

History of the Foundation



Extracts from:

Colin Roderick, *Foundation for Australian Literary Studies THE FIRST TEN YEARS 1966–1976*.

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THE FOUNDATION FOR AUSTRALIAN LITERARY STUDIES of the James Cook University of North Queensland, like so many North Queensland enterprises undertaken since Leichhardt opened up the area with his journey of exploration in 1844–5, originated in Sydney.

There, shortly after Dr Colin Roderick had in July 1965 accepted the invitation of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Queensland, Sir Fred Schonell, to take the foundation Chair of English at the University College of Townsville, two crucial meetings occurred.

DR Roderick, then a Director of the publishing company of Angus and Robertson Ltd, invited an interested group of bookmen to join him at two luncheons at Claude Fay's Metropolitan Hotel, on the corner of Bridge and George Streets, a hundred metres from the publishing offices of the Company. To the first meeting came Sir Norman Cowper, Chairman of the Company; George Adie Ferguson, CBE, Managing Director; the poet and critic Douglas Stewart, OBE, a member of the Company's literary staff and formerly editor of the Red Page of the *Sydney Bulletin*; the poet Kenneth Slessor, OBE, then literary critic of the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* and President of the Journalists' Club; Harry Kippax, drama critic of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and DR Clement Semmler, of the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

At that meeting DR Roderick broached the idea of the establishment of a literary foundation in association with his Chair, for the close affiliation between the community and the Chair

of Australian Literature at the University of Sydney which he had worked to establish had not eventuated. The aim of the proposed foundation was to bring writers, teachers, critics, and readers of Australian literature into closer contact with each other and with the reading public. This, Roderick said, could occur through public lectures, seminars exploring the practical aspects of literature, social occasions with a literary flavour, nation-wide symposia on the problems of communication between writer and reader, and by publications inspired by activities of the Foundation. He wished it to be free of Government or University financial support and to rely for its continued existence on public appeal to the spirit of free initiative.

At that time North Queensland had no public Art Gallery, no regional well-stocked library, and no organized theatre. The population of Townsville was 48,000. The University College, instituted in 1961, occupied a small building in an inner suburb and had no more than a hundred students in the Department of English. The demand for a cultural impetus to North Queensland was clamant. All present at that first meeting in Sydney were in favour of the idea and undertook to support it if it were established.

At the second meeting the same gentlemen attended and met the newly-appointed Warden of the University College, DR K.J.C. Back, as he was passing through Sydney on his return from sabbatical leave. DR Back, a bio-chemist, undertook to support the venture on its being made clear that no call would be made on University funds on its behalf. George Ferguson pledged his support by way of publication by Angus and Robertson of monographs consisting substantially of a series of annual public lectures sponsored by the Foundation.

In anticipation of success, DR Roderick requested the notable author and commentator Rohan Rivett of Melbourne to hold himself in readiness as the first guest of honour at the inaugural dinner envisaged for July 1966 and as the Foundation's first public lecturer.

Resigning as a Director of Angus and Robertson on 5 January 1966, DR Roderick entered on his duties as Professor of English on 19 January 1966. The Department of English was at the time a subsidiary of the Department of English of the University of Queensland, of which Professor K.G. Hamilton was head. The courses of both Departments ran in parallel, and with Professor Hamilton's agreement, it was possible to institute two years of study of Australian literature at both institutions from the beginning of 1967.

Meanwhile Professor Roderick, carrying a letter of introduction from the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Alderman (later the Honorable) Harry F. Jensen, conferred with the Mayor of

Townsville, Mr Angus Smith, OBE, and with Mr Andrew Dale, Chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the University College, on the inauguration of the Foundation. The Chairman of the Advisory Council of the University College, Mr H.T. Priestley, agreed to act as foundation Chairman of the Foundation.

A Steering Committee consisting of Professor Roderick, Mr Andrew Dale, and Mr Justice Russell Skerman arranged an inaugural subscription dinner at which the Foundation would, following approval of the Advisory Council of the University College, come formally into existence.

At this dinner, held on 18 July 1966 in the Orchid Room of the Hotel Allen, Townsville, then the only commodious dining-room in the city, seventy citizens with the Mayor of Townsville in the Chair heard the formal proposals to establish the "Foundation for Australian Studies", as it was first called. Among them were the former Commonwealth Treasurer, Sir Arthur Fadden, judges of the North Queensland jurisdictions, the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops, Commonwealth Senators and State members of Parliament, including DR Peter Delamothe of Bowen, then Minister for Justice and Attorney-General of Queensland, and leaders of commerce and industry in the city.

