In Australia there is only the HRC (1991-1995)

Abstract for chapter 5

Graeme Clarke succeeded Donaldson as Director of the HRC, linking the Centre with a great tradition of classical scholarship. Professor Deryck Schreuder was appointed as Associate Director and proved a most eloquent and innovative partisan of the Centre as a resource dedicated to the humanities, which he considered had ‘never been more relevant in our troubled world.’

Clarke and Schreuder were both concerned to ‘de-Europeanise’ humanities studies, ‘breaking down the relationship between European and Asia/Pacific scholarly theories.’ The series of conferences and exhibitions on the theme of ‘Sexualities’ attracted almost as many participants as the ‘Feminism’ year.

Iain McCalman succeeded Schreuder as Associate Director at the beginning of 1994, bringing to the Centre a record of brilliant achievement in teaching and research in literature and history. He assumed office just as the Centre was involved in the Review of the Research School of Social Studies, with which the HRC was affiliated. The great philosopher Richard Rorty testified to the Review Committee that the HRC had ‘an absolutely impeccable reputation in the international scholarly community, and is thought to be one of the most successful think-tanks in the world.’

The Committee applauded the Centre’s ‘pivotal position and future potential in the nation’s work in the humanities,’ but noted that its continuing success was seriously imperilled by a long-term erosion of resources.

Keywords
Asian studies, conferences, European studies, exhibitions, humanities, resources, Review, Sexualities year, staff

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Ralph Elliott described Graeme Clarke towards the end of 1991 as ‘standing among the remains of the Acropolis Palace at Jebel Khalid . . . smiling broadly, under a cloudless sky, in light working clothes, his left hand resting proprietorially on what looks like a huge stone hamburger’.

It was a happy picture and one which no doubt owed much of its happiness to the fact that work on his archaeological digs on the Euphrates was rather less exacting than was required of Clarke in his other capacity as Director of the Humanities Research Centre in Canberra. Maybe the weather was better too.

But it was also more importantly a picture that conveyed Clarke’s unique contribution to the HRC. He himself insisted that he merely continued the aims of Donaldson after the departure of the first Director. Ann Curthoys confirmed that ‘the gentlemanly style of Ian Donaldson continued and developed’ under Clarke, and that ‘Graeme’s emphasis was always on developing a community of scholars’.

But Clarke’s archaeological researches had the effect of linking the HRC with a great tradition of classical scholarship evoked by John Docker in his reference to Clarke’s being a ‘classicist of international repute’, whose presence as such ‘added great depth to the HRC as a scholarly centre’, with his ‘extraordinary width of knowledge about so many topics, his cosmopolitan ease of knowing different cultures as diverse as ancient Greek and modern Syrian’.

Clarke indeed described himself as being really ‘just a simple-minded ancient historian and field archaeologist’. But that was a tradition that was not without a certain element of the heroic, as Donna Merwick
and Greg Dening observed: undertaking archaeological researches on the banks of the Euphrates in the Syria of Hafiz al-Assad the Terrible in the 1980s and 1990s was rather more demanding than a stroll across campus to the University Library. It involved a real degree of dedication, discomfort and danger.

Graeme Clarke inherited Ian Donaldson’s terms of contract, being appointed for a five-year term from 4 August 1990. What he did not inherit was a deputy like Graeme Clarke, or indeed any deputy at all. Donaldson himself had remained with the Centre until September 1991, but he had been necessarily preoccupied with winding up his work at the HRC and preparing for his departure to Edinburgh and the new responsibilities he would be assuming there. He had however been able to oversee the launching of another superb, innovative and interactive sequence of conferences, themed and unthemed. The theme was Histories, and the conferences associated comprised From Materials to Representations, Heritage and Memory and Histories in Cultural Systems, convened at the University of Melbourne by Max Crawford Professor of History Greg Dening. Dening’s academic contributions would always be noted for their flair and originality. A member of the HRC administrative staff was nonetheless slightly taken aback when she was greeted on arriving at the University of Melbourne to prepare for the conference with the remark ‘Oh, you’re the conference that needs the dead body’. But it was just a slight
confusion: it was a medical conference being held at the same time that actually needed the cadaver, not the discipline of history.

Another striking advance was made with the extra-thematic conference on *Modernism and Post-Modernism in Asian Art*, convened by Dr John Clark, Art Historian and Associate Professor in Asian Studies at the University of Sydney, the first conference to be jointly sponsored by the HRC and the Department of Art History, with funding from the Japan Foundation and the Cultural Relations Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It followed up the 1987 conference on the Occident and the Orient, continuing the very salutary experiment initiated on that occasion of endeavouring to look at Asian art from the inside out, rather than from the outside in, as hitherto, eschewing a Eurocentric and Orientalist gaze. Many regard this as a seminal event in Australia. Caroline Turner remembers that modern and contemporary Asian art was only just beginning to be seen in exhibitions in Australia (the first museum-based exhibition of contemporary Asian art had been organised by Turner for the Queensland Art Gallery in 1989 and the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney followed in 1991 with the stunning ‘Zones of Love’ from Japan). ‘At the Queensland Art Gallery’, she recalls,

we had just resolved to commit to a ten year program of contemporary Asian and Pacific art and John Clark’s HRC conference brought to Australia very significant Asian scholars whose papers, presented from non-EuroAmericentric perspectives, made an incredible impact on Australian art professionals at the time and introduced us to the debates about art going on in Asia.

The tradition of the Named Seminar in honour of a leader in world academe was continued, this time giving tribute to Irish-born Philip and Beulah Rollins Professor of History at Princeton Peter Robert Lamont Brown, credited by his peers with having literally created the study of late antiquity, i.e. 250-800 CE, and hailed by an anonymous student in the unofficial Princeton *Full List of Awesome Courses* in terms which must excite wild envy in every academic heart: ‘Peter Brown is a God, folks . . . Take this course’.

