

Plaque Unveiling for the new Law School at Camperdown

Vice-Chancellor, Professor Gavin Brown
Dean Ron McCallum
Chief Justice James Spigelman
Justices
Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam and Margaret Whitlam
Graduates of Sydney Law School
Friends

∞ Tradition and Ambition: Law at Sydney.

The twin themes of tradition and ambition are especially apposite for our new Law School. It was the traditional notion of Law that from the beginning separated our city-based Law Faculty from the Camperdown campus of the University. That is not to say that the traditional view of law devalued the humanities. Indeed the first Professor of Law, Pitt Cobbett, required his students to undertake a combined course in Arts and Law, the former at Camperdown and the latter in the city premises alongside the Courts. Even when straight Law became possible, seven years later in 1897, students were strongly encouraged to undertake the combined Arts-Law course, as they were during Sir John Peden's long tenure. But no one then thought of combining a Law degree with the degrees of other faculties.

That said, Law in our city premises created enduring connections with the profession that have proved indispensable. And not only for articles or part-time work in a law firm. The city's leading practitioners taught us superbly, alongside a generally outstanding full-time teaching staff (with the occasional alcoholic as I recall from earlier days). The city premises that preceded the current Law School building were quaint and decrepit. I specially remember being struck by the adjoining Infants Mistresses' Association, intrigued at the thought of those precocious infants.

Yet it is ambition not just tradition that brings us back to Camperdown: As I said at the Alumni Sesquicentenary Dinner, Sydney Law School's aspiration is to be an abiding influence on future generations of law students and scholars; for so it was for us. A contemporary law school in the twenty-first century must reach out to all the leading faculties of the University. We will do so in a way that enhances our links with the legal profession – and build new connections with other professions. Our aspiration demands a law faculty housed in the University's intellectual heartland, here on this superb central site. The new Law School, as you see, is beautifully designed, light and almost translucent, respectful of the older architecture and with a wonderful open area to meet and talk. The new Law School looks outward towards medicine, economics, the humanities and science on one side, and back to the city across parkland to the other, a potent symbol of our dual orientation. We need to be Janus-faced, to remind lawyers there are two vital dimensions to our craft, the practical and the theoretical, the pure and applied. I need hardly say that to our Vice-Chancellor in his mathematical mode!

The *New York Times* pointed out that the recently appointed leadership of the US Supreme Court will face its greatest challenge in accommodating the new sciences of bio-technology and genetics. What a lawyer needs to understand for today and tomorrow is vastly expanded. Already Sydney Law School is engaged at the interface between Law, Medicine and Public Health; so too with the Humanities and the Social Sciences and especially Business and Economics. Our Dean could not possibly teach labour law without delving into its economic implications, to which he recently subtly added feminist ones.

The Law's international dimension is no less important, with faculty exchange and post-graduate scholarships, most recently for Oxford's BCL. Diccon Loxton has been indefatigable in writing over 200 individual hand-written letters for funds for the scholarship in memory of the late Peter Cameron, deeply valued Chair of the Law School's advisory group. Likewise, I acknowledge with gratitude those who are putting in place a fund in memory of another sadly missed alumnus, the late Justice Peter Hely.

So tradition and ambition embrace each other in a dual existence for the future Sydney Law School. The city premises will become Sydney University's extraversion, its scholastic roots at Camperdown. The tradition of teaching Law as part of professional training must accommodate the new paradigm of the young professional engaged in the city. He or she will pursue post-graduate offerings across law, business, government, finance and banking, whether for intellectual depth or to advance a career. The "old" Law School will become a hub teaching post-graduate disciplines across a wide spectrum related to the needs of the city. It will retain a close and symbiotic connection with Camperdown. Today's young city professional may then combine music at Sydney's Conservatorium of Music and at Camperdown, Art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Power Institute, or Rozelle, geopolitical issues at the Lowy Institute and our Graduate School of Government. It is more than a happy accident that our newly appointed Professor Alan Dupont, head of the Hintze Centre in International Security, launches his seminal paper this week on climate change at the Lowy Institute from where he will be joining us.

To use an analogy that may appeal to Chris Beale here today from New York, imagine Sydney University with a presence in Manhattan at one end and downtown New York at the other. So you see the scope of Sydney University's ambition – a unique multidisciplinary focus and thriving presence at Camperdown with its outreach to the city and expanded presence there, cherishing its connections that bring our alumni to this gathering. Here in the heartland of this eclectic campus with its rich cultural life we will nurture the profoundest research and most fruitful interaction between law students and their teachers. It is that which will spawn thinking that transcends our traditional faculty boundaries.

G F K Santow
Chancellor
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