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Abstract
Bond University is history. Not in the way many predicted, but as subject matter for a book: 'Bond University, The Beginning 1985-1991', written by Brian Orr.

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BOND UNIVERSITY: THE BEGINNING 1985-1991

B. Orr,

Branxton Press 1991. 147 and xi pages

by
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Bond University is history. Not in the way many predicted, but as subject matter for a book: 'Bond University, The Beginning 1985-1991', written by Brian Orr. As project manager, Mr Orr has been at the centre of the development of the University right from the start. Not only closely involved with drawing plans, digging holes, and pouring concrete, he took part in deliberations on most other aspects of establishing the University. This goes from early staff selections, to decisions about the legal structure of the joint venture and public presentations of the concept. Therefore this book - presumably the first of a series - is thoroughly comprehensive and always well informed.

By all accounts the project was never easy to run. But for Mr Orr working with a group of motivated and enthusiastic people obviously had its rewards. The book traces the evolution from the days when there was lots of money to spend, and the problems were more in the nature of controlling excesses of enthusiasm, to union and press opposition, and to the days of Bond Corporation's financial woes. The account reveals that it was touch and go that the University in the end did start up and has been, to some extent, completed. One of the more hilarious passages in this otherwise rather deadpan book reveals how successive failures to pass fire inspections nearly locked the first intake of students out of the buildings. Indeed, the reader is left with an abiding sense that the University was finished in the nick of time, and against considerable odds. Had the recession, Bond's woes and the real estate slump come just a little earlier, plans would probably have remained plans.

Mr Orr, despite of his interest in the law, remains a property developer at heart. That shows in the book which reveals how quick and efficient work on the buildings carried the University project as a whole. Indeed, early defenders of Bond knew one argument would hardly ever fail to convince sceptics of the University's long term survival chances: come and see the campus for yourself.

Mr Orr is probably the only man in Australia who could deliver a made to measure university anywhere, anytime. But this book could help you well on your way to doing it yourself. The appendices contain many plans and

drawings of the University at various stages of building and development as well as copies of planning documents, lists of managerial and inaugural academic staff and legislation relevant to Bond University.

The meat of the book is more or less a chronology of events with emphasis on particular areas. There are chapters on the place of private universities, the make up and functioning of the advisory council, and present funding problems. If you have an interest in the more technical side of building a University, there is a lot on that too. From the fear that the hotel towers would collapse into the lake because of the instability of the supporting marine clay, to the now famous tale of Alan Bond's personal insistence on covering concrete with beautiful Helidon sandstone, the whole story is told with clarity and sometimes surprising candour. For example, Mr Orr admits that during 1989 the fact that building contractors refused to continue work for a month because of lack of payment was obscured by employing more people than necessary for maintenance, cleaning and landscaping. That way the campus looked convincingly busy.

In the final analysis it may prove more a stroke of good luck, than of good management, that the development of the University was so closely intertwined with a construction project. It provided a focus for progress and growing reality, and torpedoed all doubts and perceived threats. It also provided a once started, hardly stoppable impetus for the whole project. The lesson might well be: if planning a University, build first, think later. But you would have to find financiers who work along the same lines, and the skilled and experienced people to make it happen. In the case of Bond it was done on the Gold Coast, Australia's frivolity capital. That was a mixed blessing: Project development capacity was available there more than in most of Australia, but, under the sun and by the distracting beaches people found it a little hard to take it all seriously. That is, until they came and saw the actual buildings. For that reason more than any other Mr Orr can claim, as he does in his conclusion: 'The Joint Venture of Bond and EIE has given Australia a great opportunity to expand its education system in a way that can only be of benefit to the country as a whole.'

'Bond University The Beginning 1985-1981' is a book worth having, both as an interesting read and for future reference.