Graeme Clarke took a year’s study leave in August 1991, his first long absence from the Centre for 10 years, to continue his archaeological excavations in Northern Syria, before proceeding to the National Humanities Center in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, to experience the pleasures of being himself a Visiting
Fellow, relishing the hospitality and relief from stress which his own Centre had provided to so many others, but not to its Directors. Constraints of time and funding had delayed any attempt to obtain a permanent Deputy Director. William Ramson, then Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre and Chairman of the HRC’s Advisory and Steering Committees, was accordingly appointed as Acting Director as an interim measure, with the indispensable and indefatigable Ralph Elliott attending to the day-to-day running of the
Centre. And support was coming, in a form as committed, energetic, enterprising and resourceful as could well have been hoped for. Professor Deryck Schreuder agreed to be seconded from the Challis Chair of History at the University of Sydney in March 1992 to become what would be termed Associate Director of the Centre. During his time at the HRC he continued his research into nineteenth century European history as well as the history of migrant settler societies and was on a formidable array of national academic committees including chair of the Australian Research Council Grants panel on the Humanities and Social Sciences as well as chair of the ARC’s Priority Panel on ‘Australia’s Asian Context’. Schreuder was on his way to the very highest echelons of Australian academe. He was however determined that his contribution to the HRC should be far more than that of merely a caretaker role. Nobody could be more aware of the significance of the Centre for cultural life, internationally as well as nationally, the need for that significance to be recognised and the need for the activities of the Centre to be expanded to ensure this recognition. He threw himself immediately into the task with a splendid expression of the Centre’s essential contribution, past achievements and future plans, delivered appropriately on Canberra Day, 19 March 1992. ‘The HRC’, he announced with perfect truth,

has been a remarkable intellectual success story. With only two tenured academic faculty and a small general staff, it has devoted its modest budget to bringing the very best of humanities scholars to Canberra . . . Little wonder that in an age of increasing utilitarian and economic rationalism one distinguished scholar of literature [Professor Ken Ruthven] termed the HRC our “sacred site” for the humanities in Australia.

However, he continued with equal percipience, the 1990s threatened to be an even harder environment for the humanities. Schreuder then outlined what the Centre was going to do to counter these graver challenges. ‘The Directors and Steering Committee of the HRC’, he said, ‘are very well aware of this unfavourable climate for the Humanities and have been considering new roles and functions in the Centre’. These would include New Visiting Fellowships which would ‘welcome “sabbatical scholars”’ to the HRC, to enjoy the special features of centre and campus, but above all to write!’

Write they did indeed: the many volumes presented by grateful former Visiting Fellows to the Ralph Elliott Library represent only the
tip of the iceberg of works begun or completed during sojourns at the HRC. Graeme Clarke listed HRC publications up to the beginning of 1997 as comprising four monographs produced in the joint imprint series with Oxford University Press, six with Macmillan, 16 HRC publications with other houses, 16 more published through the HRC, nine special issues of journals and nine major works in preparation. That was only getting a bit further down the iceberg, for the list of publications worked on by Fellows while at the Centre was enormous. (See Appendix F.) Nor did they only write: they gave work-in-progress seminars, delivered lectures, visited other Australian or New Zealand universities, interacted with one another and with staff and students and in many cases set about seeing more of the continent than most of its citizens would probably see in a lifetime: they showed in particular, Clarke noted, ‘a curious tendency all to want to have invitations from the campus of the James Cook University of Northern Queensland’. 5

Bernard Bailyn revised 14 of 16 chapters in final form of a major book while at the Centre; Professor E. Ann Kaplan visited four universities, delivered 12 lectures and substantially completed the revision of her book *Motherhood and Representation*; Professor of History at UCLA Anne K. Mellor delivered 18 lectures and Professor of Sociology at the University of New South Wales David M. Halperin no less than 23 lectures; Professor and Chair of Political Science at Johns Hopkins William Connolly, hailed by his peers as one of the subtlest, boldest and most intellectually fertile political and moral thinkers now writing in the USA, ‘arrived with a few chapters roughed out’ and left ‘with an entire manuscript ready to go to the publisher’; and Richard Rorty doubted that he would have been able to generate the 10 000 words he produced in reply to his critics if he had hadn’t had such ‘an idyllic think tank to work in’.

Further fellowships, Schreuder continued, would be targeted at young “new Researchers” – to come and work in the Centre as they move in to post-doctoral research and publication. Post-graduate student summer visitorships will be expanded to welcome those entering advanced research. An annual “Summer School”, in a major area of theory in the humanities, is being explored for February of each year.

And he concluded with a credo at once authoritative, admonitory and inspiring for all with any concern for the future of the Humanities. ‘We do ourselves absolutely no good’, he declared, ‘by claiming
varieties of “relevance” in terms of national needs . . . the Humanities will always be relevant if we speak to the fundamental issues which concern human life”.

Schreuder’s primary concern was to achieve the widest possible recognition for the Centre. Membership of the HRC Advisory Committee had included, in Clarke’s words, ‘Directors, or their representatives, from the National Gallery and usually from the National Library . . . RSPacS (as it then was), RSSS, President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, Dean ANU Faculty of Arts, Director Institute of the Arts and from around the country in various Humanities fields . . . The Committee was . . . a useful, if a little cumbersome, way of informing a number of influential people and institutions of forthcoming activities and visitors, and enabled the national profile of the HRC to be raised’. Schreuder now wrote to Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Max Neutze, urging that ‘the University give approval to the disbanding of our current Advisory Committee . . . It is my view . . . that we should rather have a panel of Advisors drawn from a broad range of educational, cultural, publishing and media organisations’. He also oversaw a highly interactive series of conferences. The designated theme was ‘Europe’, and conferences on The European Moment, Europe: Representations of Change and Intellectuals in Europe today were convened by Professor Brian Nelson and held jointly with the Centre for European Studies at Monash University. Then there was an extra-thematic conference on The Articulate Surface: Dialogues on Painting Between Conservators, Curators and Art Historians, sponsored by the HRC and the National Gallery; and on The Changing Idea of an Australian University, convened by Schreuder himself and Director of RSSS Professor Geoffrey Brennan and sponsored by the Centre, RSSS and Macquarie University; and a one-day symposium on the decidedly relevant topic of The Idea of a Republic, with the Australian Defence Force Academy. But what was in preparation for 1993 would be something which even the ‘Feminism’ year could hardly match for sheer vision and éclat.

