenses. We know this has made a huge difference to parents.

A recent ABS survey found that child care costs have fallen by almost 20 per cent over the last year. Compare that to a 13 per cent increase in child care costs the previous year.

The education revolution includes significant funds to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to high quality education:

\$1.1 billion to provide additional resources to our poorest schools for extra teaching support, homework classes and other learning resources;

\$540 million to provide extra tuition to students who are struggling to meet literacy and numeracy benchmarks;

\$2 billion to put computers on the desks of every student in years 9-12 - knowing that many young people come from

families without the resources to purchase technology to support their children's learning; and

\$2.5 billion to construct trades training centres to help those young people at risk of leaving school early to complete their education and gain a trade qualification.

We know that students from poorer families are more likely to leave school early - transferring their parents' poverty to a new generation. That is why we are determined to see school retention rates rise to 90 per cent by 2015.

Our reforms to higher education are similarly aimed at opening up our universities to the thousands of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Today just one in three Australian 25 to 34 year olds has a bachelor's qualification. Too few young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds reach university or gain a degree.

The Bradley Review found a number of groups of young Australians are significantly under-represented in higher education in Australia. Whether it is participation of Australians from remote areas, Indigenous Australians, or those from low socio-economic backgrounds, there is a constant pattern of under-representation in Australian higher education. That is why we are investing \$491 million over the next four years to uncap the number of public university places from 2012, allowing universities to offer enrolment to all eligible students.

We want to open our universities to an additional 80,000 student places over the four years from 2010 to 2013, allowing about 50,000 additional students to participate in higher education. That is why we are also investing \$437 million over four years to lift the enrolments of students from low income families by 55,000 by 2020. We will do this by funding our universities to build robust partnerships with disadvantaged schools and by rewarding them for attracting and retaining low SES students.

We came to office determined to provide young people who did not want to attend university with the opportunity to learn a trade.

We have delivered with 711,000 training places for school leavers, the unemployed and those in jobs who may be at risk of redundancy from technological and economic change.

Our Jobs and Training Compact also targets Australians most at risk from unemployment in 20 targeted local areas across Australia.

Specifically, our Compact with Young Australians requires young Australians under the age of 25 to be earning or learning – either in full time employment or in full time education or training.

All these measures are intended to guarantee that as the education revolution rolls out across Australia, we put in the maximum effort to make the benefits of that revolution available to every young Australian, because we believe passionately in the power of education to transform a person's life opportunities.

It was a similar vision for the power of education that inspired the establishment of the Australian National University by the Chifley Government in 1946.

The ANU is the only Australian university to be established by a federal Act of Parliament. What you may not know – as we battle the challenges thrown at us by the current global financial crisis – is that the ANU could have been established decades earlier had it not been for an earlier global meltdown.

The idea first started kicking around in the late 1920s, with calls for "Australia's Oxford" – a great national research and residential university, where students from all around the nation would come to study honours degrees or pursue postgraduate research.

The Cabinet of the time went as far as setting up a committee to investigate the idea. The committee agreed in principle that the university was needed, but they could not agree on whether it should be a teaching university for the Canberra community, or a post-graduate research institute working closely with the then Council for Scientific and Industrial Research - the CSIR.

Discussions were heated, battlelines were drawn, and those advocating a teaching institute – to be called The Canberra University – had the numbers, but before the final vote could be taken, Wall Street crashed. The world plunged into the Great Depression. And the CSIR decided that there was not much point in spending the 50 pounds needed to bring the committee together for its last meeting.

So the idea languished through the Depression and most of World War Two, but in 1943, the Curtin Government – at the

prompting of HC “Nugget” Coombs – took up the vision for a national centre of higher learning, and on August 1, 1946, under Prime Minister Chifley, the federal parliament passed *The Australian National University Act 1946-47*.

But the vote was far from unanimous. John Leckie, an Opposition Senator from Victoria, described the vision for the ANU as a “synthetic, provincial university”. Adair Blain, the member for the Northern Territory, feared that “ratbag” views would infest the University through the inclusion of the Research School of Social Sciences. And the then Leader of Her Majesty’s Opposition, one Robert Menzies, confessed “to a mild feeling of horror” at the university’s name.

According to Mr Menzies, as he was at the time, it should have been called The Canberra University. He told the House:

*“I cannot imagine anybody becoming extraordinarily enthusiastic about the proposed title. If institutions of this kind are to be real, and not merely scientific shops, they must develop some esprit de corps, their own character and colour, and make their own mark upon those who pass through them.”*

Six decades down the track, there’s no doubt that this university is a national treasure, and has made its mark on those fortunate enough to have passed through it.

And there is a pattern here. The Fisher Government – the first national Labor government to win a parliamentary majority anywhere in the world – decided that Canberra would be our national capital. Four decades later, the Curtin and Chifley Labor Governments decided that our national capital needed a national university.

