



Re-imagining Convocation

We acknowledge we are situated on Noongar land, and that Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practice their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We pay our respects to the traditional owners of the lands on which we live and work across Western Australia and Australia.

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This presentation is largely drawn from Jenny Gregory, 'Convocation in leading British and Australian universities: a brief history', unpublished report for UWA Convocation, based on 2019/20 desktop survey and analysis.

Defining Convocation

UK universities

- 'a body consisting of all registered graduates, having the power of discussing and expressing an opinion on any matter connected with the interests of the University, and of electing certain members of the Senate.'

North America universities

- 'a calling together in answer to a summons' — a ritualised formal ceremonial meeting — of freshers (sometimes called a 'commencement' ceremony) and/or graduates (a graduation ceremony).

Universities in Russell Group

- 15 have Convocation/Congregation/University Court/General Council – in which graduates can fulfil responsibilities of a Convocation
- 9 Convocation has either been removed, reconfigured or closed during federation of a group of universities

Growth of neo-liberalism

- 1985 Jarratt Report – universities as corporate enterprises run by business leaders rather than scholars.

Russell Group universities which retain a Convocation or similar

- **Approve appointment Chancellor/Vice Chancellor**
- **Have representation on Governing body**
- **Scrutinise Amendments to Charter and Statutes**
- **Maintain roll/register of graduates**
- **Meet annually or biannually**
- **Make representations** to ensure that graduates have a continuing voice in the management of its affairs.

Mandated in founding legislation of at least eight universities

(Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Queensland, UWA, ANU, Newcastle and New England)

- 50 to 100 graduates must meet to form a Convocation
- Senate/Council of university must be elected from/by that Convocation

Removed from most Aust university statutes as result of

- 1989 Dawkins Reforms in *Higher Education (Amalgamation) Act*
- 1995 Hoare *Report of the Higher Education Management Review Committee* – universities are corporations
- 2003 Commonwealth *Higher Education Support Act*
- 2004 *National Governance Protocols for Higher Education Providers*

UWA's Convocation is unique

- only member of the Go8 with Convocation in current Act
- **Some features of Convocation continue in older Go8s.**
 - graduate representation on governing body (Sydney, Adelaide, Queensland, UWA)
- **Convocation replaced by Alumni Council** (Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide)
 - members not elected by Convocation of graduates
 - Members elected or appointed by university's governing body.
 - size 14 to 23 members incl non-voting uni reps
 - closely aligned with Development Offices
 - governed by regulation rather than statute

UWA's Convocation



- 1911 Act 'The University shall consist of a Senate, Convocation, undergraduates and [post]graduates, and professoriate'
- **1930s Radical group elected to Council demanded**
establishment of a woman's college, Aboriginal rights, introduction of Asian languages, representation of undergraduates on the University Senate
- **1939 UWA commissioned report by VC Sydney Uni**
- **1941 Wolff Royal Commission into UWA**
- **1944 University of Western Australia Amending Act**
 - No of Convocation Senators reduced from 12 to 6
 - Overthrew Convocation's power to reject statute changes proposed by Senate
 - Convocation became an advisory body

Reimagining Convocation Council



2020 Convocation Council established Review Committee

- forensic audit of Council's role
 - Convocation 'a slumbering behemoth'
 - current structure of Council needs modification
- Opportunities emerged

Developed in Strategic Planning

- Plan could support relevant UWA strategic priorities
- Convocation Council could assist the University in key areas
- DAR could assist Council with expertise and administrative support
- Joint Initiative Committee could strengthen links between Council and University staff

Convocation Council Strategic Plan 2023-26



Key Strategies

1. **Revitalise** the structure and resources of Convocation Council (eg reduce size to 17, limit term)
2. **Inspire** members of Convocation by providing opportunities for meaningful engagement and advocacy.
3. **Increase engagement** with UWA Schools, clubs and societies.
4. **Contribute** to the advancement of our University, Convocation, higher education and our community

Convocation Council Strategic Plan 2023-26



A Recipe for Success?

1. Council elected by Convocation members
2. Senate include 2 elected members of Convocation
3. Convocation has right to comment on and advise university on statutory changes
4. Joint Committee of Convocation Council and Development and Alumni Relations



Convocation Council
Reimagined

Thank you