Schreuder himself was soon called to fight the battle for the humanities on an even higher plane, being elected President of the Academy of the Humanities in November 1992 and appointed the following month Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of Macquarie University, operative as from Easter 1993, subsequently becoming Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia. He announced his acceptance of the ‘warm invitation’ from Macquarie along with
a reiterated warning that the humanities were under challenge in Australia. ‘There is a widespread spirit of utilitarianism about – partly symbolised by economic rationalist theory, more still through technocratic models of society and development’. The humanities nonetheless had ‘never been more relevant in our troubled world . . . And yet the technocratic vision is adopted uncritically by government. A recent Commonwealth paper, entitled Developing Australian Ideas: a blueprint for the 1990s . . . offers a set of ideas entirely devoid of the Humanities’. That was in 1993. The spirit of utilitarianism in government was just beginning to spread its wings. Schreuder expressed his resolve to ‘continue to be associated with the HRC over the years ahead, and especially in relation to the 1994 and 1995 themes on “Freedom” and “Africa”’.9 Clarke returned to the Directorship in July, quite convinced as to what was the greatest service that institutions like the HRC could provide for the world of learning. He had just discovered for himself what it was like to be a visiting academic at a hospitable and congenial research centre, and the experience had been wonderful. He had spent

a blissful seven months . . . in the tranquillity of the National Humanities Center in the Research Triangle Park of North Carolina. My experience there has reinforced my considered view that what will make most Visiting Fellows happiest is a quiet office, a blank wall, a desk with a p.c. or writing pad, and a peaceful atmosphere after all the noisy static and argumentative competitiveness of their everyday academic lives . . . The National Humanities Center was wonderfully equipped and efficiently run to meet this Platonic ideal: the experience spurs the HRC to emulate, so far as our resources allow. In essence we must ensure that the HRC continues as a precious resource because of its very capacity to provide a place for undisturbed senior scholarship.10

There was a fascinating irony in the fact that the Director of the HRC had to go as a visitor to another research centre to enjoy the opportunities for serious and relaxed academic study that his own centre was famed for providing for its visitors. But there was no question as to the gravamen of his address. Donaldson too had been reflecting since his return to the United Kingdom on the implications of the ever more constrained resources available to the HRC, although he characteristically reflected that even this might not be ‘altogether a
bad thing’. ‘Placed alongside the ANU’s powerful Research Schools’, he wrote,

the HRC was a tiny affair: only two tenured academic positions were contemplated, that of Director and Deputy Director, and the remainder of its budget was reserved for visiting appointments. Privately, however, it was hoped that the HRC would transform itself in due course into a small Research School with its own departmental infrastructure and range of tenured appointments and long-term research projects. In the idealistic projection of the Melbourne historian Professor R.M. Crawford, the HRC would in time develop a substantial research library which would enable it to operate in the manner of the Warburg Institute at the University of London, as a centre housed within its own specialist Collections.

But ‘what none of these dreams predicted was the severe contraction of University funding that was to occur throughout Australia during the 1970s and 1980s which not only prevented the HRC from ever evolving into a Research School, but held the number of its tenured academic staff to one (a Director) during the first eight years of its existence. In retrospect’, however, ‘I believe this failure to fulfil the earliest hopes for the Humanities Research Centre may not have been altogether a bad thing. It forced the HRC to be flexible and resourceful during a period when the ANU’s Research Schools themselves became increasingly anxious about their own comparative inertia.’

This was looking on the bright side with a vengeance. But the HRC could hardly have survived at all if it had not been guided by people who were prepared to look on the bright side and make virtue out of hard necessity. It was this kind of tough-minded optimism which had made the Centre such a superb place to work in and to work for. It was precisely the need to do as much as possible with what might have seemed as little as possible that had inspired Donaldson and Clarke to go beyond the original mandate of the Centre into fields outside the areas of operation of the Research Schools. They had already achieved a spectacular success in this line with the Feminism programme in 1986. Clarke had already prepared a programme for 1993 that promised to be at least as spectacular and even more provocative. But the power of positive thinking can accomplish only so much without adequate resources. And the most effective way to expanding the exiguous resource base of the Centre seemed to be for it to
take on an expanded role. Clarke and Schreuder put it flatly to the Advisory Committee that HRC activities were ‘currently restricted by the budget within which the Centre must work’. They had accordingly tabled a proposal for an expanded HRC which the Committee ‘noted and generally endorsed’. Its basic argument was that ‘an argument for an increase in the budget could be made from the breadth and diversity of the Centre’, and ‘the diverse use made of the Centre’s facilities, e.g. as a conference area’. The Directors observed that ‘successful fund-raising will depend on the HRC’s profile’. There was ‘a need for publicity not only within the university but also outside academia’, such as Schreuder had been tirelessly promoting, ‘of the kind afforded by the Centre’s involvement in one-off conferences such as Republicanism and The Idea of an Australian University [1992]. They were convinced that ‘not only the constant variety and change of activities in the HRC but also the desirability of undertaking longer projects justified a larger budget’. Larger premises might also be justified: the HRC ‘should not necessarily be tied to the AD Hope Building if larger more suitable accommodation could be provided. If the Centre is to expand, it might be preferable that new space be specially designed for its activities’.

Clarke and Schreuder maintained that the HRC in fact played a genuinely national role in Australian cultural life. It was also one that it was critical to maintain and augment in the national interest. The Centre, they argued, had

a unique status in Australia. There is no other cross-disciplinary humanities centre, and it is highly unlikely that such a research resource could now be created . . . It is therefore all the more crucial in the 1990s that the HRC both continue its work for the broad area of the ‘humanities’ in Australia, with its major international linkages, and also ensure that there is at least one resource dedicated to humanities enquiry and publication within an educational environment that has become increasingly utilitarian in policy outlook and emphasis. The United States of America has many centres for humanities research . . . But in Australia there is only the HRC.

And he repeated Ken Ruthven’s comment about the HRC being ‘a sacred site for the humanities.’ It was a good phrase and it was worth repeating.

