

Academics Never Retire: An Opportunity For Innovation and Transformation

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Giles Pickford BA (Hons) was born in Bombay in 1941. However, he spent most of his early years growing up on a farm near Albany, WA. He was educated at Albany High School and the University of Western Australia where he obtained a BA first class Honours degree majoring in English Literature.

After graduation he spent sometime in a droving team near Shark Bay, WA, before succumbing to a career as a university administrator, specialising in the fields of event organisation, fund raising and public relations in general. He has worked at the University of WA, UNE, AVCC, James Cook University, the Australian Cancer Society, the University of Wollongong and the ANU. He served as an Alderman of the Wollongong City Council from 1985-88 and he has served two terms with the ACT Cultural Council from 1991-96. He is currently the Secretary of the ANU Emeritus Faculty, and Convenor of the ATEM Ghosts: both of them are organisations for retired people.

“During the next 40 years, the over-65s in the population would go from representing one in six people to one in four and those over 85 from one in 20 to one in 20...the younger senior generation is the healthiest, best educated and best resourced to ever stop full time work”

Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, Australian Financial Review 5 August 2011

Fortunately for the ANU, in 2000 a small group of retiring academics organised themselves in a way that would become very relevant in the Australian demographic which would unfold ten years later. This is their story. There is a lesson in the story which needs to be considered by the higher education sector.