The wording of the Act which established this University was pedestrian at best. It described the functions of the ANU as:

- (a) To encourage, and provide facilities for, post-graduate research and study, both generally and in relation to subjects of national importance to Australia;*
- (b) To provide facilities for university education for persons who elect to avail themselves of those facilities and are eligible to do so;*
- (c) Subject to the Statutes, to award and confer degrees and diplomas.*

But the vision behind it was grand.

In his second reading speech, the Minister for Post-War Reconstruction, John Dedman, spoke of an institution that would:

*“bring credit to Australia, advance the cause of learning and research in general, and take its rightful place amongst the great universities of the world.”*

And as Nugget Coombs wrote in his autobiography, *“Trial Balance”*:

*“The university was therefore to be the most bountiful of the sources from which would flow the intellectual energy which was to power the peaceful revolution, ushering in the ‘century of the common man’, which leaders of all political persuasions here and abroad had promised.”*

And 60 years on, the ANU has an important role in a new education revolution. It already ranks as Australia’s leading university by global university ranking systems, and the research achievements of the ANU speak for themselves – including two Nobel Prizes in medical research.

The time has now come – 60 years on – to discuss where the ANU should be in another 40 years, when this great institution celebrates its centenary. Consistent with its Charter, how do we in the 21st Century imagine a future vision for Australia’s national university?

Earlier this year I announced that the Australian Government will be developing compacts with each of the nation’s universities. Among other things, these compacts will set out the arrangements for distributing performance-based funding for teaching and research activity.

The ANU’s Vice-Chancellor Ian Chubb has been a strong advocate for these compacts because of their potential to foster specialisation, diversity and excellence. These reforms will herald a new era for the operation and funding of Australian higher education.

Compacts will play a key role in implementing our reforms and ensuring improved outcomes from increased Commonwealth investment. Our compact with the ANU will be especially important given the ANU’s special place as a strategic endowment for our nation.

The Australian Government’s vision for the ANU is to build on this great national endowment. The Compact that we sign

with the ANU will reflect the status of the ANU as a university of national significance.

The Compact will help ensure that Australia retains and builds capacity in academic areas and disciplines of national importance. It will be their intrinsic importance, consistent with its legislative charter, that drives the future profile of ANU, not just the ebb and flow of undergraduate demand or popularity.

ANU is a research-rich university of high quality. It is a University with a high proportion of graduate students, particularly PhD students. And it is a University where the richness of its research and the quality of its performance creates a unique educational environment in Australia.

Over and above this Compact, it is my vision that a new re-invigorated strategic relationship is established between the ANU and the Australian Government. A relationship that puts education and research at the centre of building robust public policy. A relationship that grows excellence in policy analysis, policy advice and public sector strategic leadership.

A strategic relationship would be based around an agreement between the Australian Government and the ANU that sets out the overarching arrangements to govern and guide the relationship. This agreement would provide the foundation to undertake joint initiatives in key areas such as public service training, the study of Asia and national security.

In the 1930s, Ernest Burgmann wrote that Canberra:

*"... long remained an offence to vast numbers of Australians who heard of it with their ears but who had never seen it and strangely enough did not want to see it with their own eyes."*

But, he also added – perhaps with a premature sense of confidence:

*"This phase is passing."*

Canberra is known – sometimes disparagingly – as a public service town. Indeed, 37 per cent of the 160,000 members of the Australian Public Service live here. So it makes sense to harness the resources of our national university to enhance the administration of the Commonwealth.

There is good work being done through the collaborative Australia New Zealand School of Government, which is dedicated to promoting public sector leadership and policy.

The next challenge is how do we take that to the next level? How do we meet the future professional needs of our official community?

The public service is at present discussing its future challenges: improving the quality of public sector management, leadership, information technology systems, and budgeting and finance.

And these debates are of critical importance to the nation, because of the great burden of responsibility that rests on our public service.

What we need in Canberra is a much more robust and integrated exchange of ideas between our academics, our politicians and our public service, and more intensive professional preparation for senior roles in government. Imagine if this country engaged its academics in thinking about the way ahead for the public service with initiatives which, in their totality, would be like the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

Our bureaucrats and our politicians need to be challenged by the larger world of ideas and the best research and policy work being undertaken across the world. They need to be grappling with the great long term challenges to public policy:

How do we balance the roles of the market and the state, given the financial market implosions we have just witnessed?

What should our health system look like in 10, 20, 30 years time?

How do we deal with climate change and revolutionise the energy sources of the global economy?

How can we close the gap of Indigenous disadvantage?

How do we best prepare for the Asia-Pacific Century?

These are critical public policy challenges – but the answers do not necessarily lie only within the public service and elected politicians.

So what does this mean for an institution like the ANU?