But all this entailed of necessity an expansion of resources, physical
as well as human. ‘Ideally’, the Directors continued,

the Centre should be able to accommodate:

a) The Directorate
b) Centre Administration
c) Publications and editorial room
d) Seminar/Reading Room
e) Rooms for Visiting Fellows/Sabbatical Fellows etc.
f) Library of reference works and periodicals; and
fellows’ works

Plus, have a good modern kitchen, to support the social side of its seminars/conferences, and possess adequate storage resources . . . Whilst it would be desirable to keep the permanent senior academic staff low (two is an absolute minimum) there is a great need for an academic assistant to the Directors (say a lecturer/senior lecturer on secondment for a specified term). This person,

ey they represented with feeling,

can mop up a great deal of routine correspondence on behalf of the Directors, deal appropriately with a series

James Grieve, Krystyna Szokalski, Leena Messina, Graeme Clarke, Jodi Parvey and Stephanie Stockdill, 1993.
of queries from the Visiting Fellows . . . have authority for deciding on a number of budgetary items, and make decisions of a reasonably routine sort that crop up with running seminars, work-shops and conferences. A lot of this flack needlessly intrudes, at present, into the daily lives of the Directors.  

Schreuder could testify with feeling on that subject: he confided to Clarke when the latter returned from his blissful term of release that he had ‘found his job as Acting Director, when I took a period of leave, as “impossible”, being torn between the administrative demands of the position and the need to get on with research’, as well as fulfil his responsibilities as a member of the Australian Research Council.  

But one appointment could not be delayed any longer. An absolute minimum of two academics entailed in reality a permanent staff of three, since one of the two was certain to be absent from duty for part of the time, for one reason or another. But first it was necessary to get the two. It was decided in March 1993 that applications should be sought for a Professor and Associate Director in the HRC. The paragon who would combine these functions should be

a distinguished scholar with wide-ranging intellectual sympathies and special expertise in any area of the humanities relevant to the work of the Centre. The person appointed will be required to pursue research in his or her field of interest and to assist the current Director . . . in the administration and long-term planning of the Centre, and in the promotion of its work nationally and internationally.

Essential prerequisites for the job would include skills which would ‘complement those of the current Director (whose interests lie primarily, though not exclusively, in Greek and Roman history, literature, religion and archaeology)’. Clarke’s interests had already been shown to extend far wider than this very classicist list might imply and they would be seen to extend far wider yet. ‘A readiness to deal with a wide range of people’ was stipulated and was essential without question; and a ‘familiarity with several European languages and cultures would also be an advantage’, although, it was observed realistically, ‘not essential’. The appointee might also ‘be asked to take special responsibility for certain day-to-day tasks in the Centre, which include the organization of conferences, seminars, talks, exhibitions, readings and other activities’. Clarke and Schreuder had proposed
that these functions should be the responsibility of the senior academic on secondment for whom they discerned a great need. Much was in fact being undertaken by the devoted administrative staff, Jodi Parvey, Wendy Antoniak, Stephanie Stockdill, Krystyna Szokalski and Leena Messina, whose services would be recognised in a continuing flow of testimonials. But this did not mean that another academic was not absolutely essential, to be ‘the Director’s closest senior colleague and adviser on matters of general policy and long-term planning’. That was indeed how it had been in the past with Donaldson and Clarke and again with Clarke and Schreuder. It was how it would have to continue to be if the Centre were to function at all in the future.

Clarke was never in any danger of suffering from the dreaded condition that Lenin identified as ‘dizziness with success’. However, the plaudits of Visiting Fellows might have been a temptation in that line, had circumstances been less sobering. Professor John D’Emilio from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro said that the Centre had ‘proved an almost utopian work environment’. Professor David M. Halperin, from the exalted heights of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, testified that the Centre offered ‘an ideal venue for research’. It possessed ‘the right proportion of social and intellectual life, on the one hand, and solitude, on the other’, which might well be said of Canberra in general. Further, the ‘combination of rich opportunity and untrammelled freedom is exactly as it should be, and in that respect’, he concluded authoritatively, ‘the HRC is on a par with the world’s best research centres in the humanities. (The HRC’s
chief disadvantage is financial."

Clarke now declared the quantum shift in the mission of the HRC which he and Donaldson had been subtly introducing since 1981. ‘The centre’, he later told a Canadian audience, ‘consciously strives to “de-Europeanise” humanities studies, breaking down the separation between European and Asia/Pacific scholarly theories, methods and approaches and takes care to include in its themes, if possible, antipodean, Pacific and Asian perspectives and experiences’.

The central function of the Centre, he affirmed in 1993 was ‘to stimulate research in the humanities (broadly interpreted) within Australia’. One of the ways in which the Centre could foster this aim was ‘to concentrate from time to time on an area of research which, while important, happens not to be well represented within the Australian Academy’. He and Donaldson had already achieved such a breakthrough with their 1986 conference on Feminism. Plans were ‘now maturing for our 1995 year with “Africa” with this aim in mind’.

Africa was Schreuder’s own idea, having himself been born in South Africa and educated in Zambia and Cape Province before leaving for Oxford. It was an idea that in Clarke’s words

fitted in with one of the declared objects of the Centre – to reinforce an area of study, established within Australian academia, which could do with strengthening and encouragement . . . This was a conscious policy and fitted in with the concept of the Centre as a National Facility for the Humanities. The other broad category for the annual

*Regimes of Sexuality* Conference. Professors Margaret Jolly and Graeme Clarke in first row.
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themes, with a similar vision as national facilitator, was fields of study which were ripe for critique . . .

Plans had also been matured for a conference on an area very important indeed and even less well represented within the Australian Academy.

