



Emmanuel College

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

**The Spirit of Caledonia in the Formation
of The University of Queensland**

By

**Mr John D Story AO
Chancellor, The University of Queensland**

**EMMANUEL PAPERS
NUMBER 11 – FEBRUARY 2011**

Emmanuel College
The University of Queensland
Enriching lives since 1911

Emmanuel College is Australia's ninth, and with St John's College, The University of Queensland's first residential college to gain affiliation. It was founded by the Presbyterian Church of Queensland in 1911 with the first students taking up residence in Wickham Terrace in 1912. As the Presbyterian Church moved towards partnership with other religious denominations during the 1970s, Emmanuel College also came under the auspices of the Uniting Church. Upon its inauguration, Emmanuel College was an all male residence but this changed in 1975 when women were admitted as collegians. Now, the College numbers around 340 students with half our population being female.

Further change was experienced by the College when it moved in 1955 from its original site in Wickham Terrace to its present location on the main university campus in St Lucia.

Since 1911, Emmanuel has stood for excellence in all round education and has had seven Rhodes Scholars during its history. Its graduates have gone on to make a major contribution to Australia in many areas, including as doctors, scientists, teachers, engineers, lawyers and judges, politicians, ambassadors and diplomats, and church leaders.

THE AUTHOR

Mr John D Story

Mr John Douglas Story BA, LLB, FAICD has been Chancellor of The University of Queensland since 2009. John has enjoyed a long and successful career as a corporate lawyer and director. He has been chairman, managing partner and partner with the law firm, Corrs, Chambers Westgarth and director of various companies, most notably, chairman of Tabcorp Holdings and Suncorp-Metway Limited. His outstanding career in the corporate sector was recognised with his chairmanship of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He is a Scot by background and his grandfather, also John Douglas Story, was the under-secretary of the Queensland Department of Education from 1906 to 1920 and Public Service Commissioner from 1920 to 1939. He was one of the people instrumental in the founding of the University and became the first full-time Vice-Chancellor in 1955. John's own story has been closely intertwined through the generations with that of The University of Queensland.

Copyright is held by the author

This speech was delivered at the Emmanuel College Convocation Dinner on Sunday 20 February 2011.

The Spirit of Caledonia in the Formation of The University of Queensland

As is the case with so many of us, the University of Queensland has been an accepted and integral part of my life. The formative parts of my education, both academic and otherwise, were enjoyed here, as were those of my wife and our children. In my professional career, I retained connections with my old School of Law, and over the years provided legal advice to the University on a range of issues. With the benefit of several years on the Senate, I took up the role of Chancellor on the basis of an undoubtedly arrogant, naive and false assumption that I had an adequate understanding of the University and all that it represented. In fact the period of the past two years has represented a continuing journey of discovery, certainly a very enjoyable journey but plenty of scope for further discovery remains.

The past year was of course the Centenary of the University, and this year it is the Centenary of Emmanuel College. The celebration of centenaries can be an opportunity for self indulgence, wallowing in the past and basking in the reflected glory of the achievements of those who have come before us. But in the world of academia, one hundred years is no big deal. We are very much the junior to the Universities of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Tasmania and, as a visiting speaker ever so gently reminded us last year, her home, the University of Glasgow, is five hundred and sixty years old. Perhaps with this in mind, the Vice Chancellor set the objective that the University celebration should be focussed more upon our entry into the second one hundred years, and I believe that this was successfully achieved. But let us not forget, the Vice Chancellor is an engineer. Those of us with the benefit of a more liberal education know that to confront the challenges of the future some understanding of the past is essential.

During the course of the past year, therefore, with the imposed discipline of speeches such as this evening's, I have found it fascinating to delve back into the background and formative events and personalities of the University, and I would like to think that, as a consequence, I am a little wiser in confronting the issues of today.

It was on that basis that I approached tonight's address. The University Colleges, and Emmanuel in particular, are as much a part of UQ as the Great Court, but are also separate and distinct. What are their origins and their role?

In the case of Emmanuel, whether it is through the dulcet tones of your Principal, or the mournful wailing of the pipes, the spirit of Caledonia is pervasive, and that led me to the further question, just what has been the influence of the Scots, and their strong educational traditions, on the development of this College, our University and tertiary education in Australia generally. I appreciate that there are among you here tonight many whose starting base of knowledge in these areas far exceeds mine, but these are some reflections based on my reading, which I hope might be of interest as you commence upon your centenary year.

Much has been written of the Scottish educational tradition, but just what does that entail? There is no doubt as to its strong history at the tertiary level. The 15th century saw the founding of the University of St Andrews in 1413, the University of Glasgow in 1450 and the University of Aberdeen in 1495. This was accompanied by the passing of the Education Act of 1496, which decreed that all sons of barons and freeholders substance should attend grammar schools. This was a period of close links between Scotland and France, and saw a flowering of Scottish culture under the influence of the European renaissance. All this resulted in an increase in literacy, albeit concentrated within a wealthy and male elite.

