
Agency number: 559

Agency title: Monomeeth Association

Start date: 1963

End date: c. 1994

Creation:

Abolition:

Administrative history note: The first mention of the creation of a university "Parents' Group" appears to have been in a November 1962 public relations report on fundraising. The then thirteen year old university had only a small body of alumni and so the introduction of a different type of sympathetic group was seen as a way of furthering the university's interests. It was believed that with this group in place "the university would obtain the active support of a group in the community, the members of which would be in a position to accept obligations for supporting organising fund-raising in aid of the university and their particular faculty" (CN366/Box 1).

Little progress, however, was made in forming the group until September 1963. At this time Vice-Chancellor Professor Philip Baxter, Mr Harold Dickinson and the UNSW Appeals Liaison Officer Mrs Joyce Dent met to discuss the group in more detail. As a result, Mrs Dent invited a small group of twenty parents of students representing a range of faculties to an initial meeting on 18 October 1963. Chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, the meeting's aim was "to inaugurate a group within the university provisionally known as the 'Friends of the University of New South Wales'". At the meeting a steering sub-committee under the chairmanship of Mr H. H. Dickinson was appointed with the task of developing a draft constitution for the group that was to include the following objectives:

1. to promote the interests of the university
2. to provide a means of liaison between the university and the public
3. to raise funds for the university
4. to promote the formation of branches of the group, having similar objectives to those set out herein.

The first three of these goals were to remain central to the association throughout its existence.

The second general meeting of the group was held in November 1963 with Mr Dickinson as the chair. At this meeting the constitution was adopted and the office bearers appointed. Mr Dickinson was named as president, Mrs J. Knight as vice-president, Mrs Elizabeth Daly as secretary and Mr S. Grill as treasurer, with Mrs Dent as the university liaison officer. Mrs Dent later recalled that "As most of the people present were strangers to each other, Sir Harold appealed to them, if nominated for office, to accept. When he called for nominations for president of the Association he was nominated and had to accept his own advice. He thereafter became the first president and this is the reason that a non-parent came to be the first president of the Association" (SRF - Monomeeth).

The November meeting had also determined that the name of the association would be "The University of New South Wales Liaison Group". This title was, however, rather unpopular amongst members and so Mrs Dent set to work to discover a more acceptable alternative. With Tharunka as the university's student newspaper, it was considered that an Aboriginal word might also be an appropriate name for the association. Through discussions with the Mitchell Library, Mrs Dent located the word "monomeeth", which in some Aboriginal languages means friend or friendship, in others beauty. The first meeting of the group for 1964 thus included the proposal for a new name - the Monomeeth Association of the University of New South Wales - which was passed

unanimously (CN366/Box 1).

This meeting was also to be the first to have a guest speaker, with Professor Morven Brown, inaugural Dean of the Faculty of Arts, addressing the group. This was to become a regular feature of the Association's general meetings, which were initially held bi-monthly and later at least 3 times a year. The first non-meeting event on the Association's calendar was a Musical Society evening, with the Eastwood Musical Comedy Society providing a performance of "Rio-Rita" for the Association on 2 May 1964 in the main administration building theatre. Over the years such events as open faculty nights and university campus tours, as well as other social occasions such as dinners, theatre parties, Christmas functions and pool parties were all organised by the Association (CN366/Box 1, file 00370550).

Fundraising was commenced by the Association almost immediately. At the 17 April 1964 general meeting the first project of contributing to the construction of entrance gates on Anzac Parade was proposed. By the time the gates were formally opened on 2 August 1967, the Association had made a donation of \$2,000 towards their cost. The gates were later removed as part of the re-development of the main walkway during the 1990s, but the Association's next fundraising project of the four distinctive campus clocks that adorned the Applied Sciences, Biological Sciences and Newton buildings still remain. Other contributions made by the Association were the purchase of the Steinway grand piano for the Sir John Clancy Auditorium, the John Coburn "Garden of Knowledge" tapestry for the Science Theatre, "The Bridge" sculpture located on the pool lawn, a Kawai upright piano for the UNSW Ensemble, the refurbishment of Chancellery Committee Room 1 (accordingly renamed the Monomeeth Room) and \$10,000 for the Library to equip its first electronic classroom (files 00370550, 017306).

The Association's organisation of the annual lost property sale was a main source of its fundraising income. Held initially in 1968 - when the Vice-Chancellor Philip Baxter asked the Association "to dispose of the lost property which has been found around the university and accumulated for some ten years" - the sale was planned by the Association on a yearly basis, usually being held in or shortly after Orientation Week and became synonymous with much of the Association's work. In fact, when the Association eventually ceased its activities in 1994, it was noted in Uniken that "fittingly the Association's last task will be to assist in organising the 1994 sale in the Roundhouse on 7 and 8 March". The lost property sale has continued into the present day - with the U Committee now co-ordinating its operation in August of each year (SRF-Monomeeth, U Committee, file00370550).

Despite its achievements, the Association often found it difficult to attract members. Some found it difficult to appreciate the spirit of the Association, with one of the university's associate professors suggesting in 1964 that "the Society sounds like a university P and C and I should have thought that such a body was quite foreign to the spirit of a university" (CN366/Box 1). As more women returned to the workforce, it became harder for the Association to obtain assistance for its projects. And some internal tensions within the Association in the mid-1970s did not help the membership drive.

Those who did become members of the Association, however, reported benefits that were greater than simply providing assistance to their child's university. In a 1966 letter to the then Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Rupert Myers the Association's secretary Mrs Daly wrote "as the majority of our members did not have the opportunity to attend any university, they are always most grateful for the privilege of meeting the staff and learning about education as it is presented at this level to the very fortunate young people of today" (CN366/Box 1). And in 1975 Vice-Chancellor Myers was to comment that "the Association has been instrumental in bringing parents and their friends into the orbit of the university

and it has, I think, played a very important role in breaking down the barriers which can exist between parents and their student children" (file 0037055).

Although the Association ceased work in 1994, the final dispersal of its funds was in 6 May 1996. Monomeeth President Mr Carl Elliott wrote to Vice-Chancellor John Niland enclosing a cheque for \$3,830.17. The money was put towards the celebration of UNSW's fiftieth anniversary in 1999 - an appropriate place for the remaining earnings of an association that had contributed much to the university over thirty years of its history (file 017306).

Unregistered preceding agencies:

Unregistered succeeding agencies:

Unregistered superior agencies:

Unregistered subordinate agencies:

<i>Record series created by this agency (in chronological order by start date):</i>	<i>Date range of creation</i>
794 Booklet Leaflet Collection of the Monomeeth Association	1963 - 1994