Some 1300 participants attended the sequence of HRC events in 1993 associated with the nominated annual theme of ‘Sexualities and Culture’. The Centre, ‘knowing itself to be an unparalleled national resource’, Clarke reported on the event, ‘has put much effort into collaborating with other institutions . . . A most notable feature of this collaboration was Lips of Coral – Sex, Violence and Surrealism, the conference held in conjunction with the National Gallery of Australia’s major international exhibition Surrealism: Revolution by Night’. Notable hardly conveys the impact of the Sexualities series of conferences. The marvellously entitled ‘Lips of Coral’ had been sponsored jointly by the Centre and the National Gallery, convened by Dr Ted Gott of the National Gallery and Dr Ken Wach and presented jointly by the National Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney. The NGA Theatre was crowded with 270 art specialists, which was in fact all that it could hold. Breath of Balsam: Reorienting Surrealism, the second conference, was held at the Museum of Contemporary Art Sydney and the Art Gallery of New South Wales
(AGNSW) and delegates were welcomed by MCA Director Leon Paroissien and Chief Curator Bernice Murphy and AGNSW Director Edmund Capon and addressed by Assistant Director National Gallery of Australia Dr Michael Lloyd who had co-curated the exhibition. The conferences, *Regimes of Sexuality and Forces of Desire*, and other associated events attracted more than 600 participants, almost as many as the great Feminism exercise, bringing together artists, performers, curators and writers. Among the keynote speakers was Professor Trinh Minh-ha from the University of California at Berkeley. There was also a named seminar in honour of Professor Jane Gallop convened by Dr Jill Matthews, Women’s Studies ANU.

Enthusiastic audiences attended public lectures by Jane Gallop, Distinguished Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin and without question one of the leading figures in contemporary Feminist discourse; and by Professor of History at the University of California at Berkeley and Director of the Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities Thomas W. Laqueur, vastly published historian of, *inter alia*, literacy, death and masturbation. Clarke had selected his distinguished visitors most appropriately for the occasion. The fact that academics of such international eminence would always be ready to make the long trip to Canberra was proof positive of the distinction which Donaldson

*Lips of Coral* Conference. Dr Ted Gott (convener) with Mrs Betty Churcher, Director, N.G.A.
and Clarke had earned for the HRC.

There was also an extra-thematic conference on *The Dawn of History* convened by Dr Julian Thomas and Professor Stuart McIntyre of the University of Melbourne, and another on *Music and Musicians in Australian Culture 1930-1960*, convened by Dr Peter Read, Dr Nicholas Brown and the composer Larry Sitsky with the Canberra School of Music, the National Library and the National Film and Sound Archive. Among the distinguished speakers at the latter conference was Professor Malcolm Gillies, later Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at ANU. The First HRC Summer School on ‘Colonial and Post-Colonial Humanities in a Post-imperial World’ was convened by Dr Nicholas Thomas of the Department of Anthropology at ANU and Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty of the University of Melbourne and held in conjunction with the Ashworth Centre for Social History at that university. The aim was to comprehensively explore issues of post-colonial criticism in literature, history, anthropology, cultural studies and feminism, challenging prior understandings of colonial history and representations. It was indeed all very notable.

And it was indeed noticed. Clarke’s *démarche* had been provocative in every sense of the word: it had excited, inspired, enticed and also incited irritation or at least perturbation within and without academe. The Sexualities conferences had naturally attracted numbers of enthusiastic and demonstrative gay and lesbian researchers and practitioners from California whose activities attracted the disapproval of the United States Ambassador, one of the more conservative appointees to a post the incumbents of which have scarcely ever been anything else. It had also been the target of reiterated denunciation in the columns of *The Canberra Times*. Nor was it only outside academe that reservations were expressed: ‘we were much derided’, Clarke recalled.

for putting on what was called a “whips and chains” year, and many scholars and gentlemen thought this was a rather messy and inappropriate topic for scholarly inquiry. But the scholars showed quite differently and they came in their hundreds, particularly younger scholars . . . from a huge range of disciplines.21

Ann Curthoys had no doubts at all: the Sexualities year had ‘certainly played a role in foregrounding Australian scholarship in sexuality and forging links between Australian and international scholars in the field which remain to this day. It is certainly a key link in the history of the HRC’.22 Her judgement was endorsed by Cindy Patton, Professor
of Lesbian/Gay Studies at Emory University, who told Graeme Clarke that, rather surprisingly,

those of us working on sexuality in North America work in isolation . . . and under conditions of considerable hostility in our respective locales. The atmosphere of the [Humanities Research] Centre and the [Australian National] University – so far as I could tell, at any rate – was one of enthusiasm and openness to the range of innovative and often controversial scholarly inquiries.23

There could however be no question that 1993 had triumphantly fulfilled the ambitions of Clarke, Donaldson and Schreuder to extend the frontiers of the Centre, publicly and intellectually: the conferences had, as Clarke put it, ‘helped to fulfil more than we had anticipated one of the goals of the Centre – to be a national facility for the Humanities’.24 The Advisory Committee noted that the year’s conferences and weekly seminars had been extremely successful, attracting the largest attendances ever. The diversity of participants throughout the year showed that the HRC had reached a wider audience than usual. There had also been broad coverage in newspapers and radio, laudatory and otherwise. The Committee noted the HRC’s involvement with the National Gallery of Australia and the Museum of Contemporary Art as well as the University Gallery, School of Music and National Film and Sound Archive. There had also been 250 applicants for the 1995 Visiting Fellowships. And the Committee was pleased to welcome the new Associate Director, Professor Iain McCalman, who would take up his appointment on 1 January 1994.25

McCalman might well have been expected to engage with the notion of expanding horizons and greeting the future: he was only 46, about the same age that Clarke had been when he was appointed Deputy Director; he could be described as being like Clarke and Schreuder of colonial or at least post-colonial origin, having been born in Malawi and subsequently trained, wholly against his will, with the legendary Rhodesian Light Infantry in the days of the Ian Smith regime; had degrees from ANU and Monash University, had held previous appointments at ANU, Monash, Melbourne, Macquarie, University of Canberra and Charles Sturt University; had received the Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence in 1992; and had developed a particular interest in the fruitful fields of the more arcane, louche and rastaquouère areas of English literary studies: he had published *Radical underworld: prophets, revolutionaries and*
pornographers in London, 1795-1840 in 1988 and Horrors of slavery: the life and writings of Robert Wedderburn in 1992; and was engaged at the time of his appointment as Chief Editor along with three associate editors, two assistant editors, 43 essay contributors and 120 entry contributors in a mammoth 500,000-word, 780-page Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776–1832. And this was only one of the plethora of literary ventures in which the new Associate Director and future Director would be involved.