The real underpinning may instead be identified with the Scottish Reformation. In January 1561, John Knox and a small group of clergymen set out their national programme for spiritual reform, which included "the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this Realm". "For the poor, if need be, education may be given free; for the rich, it is only necessary to see that education is given under proper supervision." The fascinating aspect is that the fundamental concepts of the Reformation, the importance of individual conscience and the supremacy of the scriptures in all matters of faith and practice, made widespread literacy essential. Put another way, the business model of the Calvinists required that their constituents could read. It could be said that, in this instance, a religious upbringing operated to encourage and expand knowledge and understanding, rather than to confine and constrain.

I will skip over the battles between church and state as to the control of education, but suffice to say that by the end of the 17th century a considerable proportion of the population of Scotland was literate, and the educational system had developed to a point considerably in advance of anything known before, well ahead of England and most other European countries.

The 18th century brought the golden age of Scottish education, contributing to the intellectual advances of the Scottish enlightenment and the industrial revolution, as well as allowing significant migration elsewhere of professionally trained and commercially talented Scots. Its universities also attracted English students, particularly the nonconformists who were excluded from Oxford and Cambridge. The Scottish universities consolidated their reputation in fields such as medicine, and the University of Edinburgh grew from 400 students at the start of the century to 2,000 by 1815.

Clearly there was entrenched within the country an established culture of education, but what was its character? Malcolm Prentis, in his book, *The Scots in Australia*, describes it as follows: "Emphasising equality of opportunity rather than a refined excellence"; its higher education was "associated with professions and practice"; and "its contemporary enthusiasm was for science applied to a wide range of human affairs."

He quotes George Bernard Shaw as saying that the Scots were successful because of their rigorous religious training: "They transfer the intellectual keenness acquired in learning the catechisms into business, and get the better of everyone".

He sums it up as follows:

"Scottish education was broad, general and practical in its content, aimed at equal opportunity and wide availability, and had achieved both to a degree equalled by few nations until late in the 19th century. Education was not only important in itself, it was a means of self-improvement, spiritually, morally and materially, so science, geography, book-keeping, grammar and philosophy had important places."

This educational philosophy was therefore bred into the Scots, as a part of their DNA and, as Professor Gordon Donaldson puts it:

"By the time of the great emigrations from Scotland were under way every Scot regarded a school as an essential element in a community, and this concept was one which he carried with him wherever he went."

In the time available this evening, I will not attempt to cover the profound influence that the Scots had on the development of schooling in Australia, but simply say in passing that the reforms introduced in the early 1900s by my Grandfather as Under-Secretary of the Education Department, which saw the activities of the Department expanded from primary education to embrace secondary and higher technical education, including the foundation of the teachers' training college, certainly reflected his Scottish background.

In the area of tertiary education in Australia, the influence is equally significant. There is no doubt that in the case of our early universities the Scottish universities constituted the model, rather than Oxford or Cambridge. At our first university, Sydney, not only did the terms of governance, such as Senate, Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor, reflect Scottish practices, but the distinctive Scottish baronial style of the magnificent St Andrew's College is a statement in itself. Throughout its history, Scots have played an enormously influential role in its operation.

The University of Adelaide is another example. Scottish benefactors, Sir Walter Hughes, Robert Barr Smith, Sir Thomas Elder, Sir Josiah Symon and Peter Waite, literally made the University of Adelaide possible and, from its foundation on, Scots have played a major role in its operation also.

The establishment of the University of Queensland in 1910 followed well behind. Even then, this occurred only following a lengthy debate, firstly, as to the merits of a university at all and, secondly, the perceived conflict between sound utilitarian objectives and the traditional liberal principles. There was, within the local populous, a widely held view as to the hedonistic lifestyle of an Oxford or Cambridge

undergraduate. This was, needless to say, an unfavourable view, and it did tend somewhat to colour the debate.

In setting the course for the future of the University, against the backdrop of this debate, it was another Scot who played a pivotal role, Sir William MacGregor. MacGregor was newly arrived as Governor of the State, and had agreed to assume the role as the inaugural Chancellor of the University. He did so on the basis that he would simply act as the chairman of the Senate, but on all accounts it was a chair that brooked little dissent. He was a graduate in medicine of the University of Aberdeen, a university with a proud history and tradition. It was founded in 1495, with a medical school as part of its foundation, in fact the first medical school in the English speaking world. In these circumstances, it is understandable that MacGregor would adhere to the traditional values, practices and standards of the established academic world. By virtue of his strong stance and leadership, MacGregor ensured that the proud words of Premier Kidston on Inauguration Day, that the University "would be of the people and for the people" did not open the door to a relaxation or compromise of those standards.

