

Lyall Hunt: Mount Lawley Teachers' College 1970-80

Written by Professor Lynne Hunt (née Hardy)

Lyall Hunt was a foundation member of staff at Mount Lawley Teachers' College (MLTC). He was Head of the Social Science Department which, over the years, grew to include Doug Markey, Brian O'Sullivan, David Hedges, Brian Jenkins, Bob Plumb, Murray Print, Lynne Hardy, John Prestage, Alan May, Russell Catomore, and Wally Moroz.



Mt Lawley Social Science Department 1973

attending Murray Prints' Wedding

L-R Lyall Hunt, Brian Jenkins, Brian O'Sullivan David Hedges, Doug Markey.
Murray Print (seated)

Lyall provided strong educational leadership. He promoted active learning which included numerous social science camps that enabled students to "get out there" and learn something of the history and geography of Western Australia (WA) - the State in which most graduates would teach.



Early 1970s Lyall at a student camp

His emphasis on critical thinking skills and social analysis expanded as Mt Lawley Teachers' College became Mt Lawley College of Advanced Education and, subsequently, The Western Australian College of Advanced Education (WACAE). In the mid-1970s, he initiated courses that extended beyond teacher education. These social science diplomas were based on his favoured learning-by-doing approach, but now his emphasis was on research.

Although Lyall was a foundation member of staff at MLTC he was absent for most of the inaugural year because he was on study leave finishing his research master's thesis. The transition of colleges from the auspices of the WA Education Department to independent status meant that many staff had to upgrade their academic qualifications. Many responded to the call. However, the academic cycle of research and publication wasn't yet on the radar and staff taught for up to fifteen or sixteen hours a week. This was well above the norm that prevailed in universities. There was no time for research. Lyall's creative solution was to make time by integrating teaching and research.

In the late 1970s Lyall was approached by the Yilgarn Shire to write their history. The book was commissioned to celebrate the centenary of finding gold in the Yilgarn in 1888. He didn't have time to write this book on his own, so he suggested a model that included all the staff in the Social Science Department. Each would write a chapter based on their own and students' research. The Yilgarn Shire supported the process by providing accommodation for student camps that enabled them to do local social science research for their assignments. In brief, the Yilgarn became an MLTC social science laboratory for almost a decade. Some students were so inspired by their involvement in the Yilgarn project that they went on to university study and postgraduate qualifications. All participating students were named in the book, so it became a first step in building their curricula vitae thereby enhancing employment prospects.

The book, *Yilgarn: A Good Country for Hardy People*ⁱ, was published on time and to acclaim. Years later, a leading WA historian, Geoffrey Bolton, referred to the book in his revision of his own work on WA History. He contacted Lyall to say that the chapter on Indigenous history in the Yilgarn book was one of the few resources he'd been able to find on this topic. The project was way ahead of its time. Pedagogies such as 'research-based undergraduate teaching' and 'students as partners' did not emerge until well into the next century. It was only then that that the project could be properly described and published in an article entitled: *The Importance of a Whole-of-Department Framework in Learning Partnerships*.ⁱⁱ

Lyall's innovative integration of teaching and research shows how MLTC built the capacity of staff and students to further their own careers through research and writing. It also provided some of the evidence of research productivity on which Western Australian colleges based their application for university status. Lyall published two other books, *Westralian Portraits*ⁱⁱⁱ and *Towards Federation*.^{iv} He also published numerous entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biographies*. He was part of the small group of historians who developed Western Australian history and his achievements were honoured when he was elected as a Fellow of the Royal Historical Association of Western Australia.



Lyll was acutely aware that teachers' colleges like MLTC provided an avenue of social mobility for working class students for whom university entrance was a remote possibility in the 1970s. He'd drifted into teacher training via night classes, followed by late entry to college leading to part-time study at university. Personal experience of finding his own way through the education system and his own working-class background gave rise to his keen sense of social justice. He strongly supported the development of the Aboriginal Teacher Education Program and understood the needs of 'first-in-family' students. In the 1970s this was the majority of students, many of whom came from homes in which English was not the first language. The 1970s also saw an influx of mature-age female students who had to re-enrol to upgrade their qualifications to become three-year trained teachers. Many students needed considerable help in meeting the College's standards of academic writing, so Lyll worked his colleague, Glen Phillips, to write a *manual*^v to assist them. It was reprinted many times.

Lyll is remembered by MLTC staff for his leadership in the academic staff union. He advocated for staff on matters such as the new conditions of service including study leave, annual leave and superannuation. He insisted on staff representation on decision-making committees and, years later, worked on equal opportunity processes that encouraged positive discrimination for women to compensate for past inequity. None of these activities made him popular with the hierarchy of the college, though he was respected by most as a man of integrity and principle.

ⁱ Lyll Hunt (ed.), (1988) *Yilgarn: good country for hardy people*. Southern Cross : Yilgarn Shire

ⁱⁱ Hunt, Lynne & Hunt, Lyll (2017) The Importance of a Whole-of-Department Framework in Learning Partnerships. *International Journal for Students as Partners* 1(2)

ⁱⁱⁱ Lyll Hunt (ed.) (1979) *Westralian Portraits*. Nedlands WA: University of Western Australia Press

^{iv} Hunt, Lyll (ed.) (2000) *Towards Federation. Why Western Australia joined the Australian Federation* Nedlands: Royal Western Australian Historical Society

^v *Lyll Hunt & Glen Phillips (Date?) Title etc*