McCalman had already made his impact at the Centre when he impressed James Chandler, the very eminent Director of The Franke Institute for the Humanities at the University of Chicago, as ‘of course impresario of the HRC’, who would emerge ‘not only as a force in his own field of Romanticism, but also, building on the strong record of Ian Donaldson, as a leader in the international development of humanities institutes and centres’. Chandler had also been continually amazed by ‘the breadth, depth, and sheer invention of the activities that the Centre sponsors every month. Now that I direct a Humanities Institute myself’, he wrote in 2002, ‘I appreciate Iain’s example more than ever – his exemplary combination of ease of manner, generosity of spirit, and rigor of scholarship’. This was for the future: what McCalman found that he was required to display most at the outset of his career was fortitude, fancy footwork and a profound sense of survival. He was indeed no sooner in the job than he and Clarke were called upon to face the usual financial crisis. And financial crises would always mean crises of survival for an institution funded as exiguously as the HRC. It had been agreed in December 1988 that the Centre should be ‘affiliated’ with the RSSS in the Institute of Advanced Studies, ‘with the proviso that enquiries concerning research fund eligibility for members of the HRC should be satisfactorily answered’. But it appeared that they had not been answered all that satisfactorily. ‘We have been given to understand – indirectly –’ McCalman wrote to Vice-Chancellor Deane Terrell,

that the University has shifted the HRC funding from a one-line item on the Faculties’ budget to that of the Institute. Whilst there may well be advantages to the University in such a change, there are at present very considerable disadvantages to the Centre. In the short term we cease to be eligible for FRF and ARC funding and we also cease to be claimants on Faculties’ new funding for travel grants, conference leave, equipment, space, small works, etc. If we are to be fully established as a Centre
within the Institute, then we not only need access to all the prerogatives and privileges of membership in the Institute (currently denied to us as being of “ambiguous” status), and the basis of our affiliation to one of the Research Schools (eg. RSSS) needs to be spelt out specifically, but we also need to be established with adequate support infrastructure . . . At the very least the Director and Associate Director should be able to have the annual level of research funding they could expect to receive from FRF and ARC . . . In total . . . a funding base of $140 000.

Then he unmasked a proposal which was to lead to the HRC acquiring a new direction, a new philosophy, a new managerial structure and a new location, with the challenges inherent in a revolution of that order.

Donaldson, Clarke and Schreuder had been committed to the point of passion to extending the horizons and impact of the HRC, as so of course had Ralph Elliott. But McCalman’s vision went beyond the boundaries of the HRC itself. ‘Graeme Clarke and I’, he told Terrell, ‘believe that the HRC is also uniquely placed, both nationally and within ANU, to develop a Centre for Advanced Cultural Studies. Like it or not, cultural studies is a burgeoning field which impinges on the concerns of both the traditional humanities and social sciences, and is here to stay’. Survival for academic institutions was coming more and more to mean getting more students in; and the problem was that ‘students coming to the ANU are showing increasing interest in the interdisciplinary fields of cultural studies yet it has no institutional expression here . . . Rival universities such as the University of Canberra have benefited enormously from meeting this demand’. The HRC appeared to be ‘ideally placed for developing a concomitant postgraduate degree in cultural studies with a strong coursework component’. But what was needed to put this into practice was ‘someone to act as a graduate teacher and coordinator within the HRC in order to prepare an examinable program in Advanced Cultural Studies . . . We believe’, McCalman concluded,

that an important opportunity exists at a crucial transitional time for the HRC. We are prepared to commit ourselves to the effort to make it work, but we cannot do so without an adequate research establishment, measured in physical resources such as rooms and computer facilities, and personnel such as research assistants, postdoctoral fellows
and possibly a graduate teacher/coordinator . . . If the Centre [for Advanced Cultural Studies] is to become an integral part of the Institute, cognisance will have to be taken of our legitimate aspirations for a more complete establishment as a research unit.26

Geoffrey Brennan wrote to the Vice-Chancellor in support of McCalman’s appeal. ‘There is no doubt in my mind’, he told Terrell, that both Clarke and McCalman could reasonably have expected continued ARC funding to the tune of probably $140 000 between them – and conceivably rather more if Iain’s cultural studies “companion” volume captured ARC imagination . . . the facts are: first, that the HRC was moved to the IAS (without being consulted as far as I know) for reasons of the perceived financial interests of The Faculties; second, that this move cost the HRC about $140 000 pa in expected research funding (assuming no development); and third, that the faculties did indeed gain from the move to the tune of about $2m. It seems clear to me that simple justice requires compensation to the HRC.

However, Brennan argued, this compensation should not come from the IAS budget, and

*a fortiori* not from RSSS’s budget. Perhaps in the long run, the HRC personnel should have their research plans financed competitively against other IAS claimants . . . But for the time being, some way will have to be found to meet the true cost of the HRC transfer out of the benefits that The Faculties obtained thereby.27

This seemed only fair, although it is not usually difficult to find reasons why justice should be served by someone else’s footing the bill. What needed prompt attention was the fact that spending on conferences in 1993 had exceeded budget by the not too exorbitant sum of about $60 000. This was not indeed surprising, considering the phenomenal spread of visiting scholars and conferences that had been held that year. Clarke and McCalman advised the Steering Committee that had ‘been in part occasioned by shifting monies from their customary allocations . . . and this . . . had led to overspending on conferences and publishing’. The Committee for its part noted that ‘the HRC could only support with difficulty large conferences that exceeded its infrastructure’. The lack of a publications officer was also
‘placing severe pressure on the administrative staff’.28

