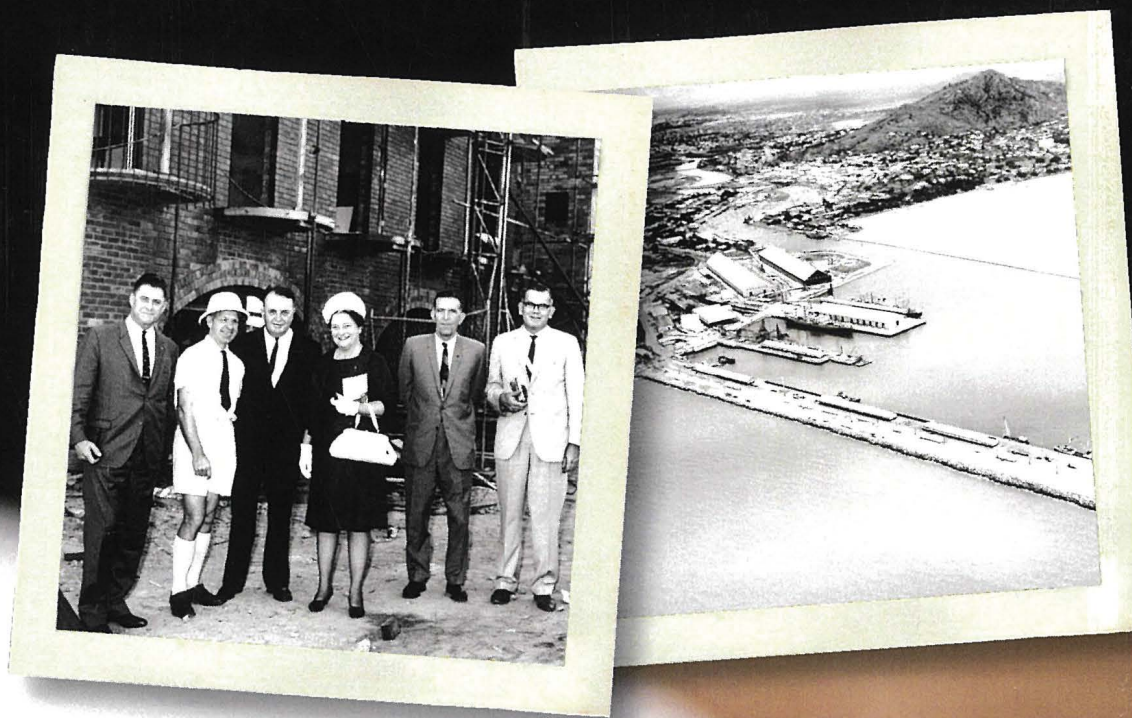


A History of the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies 1966-2016

by COLIN RODERICK &
LYNDON MEGARRITY



Published by the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies
Townsville 2016



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INTRODUCTION

The Foundation for Australian Literary Studies (FALS) is that rare thing: an organisation that has made a difference to the public understanding and appreciation of Australian literary culture from a regional rather than a metropolitan setting. This publication has been prepared to commemorate and celebrate the first fifty years of FALS, an organisation designed to promote and encourage Australian literature at a local and national level. It is the work of two authors.

The first author is Professor Colin Roderick (1911-2000), the original driving force behind FALS and its first Executive Director (1966-76). The Foundation published Roderick's account of the organisation's first decade in 1989, and while Roderick prepared a manuscript for the second decade, this has remained unpublished until now. Therefore, in this publication, the first twenty years of the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies are presented from the direct perspective of Colin Roderick. There has been some very minor editing to preserve continuity and context within the publication as a whole. Roderick skilfully captures the energy and enthusiasm of the early years of the Foundation, which elevated the importance of Australian literature and showcased North Queensland's potential as a cultural centre. Roderick's narrative of the first twenty years of FALS is followed by an account of the three decades from 1987 to 2016. This has been written by historian Dr Lyndon Megarrity, and will focus on how the Foundation has evolved since the 1980s.¹ It will also show how Roderick's vision has helped sustain the organisation over five decades.

Townsville in the 1960s was consolidating its reputation for being a regional hub and centre of national importance, especially with developments such as the Townsville University College (now James Cook University) and Lavarack Barracks, the largest army base in Australia. It was a town with strong economic infrastructure, but its cultural infrastructure was less developed. The establishment of the Foundation for Australian Literary Studies in 1966 was a sign that Townsville and North Queensland as a whole could be a location for cultural as well as economic advancement. As a former FALS Executive Director, Adjunct Professor Don Gallagher, has stated,

You have to remember that Townsville was a very different place in 1966 and the Foundation created quite a lot of excitement among the educated for bringing really well known people to the city—not just the Governor-General—but big names in writing, e.g. the first Lecturer, Rohan Rivett. It seemed the beginning of a cultural awakening in the city ...²

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¹ Dr Megarrity is an adjunct lecturer at James Cook University. He would like to thank Don and Mary Gallagher, Victoria Kuttainen, Hannah Cameron, Harry Heseltine, Sarah Galletly and the Megarrity family for their support in this project.

² Don Gallagher to Lyndon Megarrity, email dated 15 August 2016.