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Abstract

Since my appointment in 2009 as the fifth Dean of Law and the first female Dean at Bond University, I was very fortunate to get to know Dr John and Dr Alison Kearney, and have the benefit of their counsel and their extraordinary knowledge of Bond University, in particular the Faculty of Law. My predecessor Professor Duncan Bentley had consolidated and grown the excellent relationship that had previously existed between the Law Deans at Bond and John and Alison, and it was thus that I got to know them well in their later years.

Keywords

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DR JOHN F KEARNEY QC AM: AN ENDURING LEGACY

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Since my appointment in 2009 as the fifth Dean of Law,¹ and the first female Dean at Bond University, I was very fortunate to get to know Dr John and Dr Alison Kearney, and have the benefit of their counsel and their extraordinary knowledge of Bond University, in particular the Faculty of Law. My predecessor Professor Duncan Bentley had consolidated and grown the excellent relationship that had previously existed between the Law Deans at Bond and John and Alison, and it was thus that I got to know them well in their later years.

I was privileged to attend John and Alison's 60th wedding anniversary celebrations, where the Faculty's gift was a substantial contribution to the Bond Student Opportunity Fund, gathered entirely from academic and professional staff contributions. The amount of money raised in honour of John and Alison was a clear measure of the high esteem in which they were held in the Faculty. I was also fortunate to attend John's 90th birthday celebrations in 2013, where despite his advancing age and obvious frailty he gave one of his legendary speeches reflecting on his extraordinary life, and, as always, acknowledging Alison's role in everything that they had achieved together.

John Fouhy Kearney came from a pioneering family from Toowoomba, Queensland, and was born in Melbourne. After completing articles of clerkship in Melbourne he joined the Bar in Victoria, becoming Queen's Counsel in 1964. His practice was mainly in the area of property law and included, among many other achievements, the position of Chair of the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal in Victoria from 1971-1976. While at the Bar he tutored at the University of Melbourne Law School in property, conveyancing and drafting for 15 years, which was no doubt a contributing factor in his passion for and support of legal education. He completed a Bachelor of Laws at the University of Melbourne in 1968.

In getting to know John and Alison, I was welcomed to their magnificent home Jabiru Homestead at Mudgeeraba in the Gold Coast hinterland for one of their legendary garden parties, other functions, or simply on occasions where they would welcome and acknowledge Bond students. In these years, despite failing health, John would delight in hosting morning teas to acknowledge student achievements and in

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¹ In addition there were two acting Deans for substantial periods.

particular enjoyed meeting with students who had received Bond Law Kearney International Scholarships to fund their international exchange visits.

In the Law School, John Kearney was a member of the inaugural School of Law Advisory Board and chaired the Fund Raising Committee. Apart from this more formal involvement John and Alison remained firm friends of what is now the Faculty of Law, attending many functions lending support and advice and always remaining an integral part of the faculty. They had been involved in discussions for the inception of Bond University from the mid to late 1980's and hosted some of the planning meetings in their own home.

Both John and Alison were major drivers of the first Moot Court at Bond University (completed in early 1990) and made possible by their generous donation in 1988. They were actively involved in its design, and the family Jabiru emblem together with their separate initials are discretely carved into the timber panelling. The original Moot Court remains in use today, and is the traditional base at Bond University for students preparing for the annual Philip C Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.

John and Alison Kearney were instrumental in the foundation of the Law Library at Bond University, including donating many of the books, as well as substantial funds for its establishment. In recognition of these significant contributions, which increased with an additional donation for the refurbishment in 2005, the library was named the John and Alison Kearney Law Library in their honour. The main library at Bond University was renamed the John and Alison Kearney Library at its reopening in October 2009 in acknowledgement of a substantial donation made in the University's 20th year of operation.

In 2005, John Kearney was pivotal in the development of a unique and innovative resource at Bond University, the Legal Skills Centre, again making a major contribution to construction costs. Completed in 2007, the Legal Skills Centre contains two state of the art electronic Moot Courts, small skills rooms including negotiation rooms, and other innovative teaching spaces. The building was doubled in size in 2010 to allow for staff offices and other facilities. It remains a remarkable teaching space and a unique facility, testament to the vision of John Kearney in providing the best possible resources for legal education.

In 2008 John and Alison Kearney generously instituted a scheme to assist Bond Law students travelling on international exchanges. The Kearney International Scholarships have continued to provide Bond students with an outstanding opportunity to pursue their studies in North America or Europe, and it was one of my greatest pleasures to take the scholarship winners to meet John and Alison at

Jabiru Homestead, where they would take a keen and ongoing interest in the students' achievements.

The John F Kearney Law Gold Medal is awarded each year to the student graduating with the highest level of academic achievement, and has been awarded continuously since the first graduation ceremony at Bond University. The first Gold Medal in Law was awarded to Terry Gygar in January 1992, now an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law. Terry Gygar was also the first Bond graduate to be admitted to the Bar, with his admission being moved by John Kearney QC. Owing to the ongoing generosity of the Kearney family, the John F Kearney Gold Medal will continue to be awarded in perpetuity.

The support for the Law Faculty by the Kearneys also included academic prizes and travel costs for sporting teams and international moot teams, including sponsorship for several Philip C Jessup International Law Moot teams who qualified for the international finals in Washington DC in the United States.

John and Alison were also generous donors to the Law Schools at the University of Melbourne and Griffith University. At Bond University John was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws in 2000, and had been similarly honoured by the award of Doctor of the University at Griffith University in 1999. He was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2005. Alison Kearney was honoured with the award of Doctor of the University at Bond University in 2009, and recognised in the same way by Griffith University in 2011.

Above all, John Kearney was invariably modest in relation to his own achievements, rejoicing instead in those of others. Alison too was a scholar in her own right, graduating from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts in Botany, Latin and German, and John delighted to speak at length of her accomplishments.

In strongly supporting as they did the Law Library, the Moot Courts, and the Legal Skills Centre, John and Alison Kearney ensured that the law students at Bond University received the best possible legal education. In contributing in so many other ways, including endowing the John F Kearney Gold Medal in Law, the Kearney International Scholarships, and their generosity with moot teams, the Kearneys have been rich contributors to the life of the Faculty, and their influence cannot be underestimated. The Faculty of Law owes much to John Kearney's vision and unfailing support, and is much the poorer for his passing.