Important conferences had certainly been the distinguishing mark of the HRC’s contribution to the humanities, nationally and internationally. The tradition continued in 1994 with three major conferences devoted to the theme of Freedom: one on ‘Ideas of Liberty’ convened by Professor Barry Hindess, Director of the Political Science Program at RSSS; another on Asian Paths to the Idea of Freedom, convened by Professor of Southeast Asian History at RSPAS A.J.S. Reid; and a third on Commitments to Representation and Freedom, again convened by Dr Sue-Anne Wallace, in conjunction with the National Gallery and the Museum of Contemporary Art. There was also a special public lecture and colloquium convened by Professor Conal Condren on The Republican Conception of Freedom to mark the second visit to the HRC of Professor Quentin Skinner of the University of Cambridge and acclaimed as the world’s leading historian of early modern political thought; a Summer School devoted to Feminist Theory and Women’s Studies in the 1990s convened by Associate Professor Barbara Caine of the University of Sydney with Associate Professors Rosemary Pringle and Elizabeth Grosz, for which an expanded quota of 60 participants proved to be not expanded enough with many applicants disappointed by not getting a place; an extra-thematic conference on writing and editing had been convened by Professor Paul Eggert jointly with the Australian Scholarly Editions Centre; and The Roman Family, a topic in which the HRC had taken a leading world role thanks to the efforts of ANU academic Professor Beryl Rawson of the Classics Department, an expert in this field, was revisited in a third conference convened by Professor Rawson and Professor Paul Weaver of the University of Tasmania and with speakers from France, Canada, Denmark, England, New Zealand, Germany, the US and Australia.

But the question was as always how long this kind of effort could be sustained. Clarke reiterated the obvious problem: the Centre runs on a very slim budget and its establishment is lean – just two senior academic appointments and a small secretariat (barely adequate for the Centre’s needs). This is by deliberate design so that we can put as many resources as we can possibly manage into our Visiting Fellowship programme . . . Ideally, the Centre would wish to be involved in a long-term humanities project of national significance . . . but at present funding any such involvement would drastically reduce, if not eliminate, the humanities constituency we are currently able to serve.
But hope springs eternal.29

That had always been the motto of the HRC. The immediate question was whether it was going to be its epitaph. The University had decided to conduct a Review of the RSSS. This would involve a Review of the HRC, as a centre attached to the RSSS, although Clarke and MacCalman made the point that the HRC was ‘very conscious of its role as the only centre in Australia established for research in the Humanities generally’; and that it did ‘not make sense, given its mission, to be either of The Faculties or of the Institute but rather a Centre of the University, with membership of both’.30

Clarke went on research leave to supervise a dig in Syria, planned originally when he had thought that Deryck Schreuder would still be in place, leaving McCalman as Acting Director, with major responsibility for the planning of the activities of the Centre over the next two years. McCalman saw the issue as being one of whether there was going to be a Centre to have any activities: he warned his readers that the ‘next few months are likely to be portentous for the HRC. The context is an impending review of the Institute of Advanced Studies (the research-only side of ANU) conducted jointly by the University and the Australian Research Council. The HRC has been included in this review’, he suggested,

primarily, it seems, in order to resolve its ambiguous status as a research centre located neither in the teaching Faculties nor the Institute . . . our reviewers will naturally be keen to assess whether we have been successful in meeting our avowed national and international mission to promote research excellence in the humanities at large.31

Behind the scenes many believed that the purpose of including the HRC in the Review was to produce an outcome which would lead to the HRC being assimilated as a Department of RSSS. The Director of RSSS, Professor Paul Bourke, had recently closed down the History of Ideas Unit in that Research School, a move that had provoked much criticism and it was widely discussed that the HRC could perhaps replace it. The danger for the HRC was that it could lose its identity and independence. And criticisms were being expressed by some unsympathetic to the HRC that a Visiting Fellows programme was less productive than long-term fellowships. Such criticisms probably reflected the competition for resources beginning to affect every part of the University and failed to take into account that the HRC had a different mission and a different funding structure from a Research
School and that the Visiting Fellows and conference programmes had served as the public face of ANU and of the humanities in Australia for many years. As for research output the list of publications of the Centre was indisputable evidence of the research done there.

One of the means by which McCalman planned to satisfy enquiries on the score of the Centre promoting excellence in humanities research nationally and internationally in particular was by rallying support from pre-eminent national and international scholars in the Humanities who could speak from personal experience of the Centre and its achievements. The strategy was totally successful: even the few negative comments were positively advantageous in that they related entirely to technical issues like the lack of IBM equipment and air conditioning resulting from inadequate funding; and the positive comments were all that could have been desired and more than could well have been imagined.

Perhaps in a technical sense the most compelling testimonial came from Judith Ryan, Professor of German Languages and Literature at Harvard, who had been appointed Assessor into the HRC. She reported with appropriate judicious moderation that the Centre stands extremely well by comparison to other high quality research centres, particularly those I am familiar with in the United States... it functions as a model for other
tertiary educational ventures . . . The Centre’s unique combination of historical and contemporary studies makes it far less isolated than many other Humanities centres, which often focus on cultural studies without the broad informing framework of social sciences that is palpable in [the] work of the ANU Humanities Centre.

Other distinguished overseas academics were quite immoderate in their expressions of support. Professor Peter Jones, Director of the Institute for Advanced Studies, The University of Edinburgh, testified that the HRC had ‘established a unique and enviable reputation, worldwide, for the quality of its Fellows’, and ‘the innovative character of its thematic meetings and conferences’. Harold F. Linder, Professor of Social Science at Princeton, declared that he himself worked in ‘a research institute, somewhat comparable to the HRC, and have spent time, both in this country and abroad, at others. There is none, including my own, which is more effective in pursuing its mission with direction, dedication, and a broad range of interests’. His accolade was endorsed by Dr Carole Vance, Associate Research Scientist, Anthropology and Public Health, Columbia University who reported that of the many scholarly centres she had visited ‘in the United States and in several other countries, the Humanities Research Centre is by far the most outstanding. The HRC provided an exceptional environment for scholarly research and exchange, particularly at the international level’.

Australian academics could give their own national perspective, all the more impressive for evincing no trace whatever of the inter-institutional and inter-state rivalry symptoms of which some observers claimed to have detected earlier. Associate Professor Patricia Crawford of the Department of History at the University of Western Australia, reported that the conferences which the HRC organised played a significant part in the research scene in Australia. The Centre has selected conference themes of widespread scholarly interest and succeeded in making the Australian academic scene part of the international circuit. It is hard to overemphasise the value of this to Australian research. Individual scholars . . . have attended the Centre, but in addition, visitors have come to Western Australia . . .’

