

## TRANSCRIPT WEB PROFILE

**Richard Ryan:**

**Deputy Chancellor and former Chancellor CDU**

### **01 Richard Ryan on: The 1980s, Darwin Community College & Darwin Institute of Technology**

I was involved with a couple of charities in the NT. As a result of that I was asked by the Everingham Government to go on the board of what was then the Darwin Community College. But within a month or two of my going onto it, it evolved into the Darwin Institute of Technology.

It was a major revelation because, I think we're talking the early 80s, if my memory serves me correctly. I can remember graphically going to this meeting which would have been my second or third council meeting, if we take DCC into account, and being asked to resign, along with all the other Council members. And Nan Giese, god bless her soul, stared them all down - the people who wanted us to resign. The reason they wanted us to resign was the new principle didn't meet some of the education criteria that the academics thought.

And I can understand it, it was an impingement on the freedoms of the institution. That there should be a proper process rather than Government saying that Kevin Davis had the job. And he subsequently, Kevin Davis did a wonderful job.

### **02 Richard Ryan on: 1989 & the formation of NTU**

The history making event was NTU. Because it was the first university. It gave you a real buzz to be involved. Where else in Australia could you do that? At that particular stage I don't think there'd been any other institutions created and it was just wonderful. It was a great experience and it actually made you feel that you were contributing.

I remember the first council meeting was quite huge. I remember thinking this is too many people because you can never make a decision when you've got an audience that's listening to every word. But Austin did a good job. Nan did a good job and it all settled down.

### **03 Richard Ryan on: Vice-Chancellor Mal Nairn**

Of course the huge advantage in all that was the choice of Vice-Chancellor in Mall Nairn was a perfect choice

Mal, because he was a VET fitted into the community extremely well. He had wonderful skills in terms of handling people. I remember graphically him coming to

the University council meetings and using his presence to get things through without forcing them. I think his tenure, which was five years, was really revelatory to where the institution went.

#### **04 Richard Ryan on: the transition from NTU to CDU**

In the later years of NTU, after Austin Asche had resigned to become Administrator, Nan Giese became Chancellor and I became Deputy Chancellor. We really had some quite severe financial difficulties. We brought in a series of controls to make sure that we could pay wages. And I can remember graphically going with Ron McKay, who was the then Vice-Chancellor, to see Dennis Bourke, to get money to be able to pay wages in two months time. It was a whole series of compounding factors. It was nobody's particular fault. It was part of the growing up process that we as an institution had to go through. It was the federal Government restricting funds. It was the NT Government wanting to develop other avenues. so it was getting fairly difficult.

And all of this was occurring around the time Ron McKay had fallen ill and put his resignation in. So Charles Webb became the acting Vice-Chancellor . And I can remember graphically going down to Sydney to see the then Federal Minister for Education, Nelson, with Peter Plummer who then headed up the Education Department and being given a series of ultimatums by the Federal Minister that if the Northern Territory didn't change some of the things that it did that he would consider holding back funding.

They wanted the institution to be more self-supporting, get more students, and the way to do that was to put together with what was then NTU, Centralian College and Menzies School of health research. And it was all very difficult at the time. As all this was occurring we started looking for a temporary Vice-Chancellor.

And Ken McKinnon was brought into this institution on the basis that he would be here for twelve months. he would effect change and then he would wander off into the wilderness. And he did exactly that.

#### **05 Richard Ryan on: CDUs economic benefit to the NT**

The economic benefit to the Northern Territory. And if you would allow me a bit of poetic licence with this, It's the third to major employer, it has a huge impact on the GDP, And if it didn't exist we would really regret it economically. It is quite relevant to all this

#### **06 Richard Ryan on: the changes in tertiary education in the NT**

If you take the changes in education from the Darwin Community College days to today, we have Darwin Community College, Darwin Institute of Technology, the University College of the NT, Centralian, Menzies School of health Research, NTU and now CDU, that's six and I've possibly missed one. the changes are enormous .

It's hard to comprehend that in the mid-eighties there was a small country town institution that turned into an institution that has 20,000 students, that has campuses right throughout the Northern Territory, it has campuses in Sydney and Melbourne. It has Menzies School of Health research that is the leader of its type in the country. And all that has been done with a population of 220,000 people. If I sound parochial it's because I am - it's true actually!

## **07 Richard Ryan: reflections on CDU**

The University today is a long way ahead of where I ever thought it would be. We had lots of very difficult years and suddenly it's all come together

Everybody honestly has tried to do the right thing for the institution. Now often people haven't agreed on the method, or even the process.

There are some people that to the detriment of their health have stayed and fought for CDU against those dreadful people down south that existed at one stage.

The main thing that we've got going for us is our staff is dedicated. The people really want to do things and I think the future is really something - I do actually.