Since 1945 it has become commonplace for international planners and policy makers to view education as a panacea for social and economic problems. In 1975, International Women's Year, the United Nations, addressing itself to improving the status of women, stated that education was the most effective channel for achieving equality between men and women and ensuring the full participation of women in development.

Since then most western countries have enacted anti-discrimination legislation and publicly committed to the policy of equal opportunity in employment. Such commitment has engendered an increasing volume of research on the unequal status of women in the home, workplace and education. If education is the key to improvement in social status, then it is salutary now to ask what progress women have made towards equality with men in education itself, and to relate this to a wider social context.

This paper concentrates only on university education and examines changes in the participation of women and changes in the proportions of men and women at all levels of university education in Australia since World War Two. In general terms there has been a significant increase in the numbers of women participating, and in the proportion of women to men, at all levels of university education in the post-war period. This period contrasts markedly with the long period of stability in female participation rates between 1920-1950, where the percentage of female university students hovered around twenty per cent at the beginning and end of the period (with a slight relative increase in the war years).

In economic terms the period 1920-1940 is one of stagnation, with annual increases of GDP did not exceed 2.2 per cent and where there were intervals of negative growth. The years 1945-1975 were a period of boom; annual increases of GDP averaged 4.4 per cent, making possible a high level of federal funding for universities. Since 1975 with the end of the economic boom, federal funding has contracted, and the period of marked expansion for universities is over. Are we now entering another period of stalls for women in universities? Will the increased participation be maintained or gradually diminish?

In examining female participation in the university sector the most noticeable feature is the absolute increase of numbers and the relatively narrowing of the discrepancy between male and female at all levels, though most obvious at the lowest levels of undergraduates and junior staff. In the 30 years 1950-1980 women increased their share of bachelor enrollments from 18.3 per cent to 43.9 per cent, of postgraduate enrollments from 6.9 per cent to 28 per cent of academic staffing from 11.9 per cent in 1951 to 16.2 per cent in 1980.

At bachelor level female enrollments increased from 4,305 in 1950 to 56,955 in 1980. In the period 1955-1970 the increase for women was nearly double the rate for males: 552 per cent as against 274 per cent (see Table 1). The upsurge of feminine enrollments no doubt reflects changes in the career aspirations of women, in work force participation rates, and in social expectations of women as wives and mothers.1

The absolute increase of numbers and the relative narrowing of gender differences is particularly striking in the university sector. As the basic economic unit of society, the family has undergone changes as a result of the development of technology and industrialisation. Among the changes in the family structure are those in the roles of women and men. The relative narrowing of the gender differences is the result of both an increase in the overall participation of women in the various sectors and the narrowing of the gender differences within the sectors themselves. The narrowing of gender differences is more pronounced in the area of education, which is an indicator of the progress of gender equality.

This pattern can be seen in the relative narrowing of gender differences in the different fields of study, with the exception of the humanities, where the gender gap is still significant. In the sciences and engineering, the gender gap is much smaller, with women now constituting a significant proportion of students in these fields. This trend is also evident in the field of law, where women have made significant strides in recent years. The narrowing of gender differences is a positive development, as it reflects the progress towards gender equality.

However, the narrowing of gender differences does not mean that women have achieved full equality in education. While women have made significant progress, there is still a need for further efforts to ensure that women have equal access to education and have the same opportunities as men. This is particularly important in the field of higher education, where women still face barriers and biases that limit their opportunities and achievements.

The narrowing of gender differences in education is a positive development, but it is not enough. There is a need for further efforts to ensure that women have equal access to education and have the same opportunities as men. This is particularly important in the field of higher education, where women still face barriers and biases that limit their opportunities and achievements.
precise and should be interpreted cautiously. The figures used are for first class honours degrees. B.S. degrees do separate the firsts, but in 1980 there were proportionately fewer females in Arts. The 1980 figures do not separate the first, second, and thirds and should be interpreted cautiously. The figures for postgraduate degrees, 1950-1980 (11.7 per cent in 1975). The tendency for female staff to cluster at the lower levels has been a marked trend since 1961, and therefore the decline in the percentage of female staff from the all-time peak of 17.5 per cent in 1975 to 16.2 per cent in 1980 is probably directly attributable to the cutbacks in tertiary education funding, which have hit hardest at tutorial levels. The downward trend began in 1978 and is unlikely to be arrested in the foreseeable future, despite increased female participation at postgraduate level. There is still a heavy imbalance between female participation at the lowest level of tertiary education and female enrolments, and their representation on the staff.

In 1980 women were 43.6 per cent of bachelor enrolments and 16.2 per cent of staff. Men made up 56.4 per cent of bachelor enrolments and 83.8 per cent of staff. Given the economic recession and cutbacks in tertiary funding it is unlikely that these relativities will alter in favour of females in the immediate future.