Ian Templeman, Assistant Director-General, Cultural and Educational Services Division at the National Library of Australia testified to the success of the Centre’s policy of networking with other cultural
institutions. ‘In a period in which the National Library has begun to build a more active program of outreach and collaboration with the Australian intellectual community’, he told the Committee, ‘the relationship with the Humanities Research Centre constitutes a natural partnership which offers considerable benefit to both parties’. He observed that the ‘distinguished international and Australian visitors which the Centre has attracted through its Fellowships program have given great charisma both to the Humanities Research Centre itself and to the Australian National University as its host body’. Dr H.V. Brasted, Associate Professor in Indian and Islamic History at The University of New England went even further: he was convinced that what the HRC represents is of considerable value to the ANU in a number of ways:

- As the only research centre of its kind in Australia it must play a part in raising the profile of the University, both nationally and internationally.
- In a sense the HRC is the visible shop front of the Humanities at the ANU, its ability to bring to Canberra a galaxy of the finest scholars across the disciplines is the envy of other universities, and is a testament to its high standing in the academic world.’

And he concluded that:

- Doubtless the Research Schools house an equally impressive array of international scholars but they do not seem to be nearly as visible or as accessible to the academic community beyond Canberra.

For Professor Wilfrid Prest of the Department of History at The University of Adelaide there was no question: the HRC was unique, and not only in Australian terms; to the best of my knowledge no other humanities/social science research institution in the UK or USA has had a comparable impact on such a broad national constituency . . . There is simply no other institution in Australia which offers Australian and foreign scholars opportunities to pursue research and writing across the whole range of humanities and social sciences in a congenial, productive and stimulating intellectual environment.
But no testimonial could be more authoritative and conclusive than that of Professor Richard Rorty, friend to wombats and acknowledged as one of the pre-eminent philosophers of the age. ‘The HRC’, he stated flatly, ‘has been the principal means of communication and collaboration between Australian scholars in the humanities and their colleagues throughout the world. It has an absolutely impeccable reputation in the international scholarly community, and is thought to be one of the most successful think-tanks in the world’. There was nothing more that needed to be said.

McCalman recorded that he had found the Review experience ‘extraordinarily wearing’. He was however happy to report that he had been told that the Committee’s broad conclusions and recommendations . . . are everything we could have wished . . . the Committee has suggested that the HRC remain autonomous, commended the excellence of our programs under straitened circumstances, and recommended budgetary increases to enable us to support longer-term Fellowships and more sustained research projects . . . for the exhausted HRC staff this is a wonderful affirmation of the Centre’s mission.32

It was no more than the truth. The Report of the Review Commission congratulated the HRC on:

- the success of its extensive Visiting Fellows’ program which ‘increases the profile of Australian work in the Humanities and also helps to foster important networks with Australian universities. The Committee commends the excellent job the HRC has done in the past, particularly given its budgetary constraints.’
- its ‘pivotal position and future potential in the nation’s work in the Humanities.’
- its research achievements: ‘the University acknowledges that the Centre is an important component of its research and outreach profiles and a major contributor to the indicators which are reflected in the University’s quantum rating.’

The Committee also noted that ‘the Centre’s continuing success was seriously imperilled by its ambiguous administrative location and the long-term erosion of its resources. It accordingly stressed that:
even to maintain its current activities, the HRC required more space and improved equipment, especially adequate computer resources.

- the HRC requires an urgent increase in funding level: the Centre’s budget being basically unchanged for many years despite a significant growth in its activities and a significant erosion in its infrastructure.

- if the Centre is to be put on a sound basis for maintaining and extending its valuable and important national role, it must have clear avenues for funding within the University.

All this was an admirably lucid summary of the enduring problems faced by the Centre since its inauguration. And the Review Report was just as lucid on what needed to be done to resolve them. It urged the University to begin with

- a significant expansion of the HRC’s research and administrative resources in order for the Centre to fulfil its greater potential as a national centre for research on culture with a strong focus on Australian culture and multicultural issues:

- the HRC must be strengthened in order to allow it to focus more on research while keeping its strong collaborative efforts, its visitors’ program, and its conferences. In particular, it would require substantially more research staff members. It would also require increased administrative staff, and an administrative officer.

- given the Centre’s pivotal position and future potential in the nation’s work in the Humanities, and the general lack of comprehensive research units in this broad field when compared with the social and natural science fields, the University must make an approach to the Government and appropriate advisory groups for a special increment to its funds to enable the Centre to fulfil an enhanced international role.33

It was indeed a wonderful affirmation of what was being done, how it was being done and who was doing it.
Notes

2 Ann Curthoys to the authors, 8 Sept. 2003.
3 John Docker to the authors, 1 Sept. 2003.
6 Schreuder, ‘From the desk of the Associate Director’, supra.
7 Graeme Clarke to the authors, 23 June 2003.
10 Graeme Clarke, ‘From the desk of the Director’, Bulletin, July 1992, 68, p. 3.
13 Clarke to the authors, 29 Sept. 2003.
17 Clarke, ‘From the desk of the Director’, supra.
18 Clarke to the authors, 29 Sept. 2003.
20 Some indication of the attention which Washington traditionally devotes to its diplomatic relations with Australia may be gathered from the fact that the first US Ambassador in Canberra got the job because (a) he needed to get back on the public payroll, and (b) because President Harry S. Truman was advised to send
him as far away as possible. One of the few true professional career diplomats ever appointed as Ambassador to Canberra was the equivocal Marshall Green, whose role in the fall of the Whitlam Government is still a matter for debate and likely to remain so indefinitely. It has been reliably suggested that he was sent to Canberra in the first place as punishment for having displeased Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. Green certainly never held an important post afterwards.

21 Clarke, ‘Who cares about the humanities?’
22 Ann Curthoys to the authors, 1 Sept. 2003.
28 134th Meeting, Steering Committee, minutes, 26 July 1994.