

**CENTRE FOR AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE  
AND LITERATURE STUDIES**

**CALLS**



**The University of New England  
ARMIDALE, NSW  
AUSTRALIA**

**February, 1990**

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## THE AIMS OF THE CENTRE

The setting up of the Centre for Australian Language and Literature Studies at the University of New England has given formal recognition to the research and publishing activities which have been going on within the English Department at New England over many years. For instance, much of the impetus for the foundation of the Association for the Study of Australian Literature came from within this Department. Ken Stewart and Julian Croft were foundation members of A S A L and they edited its journal *Notes and Furphies* for ten years. Both are now life members, and Shirley Walker, who served on the executive for many years, was President of A S A L for a time. Ken Stewart is now Vice President. Many other past and present members of the Department have contributed to the columns of *Notes and Furphies*.

The research and publishing record of the members of the centre has also been so considerable as not to require emphasis here, while the number of post-graduate students in Australian Literature and Language who have successfully passed through the English Department can be seen from the listing which is included in this handbook. Distance education has always been a feature of the teaching at New England and the degrees of Bachelor of Letters and of Master of Letters have provided an opportunity for higher degree study to those who would otherwise not be able to fulfil this ambition. Many of these students have chosen the option of Australian Literature for their M.Litt. research. The M.A. (Hons.) has also been popular with post-graduate students of Australian literature. A gratifying development has been that which allows Ph.D. candidature to students in remote areas and the first two candidates in Australian Literature, to take out this degree, despite all the difficulties of isolation, frequent travel to Armidale and horrific telephone bills, will be graduating this April. They are Sharon Frost from Gulgong and Graham White from Warren. Other students have come from a much greater distance to study Australian literature with us, and two students from the People's Republic of China, Chen Cheng-fa and Hu Yi Feng, have successfully completed M.Litt. degrees. Cheng-fa has returned to Anhui University and Yi-Feng is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. programme. Ewa Gajer, who came to us from Poland, has recently completed a Ph.D. in Australian literature and has returned to Poland. As you will see from the checklist later in this booklet, the full roll is a considerable one.

The members of C A L L S have also, in the past, had considerable influence in the local community and in the region, in organizing literature classes and readings at the community level, in fostering regional literature and in researching the literature of the area, for instance the work of Kendall and Judith Wright, Boldrewood, or of Eric Rolls, Geoff Page and of other living writers with 'northern' antecedents.

The establishment of the Centre for Australian Language and Literature Studies both celebrates this energetic level of achievement in the

past and provides us with a new impetus for the future. The formation of the Centre will provide a focus for all activities connected with the study of Australian language and literature in New England; will promote writing, research and publication in this field, and will facilitate visits by scholars from within Australian and abroad. A particular interest of the Centre will be the promotion of the literature of the area which comprises the amalgamated and expanded University of New England. This is one of the reasons why we are so proud to have Les Murray, a distinguished poet and one who is delighted to live in and write about the region, as one of our patrons. Our other patron, Alex Buzo, grew up in the New England area and returns to it frequently. It is rumoured that his current work-in-progress, a play entitled *Armadillo*, has more than a little relevance to a well-known New England city and to its peculiarities. Our first life members are the Armidale novelist and short-story writer Gwen Kelly and the poet and playwright Dorothy Hewett, who has strong ties with the Drama Department at the University of New England.

To emphasise our regional commitment, the first formal conference of C A L L S will be held at the Kendall High School on the weekend of the 15-16 September 1990, and will celebrate the sesqui-centenary of the birth of Henry Kendall. We expect that many delegates will attend from regional communities, from the historical societies of the area, and from other academic institutions.

We are also happy to be associated with the Fourth National Biennial Folklore Conference to be held here, 23-25 November, 1990.

\* \* \* \* \*

With this, our first handbook, the executive and the current members of C A L L S extend a warm invitation to all who teach and/or research in the area of Australian literature, drama and language, and to all who share our interest in these areas, to become members of C A L L S and to join in our activities.

\* \* \* \* \*

Full membership of the Centre at a cost of \$10 per annum will be open to all who teach or research in Australian language, literature or drama at a tertiary level. Associate membership will be available to anyone else who is interested, on payment of \$8 per annum. These fees may be revised later. Honorary membership, either for a limited time or for life, will, from time to time, be offered to individuals who have made an important contribution to Australian letters or to the advancement of the Centre's interests. There is provision in the constitution for the election of a patron or patrons, and of honorary life members, and for affiliation with other centres with similar interests, both in Australia and overseas.

## PATRONS

**Les Murray, A.O.:** Les (A.) Murray as he is now known worldwide was born in Nabitac and has lived and worked in Sydney and Canberra but has more recently returned to base his life again in Bunyah, in his native country between Foster and Gloucester, which he has immortalized by such poems as 'Evening Alone at Bunyah', 'The Mitchells', the Aboriginal-inspired sequence, 'The Buladelah-Taree Holiday Song Cycle', or the sonnet 'novel', *The Boys who stole the funeral*.

He has, at his present youthful maturity, not merely won more awards than perhaps any Australian poet, but has been described by such figures as Joseph Brodsky, the Nobel Prize winner, or Alistair Niven, of the British Arts Council, as 'One of the two or three major living poets writing in the English language anywhere in the world'. His single-minded dedication to poetry has mingled great vernacular liveliness and sensibility with natural erudition to achieve a distinct style that has proved accessible to a remarkable range of readers and listeners, in a score of countries. Further, his affirmative version of life and of art have achieved a universality rare in world letters in our time.

He has a strong feeling for the Australian identity and ambivalent character, seeing them as, indeed, 'country and western'. His uniqueness and stature alike arise from his devotion to the timeless rural scene, respect and affection for the ordinary countryman, and the conviction that modern society relinquishes, at its peril, the values that are enshrined in the land and in the lives of those living in harmony with it.

He seems, perhaps more than any other, to embody in the ample girth of his poetic ego both New England and the whole continent. He is a strong and wise spirit, the Birroogun of our time and someone who is now bringing pleasure and wisdom from and for Australia to the world not merely of letters but to all readers of English in the enjoyment, now restored to them, of dynamic celebratory poetry. [Adapted from the submissions associated with the conferring of his Honorary Degree]

His better known writings include (chronologically): *The Weatherboard Cathedral* (1969); *Poems Against Economics* (1972); *Selected Poems* (1975, etc.); *Ethnic Radio* (1978); *The Peasant Mandarin: Prose Pieces* (1978); *The Boys Who Stole the Funeral: a novel sequence* (1980); *The People's Otherworld* (1983); *Anthology of Australian Religious Poetry*, (sel. by L.M.); (ed.) *The New Book of Australian Verse* (1986); and *The Australian Year: The Chronicle of Our Seasons and Celebrations* (prose) (1987).

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