At the moment, there are thick walls between academia and public administration. Between intellectuals and public policy practitioners. Between those with the deepest analytical understanding of the science of government and those who day to day practise that science here in Canberra and in state capitals and regional centres around Australia.

These thick walls prevent the flow of knowledge and experience between public policy practitioners and academic experts.

Academia should not be a life sentence.

This is not the case in the United States, for example, where these are much more merged communities. Where the independence of the academic community is respected, but its expertise is regularly called upon by governments for the greater public good.

Breaking down those barriers would enhance the quality of both government and centres of academic endeavour.

This is doubly necessary in a smaller country like Australia, where it is vital that we engage all elements of the national talent pool for the national good.

Our vision should also extend beyond our shores, to making Australia the global go-to place for the study of the vast and challenging continent of Asia, which is now challenging our future. The ANU already excels in the study of Asia – not just languages but history, culture, religion, politics, policy, international relations, and strategic and defence studies.

I have often said that my vision is for Australia to be the most Asia-literate country in the collective West. Given that this is the now century of the Asia Pacific, how do we make sure that this becomes a reality?

Recently, Michael Wesley, formerly of the Asia Institute at Griffith University and now the head of the Lowy Institute, published a report into the study of Asian languages in Australia. His conclusion was simple – we need to do much more.

As he noted:

*“Over three-quarters of Australians speak English only – making Australia the third most monolingual developed nation in the world.”*

This means that in a globalised world, Australia faces a skills shortfall: *“the ability to understand and operate in languages and cultures other than our own.”*

And in a globalised world if we do not fix this shortfall, we run the risk of falling behind.

Wesley noted that this is about more than just studying languages:

*“A comprehensive Asia literacy program must simultaneously teach the culture which the language articulates.”*

That means studying the history and modern culture; it means understanding the society in which the language is spoken.

The great institutions of the United States have strong Asian studies program, including Harvard, Yale and Berkeley. The ANU's Asian studies course was inspired in part by the vision of creating an Antipodean version of the London School of Oriental and African Studies.

Our question today is how do we take these models into the 21st century to create an unparalleled resource for both the nation – and the nation's official community in Canberra as well? How does the ANU – possibly in partnership with other universities and in partnership with the Australian Government – rise to this future challenge?

Because here in Canberra – the home to this nation's diplomatic officials, defence officials, trade officials and to the international diplomatic community – there is a practical need for this expertise to be harnessed in full.

I spoke before about the new strategic relationship between the Australian Government and the ANU. To spearhead this new relationship, I want to explore the establishment of a National Security College.

National security is now a very complex policy environment and senior officials need new sets of knowledge and skills to operate effectively and strategically within this new environment. Last December in my National Security Statement I announced the establishment of a national Security Executive Development Program.

The development of this program is underway, however I envisage that this be developed into a suite of world-leading courses that will be undertaken by senior officials working in the national security community.

I want the Program to develop a generation of senior executive officials who will have a shared understanding of the national security strategic environment, architecture and collaborative culture - and a shared understanding of the capabilities, priorities and challenges that exist across the national security community. Such a college would help develop the next generation of national security leaders and more broadly enhance strategic leadership in our community.

To give this program a "home" and recognised brand of excellence, some preliminary discussions have commenced with the ANU about the establishment of a National Security College as a joint venture established under our strategic relationship with the ANU. These initiatives, incorporating national security and public service excellence, would not only help generate the future leaders of the Australian public service.

The strategic relationship would also build the capabilities for university-based experts to support the Government and contribute to policy making. Preliminary discussions will explore models for how such a venture could be progressed.

As long ago as the 1930s, Ernest Burgmann was arguing for a national university in Canberra, and he was arguing for a wider role for Australia in the world, and particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. He told his readers in the *"Southern Churchman"* that Australia lived off the main trade routes of the world but did not feel the tremendous stimulus to thought and action under which other continents live. Australia, he said, was in danger of becoming a backwater and passing her days in a fool's paradise.

Burgmann said:

*"She has no schools for the sustained, careful study of international relations.*

*The problems of the Pacific, which are a matter of life and death for her, are left to the few who happen to be interested, and to the officials who may or may not have had special training for their tasks.*

*We need to have students studying in Oriental universities.*

*We should welcome students from the East to our own universities."*

Since Burgmann's death, these things have come to pass, in his own backyard. As we gather here tonight in a place named after Burgmann, it falls to us to build upon the foundations laid by those great advocates and architects of this world-class university – Curtin, Chifley, Coombs, Dedman, Burgmann, and men like the great champion of higher education, Kim Beazley senior, father of the Chancellor of the ANU today.

We share pride in their magnificent achievements, so many decades on. We share their vision for the role of this great national university. And we resolve to renew that vision for the ANU and our institutions of higher education, to play an even greater role in enabling Australia to meet the great challenges of the century that lies ahead.

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