To it came messages of support from leading figures in Australian literary and academic fields. Sir John Barry, Senior Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, expressed the hope that the influence of the proposed Foundation would be nationwide. Sir Stephen Roberts, Vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney, described the formation of the Foundation as "a major educational achievement". The Vice-chancellor of the University of Queensland, Sir Fred Schonell, saw it as "a means of charting the past, vitalizing the present, and influencing the future for the increasing number of Australians seeking a literary conscience".

Mr Rohan Rivett, responding to the toast of the guest of honour, predicted that the University College would grow into one of the important universities of the Southern Hemisphere. "Where you have a strong and virile university, you see enormous growth and prosperity," he said.

Moving the resolution to establish the Foundation, the Warden of the College, DR Back, said that the progress of the humanities at the College, being spearheaded by Professor Colin Roderick, would provide essential balance in the development of the university. Mr John

Saint-Smith, CBE, remarked that his own profession of engineering would benefit from the improvement in expression which he expected would follow the activities of the Foundation.

Following the reading of the congratulatory telegram from the former Governor-General, Sir William McKell, Professor Roderick dealt briefly with the proposed aims of the Foundation. "While a university must serve the mind of man," he said, "inspiring man by its research and teaching in the various disciplines, it must never lose sight of the fact that its great object was to serve the community." He was certain that the Foundation would carry the name of Townsville not only before the rest of Australia, but around the world.

DR Peter Delamothe summed up the enthusiasm displayed for the project by remarking on the historical significance of the evening's proceedings for North Queensland. "History will record," he said, "that on this night we went back to what our forbears studied first and foremost — humanity."

The resolution carried by the meeting not only formally established the Foundation but appointed a preliminary committee to draft a constitution. Its members were:

Chairman:

Mr H.T. Priestley, Chairman of the Advisory Council of the University of Townsville

Deputy Chairman:

DR K.J.C. Back, Warden

Executive Officer:

Professor Colin Roderick, CBE, Professor of English

Honorary Secretary:

Mr Andrew Dale, Chairman of the Public Relations Committee of the Advisory Council of the College

Honorary Treasurer:

Mr R.J. Barnett, Assistant Registrar

Honorary Solicitor:

Mr G.V. Roberts, CBE, Deputy-Chairman of the Advisory Council.

Members:

The Honourable Justice Russell Skerman of the Northern Supreme Court; Mr John Saint-Smith, CBE, (Manager of the Copper Refineries Pty LTD); Mr W.E. Hunt, Manager of the Commonwealth Bank, Townsville; Mr Gordon Lee, of Gordon Lee Motors; Mr Andrew Dale; Mr H. Neil Smith.

Public Lectures

The Steering Committee's first guest of honour, the Melbourne author of *Behind Bamboo* and political commentator Rohan Rivett was also the embryo Foundation's first lecturer.

Rohan Rivett, BA, born in 1917—died 1977—was educated at Wesley College, Melbourne, the University of Melbourne and Oxford University. During the second World War he was a war correspondent with the Australian Forces. He was news editor of the Malaya Broadcasting Commission when the Japanese overran the peninsula. Along with fellow Australians he slaved on the Burma-Siam railway during the dark days of the war. His captivity ended only with the surrender of Japan.

After the war he joined the staff of the Melbourne *Herald* and served as its correspondent in China and Britain. In 1951 he became Editor-in-Chief and a Director of News Limited, Adelaide. He was a Director of the International Press Institute, Zurich, in 1962–3 and was an Honorary Life Member of the organization.

Rivett's lectures followed on the heels of the inaugural dinner. His subject was "Writing About Australia". He dealt with it in four lectures, two given in the Town Hall, Townsville and two in the College Refectory. In the chair for the first lecture, delivered in the Town Hall to some 200 people who attended, the Chairman of the Advisory Council of the College presided. In it Mr Rivett traced the origins of post-war Australian writing in the work of such war reporters as Alan Moorehead, Chester Wilmot, and George Johnston. The second lecture, dealing with the writing of Australian history, was delivered an equally large and enthusiastic audience in the Refectory of the University College with the Mayor of Townsville presiding.

So the pattern of linking the community with the University College was set from the beginning.

Mr Rivett's remaining two lectures, on Australian travel literature and biography, attracted audiences of more than 200.

In due course the series appeared under the imprint of Angus and Robertson. The Company met all costs of publication and paid a royalty to the Foundation.

