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THE AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
THIRTEENTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE, N.S.W.  
27 AUGUST - 1 SEPTEMBER 1978

OFFICIAL OPENING OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

The Hon. Mr. Justice M.D. Kirby  
Chairman of the Australian Law Reform Commission

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WELCOME TO PARTICIPANTS

It is my pleasant duty on behalf of the Council and Members of the University of Newcastle to welcome participants to the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society and to declare the Conference "officially" open. This I now do. But I will not sit down immediately because there are, as you would know, certain role expectations which official speakers on official occasions such as this are obliged to fulfil. I venture to suggest that even such a discerning and distinguished group of psychologists as yourselves would get something of a shock if I were simply to declare the session open, turn on my heels and sit down. That sort of thing may be good enough for a controlled experiment. It will simply not do in real life.

I should first of all apologise for the absence of the Chancellor. There is, as some of you will know, a meeting of University Chancellors and Vice Chancellors in Canada. So far as I am aware, Deputy Chancellors did not rate an invitation. But for his obligation to attend to this duty, I am sure that Sir Bede Callaghan would have been here to extend the welcome of the University of Newcastle.

This is, in fact, my first performance as Deputy Chancellor of the University. But before I was elected to that Office, recently, I had agreed to present a paper to the Conference. This I will do on Thursday. I have titled my paper *Psychology and the Law : A Minuet*. As some of you may remember, a minuet is a slow and stately dance for two players. I paused momentarily in my own education to study psychology at Sydney University. Lately, I have come to know and appreciate the work of many of you. I am therefore especially pleased that my first performance is before this Conference. As I shall seek to demonstrate on Thursday, the lawmaker in Australia is gradually awakening to the lessons which psychologists have to teach.

The University of Newcastle will, I am sure, be a happy and conducive environment for the Thirteenth Conference. Some of you will know that the University began as a College of the University of New South Wales, then known as the New South Wales University of Technology, in December 1951. The first students were admitted in 1952. The University became autonomous in January 1965.

The University College was established on the site of the old Newcastle Technical College at Tighes Hill. In 1960 the present Campus of some 80 hectares was acquired here at Shortland. The first buildings on this site were commenced in 1964. The move here began late in 1965, at the end of the first year of autonomy.

In the first year of the life of the College, enrolment totalled 370. In 1977 they reached 4,621, including 364 who were proceeding to higher degrees.

This is a vital institution. Many of you will have heard of the important innovations being pioneered in the Faculty of Medicine. A positive decision was made to endeavour to develop a new approach to medical education and to the selection of candidates for admission to the University. The same innovative spirit permeates the other Faculties. The Department of Psychology

here is engaged in interesting and novel research, some of which will doubtless be recounted among the papers to be presented to you.

The site of this Campus, Shortland, is named after Lieutenant John Shortland, who in 1797 led the first Colonial Expedition to Newcastle. The city is now the second metropolis of this State. The surrounding districts are rich in the history of this country. I hope that many of you who are strangers to Newcastle will find the time to slip away and explore the attractive and interesting environs of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. Just make sure to be back on Thursday for my paper.

#### THE CONFERENCE

I now turn to the subject matter of your Conference. A cynical Vice Chancellor (not of this place) recently asserted that a Conference is an occasion when people get together who individually can do nothing and collectively can agree that nothing can be done.

I am sure that the same charge will not be laid against you at the end of this week. The exquisite variety of the papers to be presented needs no words from me. There is something here for everybody. We will start in a few minutes with the Presidential Address by Professor Sheehan. The concern of a Society which collects within one discipline such a variety of special interests are reflected elsewhere in this community. The rapid development of computing is another instance where science and technology have created a new, identifiable group which transcends established professional and occupational organisations. Psychologists have been around for much longer than computerists. But the variety of their discipline, as demonstrated in this Conference, makes the existence and work of the Australian Psychological Society and the continued success of its Annual Conferences, a truly remarkable achievement. I congratulate the Society on bringing together so many distinguished scholars from Australia and overseas. I am sure that we will all learn much from the papers to be presented. Our country and

the body of knowledge, which is universal, will be richer for this meeting of minds.