It is fascinating to note that your own Dr EN Merrington, who played such a role in the foundation of this College, was a part of the debate. According to Professor Malcolm Thomis, he denied the wish to turn out "well-mannered aristocratic gentlemen of leisure", but argued nevertheless for "ancient studies" as the indispensable basis of a liberal education and sound leaning.

In the context of the times, Professor Thomis describes those as "courageous words" and, as a subsequent member of Senate, Merrington would have been a strong supporter of MacGregor's philosophy.

It should be noted, however, that this concept of a "liberal education" was still very much within the Scottish scientific and practical traditions. The first professors of the University were in the fields of mathematics, chemistry, engineering and, of course, classics, and not surprisingly, given MacGregor's influence, John Lundie Michie, the inaugural professor in classics, was a Scot from Aberdeen.

When we see where the University of Queensland stands today, in the high levels of the ranking of universities globally, or as a leader within Australia in the recent ERA assessment of research capability, it is salutary to think what path may have been followed if those strong stands had not been taken in its formative years.

The other Scot who played a pivotal role was my Grandfather. There is no doubt that, as Under-Secretary of the Education Department, he envisaged a comprehensive, interrelated system of education in Queensland under government control, with the University forming one part of the system. However, throughout his long association with the University as the principle Government representative, he pragmatically managed and facilitated that relationship, with a few bumps here and there, in such a

manner that maintained the legitimately separate identity and independence of the University, but recognised the realities of a dependency with respect to funding.

Funding has of course been the major challenge for the University throughout its life. The extraordinary generosity of the Maynes established this site, but the absence of an endowment equivalent to that enjoyed by our peers has been difficult. One of the few early major bequests was that of the Ulster-Scot Sir Samuel McCaughey, a grazier from the Riverina, who in 1919 bequeathed 458,000 pounds to the University of Sydney and 228,000 pounds to the University of Queensland. In those days, these were large amounts and, for this University, absolutely critical.

Of course throughout its life the Scots have played a vital role within UQ in so many areas. This continues to the day, and Keith Webster at the Library and Ian Frazer at the Diamantina Institute are outstanding instances.

This finally brings me to the university colleges, and Emmanuel in particular. Again it is fascinating that a unique Australian institution, a college "within" but not "of" a university, should have its origins within the deep historical roots of England. The establishment by Elizabeth Tudor, Queen of England, of the Church of England as the state church of her realm had many consequences. Not the least were that non-conformists were not only barred from parliament but they were forbidden to attend England's only universities, Oxford and Cambridge. The great church and state debates ensued, and they inevitably flowed through to the Australian colonies, but with the added ingredient of Australian acrimony.

As your 75th anniversary publication records, it was not surprising that, when Australia's first universities were established in the 1850s in Sydney and Melbourne, the churches were excluded and theology explicitly banned from the curricula. The churches, and the Presbyterians in particular, were not to be so easily dismissed. In Sydney, in Melbourne, and later in Brisbane, the churches established their colleges, often incorporating a theological hall, which would offer residence together with tutorial assistance and pastoral care to students of the university to which these colleges became attached or associated.

It therefore represents a very pragmatic but very effective solution. The strictly secular character of the University is preserved, but there is, within the St Lucia campus, a strong presence of the churches represented through their colleges. There is no doubt that the physical infrastructure of the colleges is an essential component of what makes this such an outstanding campus, and the very quality of college life within the campus, with its many and varied facets, is an integral part of what is today referred to as the UQ Experience.

As an old lawyer, I should be concerned with respect to matters such as the security of title that the colleges may hold and the formal arrangements for the sharing of services and infrastructure. When I have enquired, I have generally received a rather

vague reply, but with the assurance that all is in order and that it all works. I have learnt that, in those circumstances, it is best not to enquire further. Of course, this was all put to the test during the recent flooding. To digress, could I say that the response, not only by the University but by the broader University community, was outstanding and that so far as I am aware the colleges were included seamlessly within that response. In our review at the Senate Risk Committee, the only concern expressed was the consternation at discovering, at the height of the crisis as the waters encroached upon Emmanuel, that there were in residence 80 Korean school students, aged 8 years, under the supervision of 2 nuns. Needless to say it was discovered that the students had been transferred to Kings with a minimum of fuss, but an air of high adventure for the students.

That, I suggest, encapsulates the valuable asset that we have today: the level of cooperation and mutual respect that prevails among the colleges and between each of the colleges and the University. That is not an asset possessed by every university.

Emmanuel College has a proud history, but I suspect that at no time during its one hundred years has it been so strong or so relevant, not only within the context of its own objectives but within the context of the overall fabric of the University.

I congratulate the College on the achievement of its centenary and wish it well for its celebrations during the course of the year.



Emmanuel College
Sir William MacGregor Drive
St Lucia QLD 4067

Tel: + 61 7 3871 9100 **Fax: + 61 7 3870 7183**
enquiries@emmanuel.uq.edu.au **www.emmanuel.uq.edu.au**