Preliminary Activities

The Preliminary Committee met for the first time on 27 July 1966 at the Reef Motel, Strand, where subcommittees were formed to draft a Constitution and to organize finance.

The Constitution Committee consisted of the Warden, Mr Justice Skerman, Professor Colin Roderick, and Mr G.V. Roberts. The final draft was the work of Mr Justice Skerman and Professor Roderick and was adopted by the Senate of the University of Queensland.

The Finance Committee began its operations with a credit balance of \$846 after payment of establishment expenses, including the inaugural dinner.

Four major immediate aims suggested themselves to the Steering Committee: to conduct an annual series of public lectures on various phases of Australian life; to arrange to publish them in a monograph; to endow an annual prize for the best book published in Australia; and to sponsor three-day schools in English Expression to which secondary schools in North Queensland might send one senior secondary school student.

A long-term aim was to encourage graduates, either from Australian universities or from others, to pursue postgraduate studies in Australian literature.

In general terms the Foundation was to do all that it could to enrich the cultural life of the community.

How far these aims were realized will appear as this record of the Foundation's activities unfolds.

The Foundation was to remain an arm of the Department of English. Membership was to depend on the making of donations to the University College that would enable the Foundation to achieve its aims. The scale of donations to be suggested to those invited to become members was as follows:

Full member : \$50

Benefactor : \$150

Life Member : \$300

The Preliminary Committee's second meeting occurred on 16 February 1967 at Lang's Hotel, Flinders Street, by which date the Foundation had a credit balance of \$6,221.93.

The Committee agreed to invite Professor G.A. Wilkes, Professor of English at the University of Sydney, to deliver three lectures on the Australian novel to coincide with the Annual Dinner on Monday, 29 May 1967.

The Foundation's Annual Award for the best book dealing with any aspect of Australian life and published in 1967 began with a prize of \$500, the funds for the first Award being donated by the Australian book publishers on the representation of Mr George Ferguson.

With the encouragement of the Vice-chancellor of the University of Queensland, Sir Fred Schonell, Mrs Margaret Laurie began research under the auspices of the Foundation into the myths and legends of Torres Strait. This project was successfully completed. The ensuing book, *Myths and Legends of Torres Strait*, splendidly illustrated with paintings by islanders, appeared from the University of Queensland Press and won the Foundation's Annual Award.

Journalism Seminar

During the week-end of 27–28 May 1967 the Executive Director, Professor Colin Roderick, co-editor of *The Journalists' Craft* (Sydney, A & R, 1965) attended a seminar organized by the University of New England at Armidale for the provincial press.

His address dealt with the need for closer ties between tertiary education institutions and the press. Sub-graduate courses such as the meagre diploma courses in journalism offered by some universities were insufficient. The status of journalism had to be lifted. What was needed was a marriage of the practical training by the cadet tutor and the broad educational basis provided by the discipline of a university degree. He broached the proposal that universities appropriately placed might create the degree of Bachelor of Journalism.

To thrash the question out he proposed holding a symposium on it in 1968 in Townsville under the auspices of the Foundation. His proposal was accepted, and he was asked to convene a conference to discuss education in journalism. He was empowered to invite representatives of the Australian Journalists' Association, metropolitan and provincial newspaper proprietors, and radio and television newsmen and public relations officers to attend, together with interested university faculties.

The conference was tentatively fixed for May 1968, during the university vacation. It was opened by His Excellency Lord Casey, Governor General of the Commonwealth and presided over by His Honour Mr Justice Else-Mitchell. Lord Casey subsequently bestowed Vice-Regal patronage on the Foundation and this all subsequent Governors-General have maintained.

First Annual Dinner

At the first Annual Dinner, held in the Orchid Room of the Hotel Allen on 29 May 1967, 77 members and their guests met the Guest of Honour, Professor GA Wilkes, and his wife, and heard the Chairman, Mr H.T. Priestley, present an Interim Report embodying most of what is in these notes.

At that date there were 53 members, three benefactors, seven life members, and 26 contributors of sums ranging from \$2 upwards. Members ranged from private citizens to the biggest commercial and industrial companies in Australia. The Foundation's credit balance stood at \$6,274.43.

Proposing the toast of the University College of Townsville, Mr J.J. Casey, District Manager of the Mutual Life and Citizens Assurance Company, predicted that the growth of the young university of a thousand students would exceed expectations.

"The College," he remarked, "is now occupying the first buildings on the permanent campus at Douglas, which is designed ultimately to accommodate 10,000 students."

