

## 9 Conclusion. AINSE - much more than simply an 'Enduring Institution'

In looking back on an *institution that was formed in 1958 as a cooperative venture*, the questions have to be asked: what was, and is, AINSE's *raison d'être*, and what is the secret of its success? Wal Ambrose in his paper, *Archaeometry and AINSE* referred to earlier in this history states that

*ANSTO [and AAEC] is a primary research organisation that pursues its own agenda.*

ANSTO/AAEC is one of the largest scientific organisations in Australia. It has world-class facilities that, in line with its charter are available to researchers other than its own. As Wal Ambrose notes it is, however, expected always to have followed its own agenda. Researchers from universities sometimes would be at a disadvantage if they approached ANSTO to be involved in research that may not directly align with ANSTO's own scientific agenda.

This argument, however, does not embrace the symbiotic nature of the enduring relationship between the AAEC/ANSTO and AINSE. This association, which has survived periods of upheaval and stress arising from differing priorities of the two organisations, has its genesis in their proximate beginnings and the interactions between staff at all levels, some of whom spent long periods of time in positions of influence in both organisations, usually concurrently. There is also no doubt that the AAEC/ANSTO has been generous over the decades in allowing access to its major facilities. This concept of broad access survived even during periods of intense budgetary pressure.

AINSE, from its inception, has been the champion for university-based research which can be pursued with the facilities at the AAEC/ANSTO. In this context it has been and is well understood by the AAEC/ANSTO. Its ability to peer-review research proposals, provide resources to researchers, organise conferences, employ scientific staff (in the early days) and act as an honest broker has ensured that AINSE has fulfilled its major function of bridging gaps between universities and the major research centre at Lucas Heights. AINSE's capacity to fulfil its role was, and is, reinforced by the fact that it is its own entity, has its own resources and also because the Institute is jointly owned by ANSTO as well as the universities.

AINSE's outcomes are ultimately that of university and university/ANSTO research outcomes. AINSE's annual reports catalogue the outcomes of conferences, seminars, workshops, and research awards. They also provide details of fellowships, postgraduate student scholarships, Winter Schools and papers published. These reports document an impressive array of research-based interaction and outcomes.

AINSE is a uniquely Australian institution with its own enduring identity. It is also the only research-based institute that includes just about every university within a nation. Over the last fifty years it developed a funding model whereby the annual subscription for a university is directly related to the benefit the university has drawn from AINSE in the previous three years.

All researchers from all universities have equity in access to the facilities that AINSE can allocate. This does not, of course, mean that everyone who wants access automatically gets it. The peer review mechanism exercised by the various specialist committees ensures that only the most worthwhile projects are fully supported and this includes those projects that appear creative in approach or use a technique or facility in a novel way. This has resulted in the overall success of AINSE.

Many researchers in their recollections of AINSE stress the pivotal way in which AINSE has fostered the process of scientific integration – from 'tea room' interactions, through the provision of monies and equipment and through bringing researchers together. This goodwill is a major strength of the Institute.

Another strength flows from the AINSE model itself. The myriad of reviews of scientific research over the decades have reinforced the veracity of the AINSE model.

In 1979 the National Energy Research, Development and Demonstration Council (NERDDC) Review of AAEC Research Establishment reported positively on the Institute. In particular the Committee stated that

*AINSE provides an important mechanism whereby Universities can have access to the nuclear facilities and specialist services at Lucas Heights for research processes and for development of students of the universities.*

*[and that] AINSE has a fine record of promoting effective cooperation between universities and the Lucas Heights Establishment.<sup>86</sup>*

In 1986 the formerly remarkable organisation that had been the AAEC was in drastic need of renewal. The Committee of Review that led to the creation of the robust organisation that is now ANSTO accepted the veracity of the AINSE model and its performance record. As AINSE faces the future it is worthwhile to repeat the views of this high powered and forward-looking committee

*The Committee recognises ... that AINSE provides a particularly efficient method by which Australian researchers can gain access to the unique facilities of the AAEC, and regards this arrangement as a most cost effective alternative to the proliferation of facilities.<sup>87</sup>*

AINSE has evolved over fifty years and expects to continue to grow and develop. As it meets the changing requirements of a shifting world, AINSE has been able to retain its relevance, despite the unforeseen crisis of spiralling inflation of the 70s and 80s, despite attempts to integrate its activities within ANSTO, despite the various cuts in government funding for academic research, and despite the lack of industrial and commercial support for pure research in Australia. Indeed if one were to make a simple comment, AINSE has not simply survived; it has thrived – not for itself but for greater good of Australasian scientific research.



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**Fifth row:** Associate Professor Michelle Towstoles, Victoria University, Dr Paul Hesse (a), Macquarie University, Professor Peter Gell, University of Ballarat, Professor Chris Lennard (a), University of Canberra, Associate Professor Gary Wilson, Otago University, Dr Godwin Ayoko, Queensland University of Technology, Professor Robert Burford, University of New South Wales, Professor Peter Johnston, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Professor Bruce King, Vice President, University of Newcastle, Dr Anthony Bartel, Swinburne University of Technology, Dr Brian Bicknell, Australian Catholic University, Professor Richard Keene, James Cook University, E/Professor Brian O'Connor (a), Curtin University of Technology, Immediate Past President

**Fourth row:** Professor Allan Canty, University of Tasmania, Professor John Carver, University of Adelaide, Dr Frank Bruhn, GNS Science, Professor James Shulmeister (a), University of Canterbury, Dr Robert Robinson, Bragg Institute, ANSTO.

**Third row:** Dr Steven Hinckley (a), Edith Cowan University, Associate Professor Brendan Kennedy, University of Sydney, Professor Bill Boyd, Southern Cross University, Professor Greg Skilbeck, University of Technology, Sydney,

**Second row:**

Professor Rob Norris, Monash University, Professor Greg Hope, Griffith University, Dr David Druskovich, Central Queensland University, Professor Andrew Cheetham, University of Western Sydney, Dr Jasmine Henry, University of Western Australia,

**Front row:** Dr George Collins, Chief of Research, ANSTO, Dr Ron Cameron, Acting Chief Executive Officer, ANSTO, Professor Lyndon Edwards, IME ANSTO, Associate Professor Namita Roy Choudhury, University of South Australia, Dr Dennis Mather, Executive Secretary, AINSE (non-voting), Professor Allan Chivas, President, University of Wollongong, Professor Graham Baker, University of Southern Queensland, Professor Jim Camakaris, University of Melbourne, (a) means alternate

86 AINSE Annual Report 1979 – 80 page 4

87 Review of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission, 1986 p31