

The Australia and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (ANZAMEMS) urges management at the Australian Catholic University (ACU) to reverse the proposed disestablishment of its Medieval and Early Modern Studies (MEMS) program, and its wider projected cuts to academic jobs across the Humanities as well as in Social Sciences and in Health. We are particularly dismayed by the planned damage to our field, which in recent years had greatly benefited from the work of brilliant ACU colleagues, and the university's innovative strategic vision for investment in the humanities.

MEMS research at the ACU is interdisciplinary, conducted by scholars in the named program as well as the Gender and Women's History Centre, Religious Studies, and Literary Studies. It is particularly clustered in disciplines targeted for job losses, the effects of which will be keenly felt by all staff. With current work from scholars in targeted positions on urgently topical matters including hope, humility, and faith in secular times, queer medievalism, and the history of conspiracy theories and racism, MEMS research at the ACU exemplifies the need for historically-informed approaches to understanding modern and contemporary life and addressing its most pressing problems. Moreover, MEMS scholars' research on Reformation history and theology, medieval and early modern religious histories, the history of the crusades, women's spirituality and writing, crucially supports the university's engagement with the Catholic intellectual tradition. The collective and individual work of MEMS scholars across multiple disciplines has continued to deliver new energy and critical visibility to the ACU's values-based commitment to human dignity, the common good and to equity, diversity, accessibility, wellbeing and sustainability.

If the ACU is committed to continuing the Catholic intellectual tradition by its mission, and to "building on the ancient tradition which gave rise to the first universities in medieval Europe" as articulated in its [Faith and Values statement](#), then MEMS must be central to its vision.

Further, ANZAMEMS wishes to emphasise the extreme dissonance between the proposed plans and ACU's state mission to act "in Truth and Love" and to be "committed to human dignity." The lack of any acknowledgement of the human impact on lives, careers, and wellbeing of staff that remain as well as those who may lose their jobs as a result of the Change Management Plan suggests that this guiding statement has been forgotten in the implementation of an ill-considered managerial process.

National and international MEMS experts, including ANZAMEMS members, were recruited to the ACU in recent years as part of a dedicated project to strengthen its research profile and contributions in the humanities and social sciences. They joined the institution in good faith. Some left tenured positions at other institutions, some relocated internationally, some were offered exciting opportunities to develop their promising careers. All now face intense distress and uncertainty with career curtailment and ruin on the near horizon for many. The speed of reversal from recruitment to redundancy must call into question any commitment the ACU makes to academics and their personal and professional wellbeing. This is particularly the case for the entire MEMS team who have been targeted in the current plan.

The ACU's investment in the Humanities in general and MEMS in particular made it distinctive in the Australian tertiary landscape, offering invaluable clusters of disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise that were promising to colleagues nationally and internationally as well as to those who went to work there. ANZAMEMS was proud to award funding for a career-building initiative for academic women in 2022, and a training workshop for Australian and New Zealand postgraduates in 2023, both hosted by the MEMS program. In the future, if these changes are implemented, ANZAMEMS and other potential partner organisations will find it difficult to commit to working with the ACU as a result of this sudden and unheralded change in circumstances.

ANZAMEMS stands in solidarity with all staff at the ACU, both academic and professional, and urgently calls on the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and ACU Senate and Corporation to change these plans which attack MEMS in particular, the humanities in general, and undermine the ACU's mission and values.

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