He saw the future university as a focal point for education not only for North Queensland but also for our neighbours to the north. "I wonder," he said, "Whether this enrolment of 10,000 is as far away as many people think."

In response, the Warden, DR K.J.C. Back, said that he and his staff were very conscious of the fact that the university was, and would continue to be, a part of the community. He cited the Foundation as "an admirable example of how university activity and community interest were brought together."

Professor Wilkes's lectures on the theme, "Australian Novelists Look at Life," delivered at the Town Hall and the College Refectory on 30 May, and 1 and 5 June 1967, drew attendances of 129, 60 and 165 respectively. Angus and Robertson LTD subsequently published an enlarged version of his lectures as *Australian Literature: A Conspectus*. It proved to be a strong seller and was long in demand as a concise introduction to Australian creative literature.

Annual Literary Award

During the year the Board of the Foundation resolved to establish an annual literary award to be known as the Townsville Foundation for Australian Studies Award.

The Assistant Registrar, Mr R.J. Barnett, who was both Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary of the Foundation, promulgated the rules relating to the Award in June 1967.

The Award was from the outset meant to recognize merit in the writing of Australian non-fiction and to march with the Miles Franklin Award given annually for merit in the writing of the Australian novel. Since the Miles Franklin Award did not take in poetry and the short story, the Board decided to widen the scope of the Townsville Award to include publications in any field of Australian writing. The essential qualifications were, and remain: (a) that the publications entered be published in Australia, even though they might be printed elsewhere; and (b) that they deal with some aspect of Australian life.

The judges appointed to the panel for the 1967 Award were Professor GA Wilkes of Sydney, DR Stephen Murray-Smith of Melbourne, and Professor Colin Roderick of Townsville.

The prize money was fixed at \$500 until 1976, when it became \$750. (It has since risen to \$5,000.) Since 1980 the winner has also received the H T Priestley Memorial Medal.

In December 1991, the Board of the Foundation agreed unanimously, that the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies Award be re-titled to honour its founder, Professor Colin Roderick, and the new title "The Colin Roderick Award" was adopted.

The Award has usually been made by the guest of honour at the Annual Dinner. The first Award went to the Poet Douglas Stewart for his *Collected Poems 1936–1967*.

School in English Expression

In the aim of enlarging interest in the work of the Department, the Foundation began the organization of an annual weekend school for secondary school students. To this two Senior level students from each of the secondary schools of North Queensland came. The Premier (and Minister for Education), Mr J.C.A. Pizzey, approved of the scheme, and the Railways Department provided the young students with free passes to attend. The Regional Director of Education at Townsville, Mr W.H. Hooper, who was a member of the Advisory Council of the University, and the Principals of the secondary schools, supported the scheme enthusiastically.

The first school, in Australian language and literature, occurred on 22–23 June 1967. The poet and novelist, David Rowbotham, participated in the programme, as did members of staff of the English Department.

Angus and Robertson LTD provided five prizes for the best written accounts of the school submitted subsequently by participants. Miss Barbara Vissers, 16, of the Townsville State High School, won the first prize with a report that revealed a talent for creative writing worthy of cultivation.

Of the 29 students who participated, 21 subsequently enrolled as students at the James Cook University.

In subsequent years similar weekend schools were held. In 1968 59 Senior students participated in one on "Australian Ballads and Songs" conducted by Hugh Anderson of Melbourne.

The first session, on "Folk Song and Popular Ballads" dealt with traditional songs of the British Isles and their survival in Australia. The second, "Stringybark and Greenhide", reviewed songs reflecting Australian settlement, goldfield life, bush life, and journalistic songs. The third, "The Ballads", leaned heavily on Lawson, Paterson, and the balladists of the *Sydney Bulletin*. The fourth, "Folk Song in Australia", revealed that North Queensland was the last "golden hole" for the collection of bush songs and mining ballads.

On the Saturday evening, the students enjoyed a Campfire Singabout on the campus in the foothills of the Mount Stuart Range. For the first time—and, as it happened, the last—the hills re-echoed to the strains of "The Wild Colonial Boy", "Click Go the Shears, Boys", "The Dying Stockman", and scores of other Australian ballads.

Next morning, at Cape Pallarenda, Mr Anderson discoursed on "Songs of the Sea and of Sailors". In a fascinating session he took the students through the primitive work songs and explained the evolution of sea chanties as songs of entertainment as well as accompaniments to labour on the ropes and at the capstan. The session culminated with the salt-water ballads of E.J. Brady and ended with a Chanty Singsong.

