



Recognising and celebrating the valuable contribution of Alumni Friends of The University of Queensland

Afternoon tea in the St Lucia Campus Alumni Court, hosted by the University Senate,
27 February 2017, 4:00pm-5:30pm

Following speeches by Peter Varghese AO (Chancellor, The University of Queensland) and by The Honorable Dr Penelope Wensley AC (Patron, Alumni Friends), a commemorative plaque was unveiled by Peter Varghese AO, The Honorable Dr Penelope Wensley AC, and by Professor Peter Høj (Vice-Chancellor and President, The University of Queensland). Invited guests included a number of Foundation Members and Past Presidents of Alumni Friends.

The Honorable Dr Penelope Wensley AC, Patron, Alumni Friends

Chancellor, **Dr Peter Varghese AO** and members of the University Senate (Professor Fred d'Agostino, Mr Thomas Mackay and Mr Michael Zivcic); Vice-Chancellor and President, **Professor Peter Høj**, and members of the University Senior Management Group; Vice-President of Alumni Friends, **Dr Cathi Lawrence**, current and former members of the AFUQ Executive and Management Committees; Foundation Members of the Association; Members of Alumni Friends; Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you, Chancellor, for hosting this afternoon tea; and for those thoughtful remarks of welcome, acknowledging the contribution that the Alumni Association, now Alumni Friends, has made to the University over the past half century.

Its founding in 1967 (the first such alumni association in any Australian University) may have come 56 years after the Senate reached agreement on the University's motto - (*Scientia ac Labore - through knowledge and hard work*) – but if ever an organisation could be credited with honouring the spirit and letter of those words, it is this hard-working Alumni Association.

As its current Patron, I take great pride in all it has achieved, in the dedication and commitment its loyal members have shown and in the way they have persevered to keep the Association going, not always in the easiest of circumstances. And I have every confidence that, could they be here today, that pride would be shared by my predecessors in the role of Patron: Sir Fred Schonell, Sir Alan Mansfield, Professor Brian Wilson and Sir Zelman Cowan. Men whose

names are carved, not only into the history of this University, but into its very fabric, with the Schonell Theatre and Drive, Mansfield Place, the Brian Wilson Chancellery and the Zelman Cowan Building; all landmark features of this St Lucia Campus - fitting tributes to these high-profile figures and their achievements and contribution.

By comparison, The Alumni Association (since 2008, at the request of the University, renamed *Alumni Friends of The University of Queensland*, to avoid confusion with the University's own new Alumni Network and Outreach Program) has a modest presence on the Campus - at least in terms of places and spaces identifiably its own. Two places bear its name: **Alumni House**, in the historic location of what was once **Cairngorm**; and this peaceful **Alumni Court** – an area that the Association helped to establish in 1970, gifting money to the University for its landscaping.

And I should probably add to this small inventory **The Book Shed**. Although not at all prepossessing, it is a vital piece of infrastructure being the storage facility for the books sorted

by the Bookhouse Team, which meets three times a week here at St Lucia. The Shed plays a very special role, widely known as **the** place for dropping off books for the biennial Book Fairs and Rare Book Auctions - the main fund-raising activities of the Association (the last one raised \$80,000). Attracting huge interest from amateurs and professionals alike and drawing thousands of people to the University (20,000 mentioned also by the Chancellor in his remarks). The Book Fairs probably rank as the best known of the Alumni Friends' activities; and I would add to these also **the Alumnus of the Year Awards** - created in 1992 to mark the Association's 25th Anniversary.

As one of the first recipients of this distinctive Award, in 1994, following on from David Malouf in 1992 and Peter Doherty in 1993, I can attest first-hand how valued these are and what an important outreach tool they represent, drawing former students back into contact with the University and fellow alumni. The University's expansion of the Awards, and the important place the *Courting the Greats* ceremony now has in the UQ annual calendar, affirms that truth; and I think it's nice to remember today, at this celebration of its achievements, that it all started with Alumni Friends (*from little things, big things grow!*)

It's also pleasing to see that some of those associated with the Award's inception, including Founding Member and former President, Steve Papas, are here today. In fact, by my count there are sixteen Founding Members present today - underlining my earlier point about the dedication and commitment of its Members.

The Association has always had, at its core, a small band of what I think of as *Three D* supporters. In a technical sense, of course, 3D representations are about form and depth and presenting different dimensions to the human eye, which certainly has relevance to a part of my purpose today, seeking to encourage appreciation of the different dimensions of the activities of Alumni Friends.

However, as I was crafting my remarks, I thought of 3D in a more straightforward way - as people **devoted** to the University, **determined** to stay connected to it and keeping it connected to the wider community, **dedicated** to the concept of giving back, and of finding practical ways to contribute to the University's growth and wellbeing. And this they have done handsomely - but mostly without fuss or fanfare. Working away quietly and diligently - all on a volunteer basis - to raise funds for Awards, Prizes, Scholarships and Grants, organising networking and social activities, establishing and sustaining special interest groups, producing and distributing informative newsletters, and now an excellent Website also, presenting educational and cultural events, lectures, seminars and activities, and more.

This quiet approach, together with the Association's early decision *to target niches and points of need in the system*, means that while different parts of the University will know what the Alumni Friends have contributed in their particular areas, to individual faculties, departments or institutions, few, if any, will have an appreciation of what the sum of the parts of those contributions, spread across the University community, **really** represents.

Attempting this myself, I concluded that it would be hard to find an area where it **hasn't** contributed: in addition to the Scholarships and Prizes distributed across different faculties, the UQ Art Museum, the School of Music, the UQ Library - especially the Fryer Library (mentioned by the Chancellor), the Antiquities Museum, the Mayne Centre Organ, the University Gardens, have all received funding and other forms of support at critical junctures....a quite remarkable list.

The Chancellor noted the total sum of approaching \$9 million raised since 1967, but this monetary contribution, impressive as it is, represents really only a fraction of the total contribution the Alumni Friends has made to support and enrich the life of the University since the Association's founding fifty years ago.

I congratulate the association on its many achievements. I compliment President Jason Yu, the current Executive and the Golden Jubilee Committee on the terrific effort you are making to use this 50th golden anniversary to promote Alumni Friends. This, I believe, is a perfect opportunity

to review and compile a clear picture of the Association's contribution to the University to date, to gain greater recognition for its work and to set a forward-looking agenda for the future.

Shakespeare said it far better and more succinctly than I: ***Gold that's put to use more gold begets***. May this anniversary be put to the best possible use. May it *beget more gold* in every possible way, including achieving the Alumni Friends' golden year target of raising \$50,000 to present fifty special \$1,000 Bursaries to UQ students.

This is an imaginative, generous project that deserves to succeed. As Patron of Alumni Friends, I certainly hope that it will, and that its success, and the other activities planned for this 50th anniversary year, will reaffirm the special place that the Association has within the University. Thus enabling it to look to the future with confidence, working in partnership with the University leadership and the wider community, to help ensure that The University of Queensland will continue to grow and prosper. Thank you.