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# WRESTLING WITH A FINE WOMAN:

## THE HISTORY OF POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA 1851 - 1993

The Struggle for Knowledge hath a Pleasure in  
it like that of Wrestling with a Fine Woman.  
(Lord Halifax, Seventeenth Century)

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## SUMMARY

Since the Report of the Committee on Australian Universities in 1957, postgraduate education in Australia has expanded greatly in comparison to the relatively minor role it played in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This thesis examines the history of this transformation and in particular, the rise of the research degree, culminating in the introduction of the PhD to Australia in 1946. It discusses the subsequent diversification of postgraduate education to include coursework, professional doctorates, diplomas and certificates.

The thesis analyses the change in the credentialling role of the postgraduate degree, from the moral dimension it carried in the nineteenth century to that of a sifting and accrediting mechanism in the twentieth century. It assesses, in particular, the influence of overseas models of postgraduate education on the development of an indigenous system and the impact of the rise of science and scientific method in the development of the modern research university.

It examines the increased role of the state in the transformation of the university from an elite to mass institution, with concomitant effects of this on postgraduate education. It contends that the changing relationship between state, universities and the research sector, combined with gradual loss of university autonomy, has impacted strongly on a hitherto relatively independent postgraduate sector. As universities have become increasingly assimilated into the marketplace and state, corporatization, entrepreneurial activity, direction of research and university development by government have directly impinged upon the postgraduate sector. The thesis argues that, in a mass tertiary education system, postgraduate qualifications have acquired differential market value. Aligned with this, multiple pressures for growth in the postgraduate and postdoctoral areas have effectively created a new tier of education - that of a quaternary sector.

The thesis concludes with an assessment of the impact of the Dawkins years on postgraduate education, current influence of overseas models, and an analysis of future trends within the sector, both nationally and internationally.