The students having presented Hugh Anderson with an inscribed boomerang, he came again in 1969 with Shirley Andrews, President of the Victorian Folk Music Club, for a school on Australian song and dance. The school took place on 12–13 September 1969.

In addition to more on Australian song from Mr Anderson, the students learned some of the simple country dances and on the second day went through their paces in the Anglican Synod Hall on Melton Hill.

E.J. Banfield

The year was notable for the Foundation's acquisition for James Cook University of the half-acre surrounding the burial cairn of E.J. Banfield and his wife on Dunk Island. Until then the land on which the cairn stands had been the property of Avis Rent-a-Car. Mr Eric McIlree,

Chairman and Managing Director of the Company, visited Dunk Island on 9 October 1967 with the Chief Commissioner of Lands for Queensland, Mr E.C.J. Muir; the Chief Conservator of Forests, Mr A. Trist; Sir Raphael Cilento, of the National Trust; Professor Colin Roderick, Executive Director of the Foundation; and Mr Keith Brazier, a Townsville surveyor. The purpose of the visit was to select and mark out a reserve for a proposed Banfield Memorial Centre.

Mr McIlree, whose untimely death shortly afterwards in a motor boat explosion in Sydney Harbour deprived the Foundation of a firm friend, surrendered the half-acre surrounding the cairn to the Crown, which then gazetted it as trust land to be vested in the University College of Townsville, later James Cook University. Avis Rent-a-Car undertook to provide access to the Centre from the northern bank of the embouchure to the Goo-Tchur Creek by a footway leading up the creek bank to a dam to be built by the Company adjacent to the site of the Centre. In the event of the University's erecting a building on the site, the Company would provide assistance with a tractor and trailer to haul building materials and would provide an honorary caretaker.

Mr McIlree further proposed to erect a dormitory block on a suitable site on the Company's land which would be made available to University students and participants in schools organised by the University at a price lower than the normal tariff.

In the event of a Banfield Museum's being erected, with rooms suitable for research in marine science, the question of charging an admittance fee was left open, depending, as it would, on the quality and attractiveness of the exhibits.

The Advisory Council of the University College accepted these proposals. By an Order in Council dated 28 January 1971 one rood 7.9 perches in the Innisfail Land Agent's District, Cardwell, being Reserve 12668 as shown on plan 2387 deposited in Survey office 71-1828 S.A. (R.C. 25948), was handed over to the trustees gazetted, being the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Advisory Council, later Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor of the Council of James Cook University, the Warden (Vice-chancellor), Assistant Registrar (Registrar), Chairman of the Buildings, Grounds and Development Committee, the Professor of English, and the Professor of Marine Biology. Access was, and remains, by a pathway leading to the northern corner of the lot, being lot 3 RD 23282, formerly lot 2, the land being gazetted as a Reserve for Museum (Banfield Memorial Purposes).

Professor Roderick, who was then engaged on research into the life of Edmund James Banfield, visited Ararat in the ensuing University vacation and informed Banfield's niece, Miss Lorna Banfield, of the University's intentions. Miss Banfield thereupon donated to the University a large collection of Aboriginal and New Guinea artefacts which Banfield had got together during his time in North Queensland, together with an extensive collection of shells which he had gathered on the beaches and environments of Dunk Island. These were packed under Professor Roderick's supervision and were delivered to the Warden's office in what is now University Hall. The case being large—some 12 feet by 15 inches by 18 inches—the Warden had it stored in one of the unused buildings at Stuart that had earlier served as accommodation quarters for students.

When in 1976 a Professor of Materials Science was appointed, the case could not be traced. It was supposed that it had become accidentally entangled with the wreckage of the hut in which it was housed when Cyclone Althea struck on 24 December 1971 and that it was most likely carted away with the derelict timber and iron to one of the city's dumps and there entombed—to provide a discovery for some future archaeologist.

In 1974, on Professor Roderick's return from study leave, a beginning was made to enlist Governors and Life Governors of the Foundation whose major interest would be in the construction and care of the Banfield Memorial Centre. Other ventures precluded any advance until 1976, when Mr Eric Martel became the first Life Governor of the Foundation.

The land remains vested in the James Cook University and the burial cairn of Banfield and his wife is open to public inspection by anyone visiting the island, access being by the footway in the Crown sanctuary alongside Gooo-Tchur Creek and across the dam built by Avis Rent-a-Car's heirs to the property surrounding the cairn.