We are especially fortunate to have a number of distinguished speakers from abroad. Professor N.E. Miller will deliver the Keynote Address on Tuesday evening at 8 o'clock. He has taken as his theme "Visceral Learning and Biofeedback : Experimental Evidence and Clinical Applications". Professor Miller is a past President of the American Psychological Association and holds distinctions which includes membership of the National Academy of Science in the United States and the National Medal of Science.

Also on Tuesday Mr. Asher Cashdan will deliver an Invited Address on *Pre-School Education : Theory and Practice*. Mr. Cashdan is Head of the Department of Communication Studies at Sheffield City Polytechnic and has had a distinguished career as a child psychologist and educationalist.

On Thursday at 2 o'clock the University will confer upon Professor Roger Russell the degree of Honorary Doctor of Science. Professor Russell will respond with something better than the new graduate's hurried handshake or embarrassed curtsy. He is to deliver an address on *Psychology and the Process of Change*. Although Professor Russell is Vice Chancellor and Professor of Psycho-Biology at the Flinders University of South Australia, I include him amongst the list of speakers from overseas. Not only does he have a distinguished record as a scholar in his own country, the United States, and in England where he later taught. He will be coming directly to the University from the Conference in Canada, no doubt submitting himself during the journey to experimental observations on the effect of jet-lag on circadian rhythms.

The remaining invited speakers, Professor Cumming of Monash University and Professor Lovibond of the University of New South Wales, will both speak tomorrow. Professor Cumming will address the Conference on *Accident or Design?* His study of human performance in road traffic and other transport systems

is paralleled by the experimental research of Professor Lovibond concerning driving skills. When the Law Reform Commission was charged by the government with the task of preparing a report on the appropriate legal reaction to alcohol and drug impaired driving, we approached Professor Lovibond. His research established to the satisfaction of the Commission that even skilled drivers suffer significant impairment in driving skills after imbibing intoxicants. The assertions of "common sense" and "folk wisdom" that some people can "hold their liquor" at high levels of consumption were simply not borne out by extensive empirical data.

I note that Professor Lovibond is to address the Conference on a different field of interest, choosing as his theme *"Dethroning the Female Orgasm : Drive, Arousability, Responsiveness and Orgasmic Capacity in Female Sexual Behaviour"*. None of the references received from the Commonwealth Government and currently before the Law Reform Commission require specific study of these experiments by Professor Lovibond. I am sure that will deter none of you from attending the dethroning. I only hope that there are as many of you at the conferring on Thursday as there will be at the dethroning tomorrow.

Mention of Professor Lovibond's address calls attention for the symposium after lunch tomorrow on implications for counselling of the report of the Royal Commission on Human Relationships. One of the participants is to be Miss Anne Deveson, one of the Royal Commissioners. It is not beyond expectation that sensitive and controversial psychological experiments will have an impact on the law. The report of the Royal Commission, so hastily condemned during the heat of an election campaign, is now under the study of an Interdepartmental Group in Canberra. I am sure that many of the proposals put forward with the benefit of assistance from psychologists and other disciplines, will ultimately find their way into our legal system : making the laws more tolerant and understanding of human behaviour. There is a great deal in the law, particularly the criminal law, that leaves much to be desired. Fortunately,

there is a growing perception that this is so. Governments of all political persuasions and Parliaments become increasingly concerned to remove the more intolerant features of our legal system. That is why bodies such as the Royal Commission, the Law Reform Commission, the Family Law Council and the like have been established. The days when psychologists were simply crying in the wilderness are coming to a close. Increasing education in our community and the exponential developments of science and technology herald a demand that the laws by which we are all governed should reflect the knowledge and understanding gathered by all disciplines, including psychology.

The week ahead promises a feast of interesting papers and lively debate. If you are depressed, there is Dr. Roe's paper *A Personal Construct Theory of Depression*. If you are shy, Mr. Orr will present *An Experimental-Clinical Group Treatment for Shy Individuals*. On Tuesday, H.E. Stanton presents his paper *So You Want to Feel More Confident?* Every branch of psychology is represented: from animal behaviour to cognitive processes; from cross cultural research to educational psychology; from mathematical psychology to physiological research and the study of animal behaviour. The social events and conversation hours will ensure that we go away knowing something of each other and something more of the mind and behaviour of man.

On behalf of the University of Newcastle, I welcome you and have much pleasure in declaring this Conference open.