Conclusion

The long term trend since World War II shows increased female participation at all levels of university education, but there are still large imbalances of male/female numbers at all levels: least at the bottom — undergraduates; greatest at the top — professors. The reasons for increased participation are complex, but the main cause of the rapidly rising female participation rates appears to be the long boom in tertiary education.

The low and unchanging levels of female participation in the period of poor economic growth, 1920-1940, suggest that an upward movement in the 1950s and early 1960s is at least partly due to the effects of the recession, which began in 1975. It is likely that this has been the pattern of staff recruitment with higher degrees awarded in 1960 and 1965, and their representation on the staff.

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even the heightened participation rates since 1945 have not brought the same improvement to the status of women in society at large.

References
4. ibid.
5. 1940 figures are excluded from the long term comparisons because of the relative absence of men in wartime.
7. Sydney University does not have figures for male/female honours degrees until 1990.
11. ibid., p. 170.
12. ibid., p. 174.
13. Enrolments, all degrees:
   24,204 41,838 108,096 151,238

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<th>Table 5 Teaching and Research Staff, Universities</th>
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Australian universities, being largely modelled on their British counterparts, have in the majority of cases acquired the office of University Visitor. The purpose of this paper is to examine the need, the implications and the extent of recourse to the Visitor in Australian universities so that an opinion can be formed about the usefulness of this office.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**
The function had its origins in the remote past as an essential ingredient of the Constitutions of eleemosynary institutions which appear to be one of the earliest examples of corporate identities. The distinction between eleemosynary and other types of corporations was succinctly summarised by Shefford in his Law of Mortmain as follows:

Lay corporations are again subdivided into two classes, eleemosynary and civil. Eleemosynary corporations are such as are constituted for the perpetual distribution of the free alms, or bounty of the founder of them, to such persons as he has directed. These are of two general descriptions: hospitals for the maintenance and relief of poor and impotent persons; and colleges for the promotion of learning, and the support of persons engaged in literary pursuits; of which the greater number are within the Universities, being corporations within a corporation of which they form a component part; and other colleges are out of the Universities and are not necessarily connected with them.

It is unclear exactly when the divisions between various corporations occurred but the differences were well established in England at the beginning of the 19th century so that ecclesiastical and eleemosynary corporations were subject to visitation whereas other lay corporations were not. A further difference that can be observed between the two kinds of corporations subject to the Visitor's jurisdiction can be seen in the type of a person appointed to that office. Whereas the ecclesiastical corporations followed the established hierarchy, the eleemosynary corporations left the identity of the Visitor up to the legislator who passed the enabling legislation.

This is but a brief historical outline of the rise of the visitatorial jurisdiction. Any such historical synopsis would be incomplete, however, without a review of the early cases which shaped the extent of the Visitor's Office.

One of the earliest cases to define the powers of a Visitor was Phillip's and Bury's  "Sirs John Holt, J.C., in a judgement which was actually a dissenting judge in the Court of Kings Bench but which was subsequently approved by the House of Lords when reversing the judgment of that Court, stated:

The office of Visitor by the common law is to judge according to the statutes of the college and to expel and depose upon just occasions and to hear appeals of course. And from him and him only the parties grievous ought to have redress: and in him the Founder hath imposed so entire confidence that he will administer justice impartially that his determinations are final and exequiable in no other Court whatever.1

In substance the English Courts still follow the gravemen of that statement. In more recent times the law pertaining to Visitors was consolidated and enlarged upon by Sir Richard Kingsbery V.C. in the case of Thomson and University of London.2

Whatever relates to the internal arrangements and dealings with regard to the government and management of the house, of the domus, of the institutions is properly within the jurisdiction of the Visitor, and only under the jurisdiction of the Visitor and the Court will not intervene in those matters; but when it comes to a question of right of property, or rights as between the University and a third person doing the University, or with regard, it may be, to a breach of trust committed by the corporation that is the University, and so on or any contracts by the corporation, not being matters relating to the mere management and arrangement and details of their domus then indeed this Court will interfere.3

From these two quotations, but especially from the latter, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the extent of the visitatorial jurisdiction before the beginning of the 20th century:

• In the beginning, only a member of the corporation can instigate a complaint or appeal. Thus, in the first instance, the jurisdiction of the Visitor is confined to questions arising between members of the corporation and cannot be invoked in any disputes arising between the corporation and non-corporations. This is established law and is stated, among others, by Bridge.4

Visitorial jurisdiction is therefore essentially limited to corporations and does not extend to other persons within or outside the corporation.

Thus, for example, a dispute between a laboratory technician and the university that employs him cannot be settled by a Visitor but recourse must be made to the appropriate court.5

George Szlawski, Senior Industrial Officer, Health Commission of Victoria (Formerly FAUSA Industrial Officer)