Gifts to Library

During the year Professor Roderick diverted to the University College library the complete run of the Townsville *Evening Star* from 1897 to 1938. This is the only newspaper record of events in Townsville before 1912, the files of the Townsville *Daily Bulletin* prior to then having been lost in a fire in that year.

The year 1976 was notable in the annals of the Foundation for the visit of the Governor-general, Sir John Kerr, as the Foundation's guest of honour, and Lady Kerr.

Several events that occurred during the dinner made it a memorable occasion.

In November 1975 Sir John, as Governor-general, had dismissed the Labor Government led by the Prime Minister Mr E.G. Whitlam on the ground that he was unable to command supply from the Parliament. Much controversy had followed, and Sir John and Lady Kerr had during the year succeeding suffered much calumny.

His visit to Townsville was calm, and for that much of the credit goes to the good sense of the citizens, who took their example from the Mayor, Alderman P.G. Tucker, who had formerly been Leader of the Labor Opposition in the Queensland Parliament.

During his address to the 136 guests in Lowth's Hotel on 17 September 1976, Sir John announced that he was writing a book in which he would traverse events leading to the climax in 1975. "His difficulty," he told the gathering, "was in reconciling his own feelings about the events of his life with objective fact."

An amusing incident was Sir John's presentation of a cheque for \$750 to a representative of the winner of the Foundation's Literary Award for 1975. This turned out to be DR Denis Murphy, of the University of Queensland, for his biography of a former Queensland Labor politician, T.J. Ryan. DR Murphy was then on study leave in the United States, and Miss Marilyn Bitomsky, representing the publishers of the book, accepted the cheque.

Sir John described the book as an exercise of some distinction. It was during his comments on the book that he referred to the difficulty of writing autobiography but he said: "It is a very congenial task to sit in Government House reflectively and quietly recording recent history." He recalled Sir Phillip Game's dismissal of J.T. Lang in 1932 and commented dryly that compared to those days of crisis the present was a time of tranquillity—"especially in Queensland," he added.

This was the last year in which the winners of prizes donated by members of the Foundation received their Awards from the hands of a distinguished guest at the Annual dinner—on this occasion Lady Kerr. In 1977 these prizes went to augment those presented at the Vice-Chancellor's Prize-giving Ceremony held at the University...

The Foundation for Australian Literary Studies Limited fosters the study of Australian literature within the University and in the community. It is maintained by the subscriptions of members and the generosity of supporters. James Cook University of North Queensland established the Foundation within the Department of English in 1966.

Governors-General from Lord Casey to Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC have extended their patronage to the Foundation's work.

The Colin Roderick Award: Since 1967 the Foundation has presented an annual award to the best book published in Australia which deals with any aspect of Australian life. The value of the 2008 Award is \$10,000. Since 1980 the winner has also received the H T Priestley Memorial Medal.

Schools' Book Review Competition: 1st prize \$500; 2nd prize \$300; 3rd prize \$200. From 2001 to 2003 the Foundation held a competition for full-time secondary school students aged 18 years or younger (one entry per person), submitted through the entrant's school. Winners: 2001 Felicity Jensen, Peace Lutheran College, Cairns; 2002 Ryan Anderson, Peace Lutheran College, Cairns.

Guests of Honour who have presented awards have included: Mr Laurie Muller, OA; Ms Hilary McPhee; Professor Dame Leonie Kramer, DBE OBE; Professor FJ Willett, AO DSC; The Rt Hon Sir Garfield Barwick, AK GCMG; The Rt Hon Sir John Kerr, AK GCMG KStJ QC; The Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen, AK GCMG GCVO KStJ CMG; The Rt Hon Sir Harry Gibbs, AC GCMG PC KBE; The Rt Hon Sir Ninian Stephen, AK GCMG GCVO KBE; The Rt Hon Lord Casey; Mr Thomas Shapcott AO; The Hon Mr Justice Rae Else-Mitchell, CMG QC; The Hon Sir Walter Campbell, AC QC; Emeritus Professor Colin Roderick, CBE; The Hon Mr Justice Gordon Samuels, AC; the Rt Hon Sir William Deane, AC, KBE; Major General Peter Arnison, AO; The Hon. Chief Justice John Phillips AC; Mr Les Murray and Margaret Scott.

National Seminars: The Foundation has conducted two national seminars, the first in 1968 on the Education and Training of Journalists, the second in 1971 on the Teaching of Australian Literature. In 1986 the Foundation co-sponsored the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature at James Cook University.