Uncovering Theology
The Depth, Reach and Utility of Australian Theological Education

Charles Sherlock has been engaged in theological education for some four decades, notably as Senior Lecturer at Ridley College, and later Trinity College (United Faculty of Theology) in Melbourne. He has served on the Councils of the Australian College of Theology and the Melbourne College of Divinity. During his time as Registrar, the MCD experienced the first AQF audit of a theological institution, and the MCD Act was revised by the Parliament of Victoria.

Charles’ theological interests include the Trinity, Liturgy, Ministry Studies and ecumenical theology, with a wide range of publications. He is the Executive Secretary of the Liturgy Commission of the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia, and been a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission since 1991.

Charles is married to his co-theologian and parish priest, Peta Sherlock, and they have two adult sons and two grand-daughters.
Uncovering Theology:
the depth, reach and utility of
Australian theological education

Charles Sherlock

Adelaide

Australian Learning & Teaching Council
Charles Henry Sherlock asserts his right to be recognised as the primary author of this work.

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Foreword

At its best, education must embrace the ‘whole of life’, reaching out beyond its traditional and essential duty of vocational training and reskilling to respond to the wider searchings and hungers of mind and spirit—the seeking for new horizons to explore and, for many, the probing of meaning and purpose.

The availability of work-free time, together with increasing longevity and improved aged health and activity, presents a growing challenge to educators and government and non-government providers to inform and equip themselves to meet these new challenges with quality delivery and outcome.

Within that context, Uncovering Theology reveals itself as an important and refreshing new exemplar, pioneer and reformer in and beyond its own discipline. It provides invaluable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, diversities, demands and locations of existing theological providers. Of interest and relevance, it indicates that less than one quarter of current students plan to proceed on a path to religious ordination.

It unfolds as a scholarly document, well supported by valuable and in-depth research. Where points of perceived differences emerge, notably in aspects of curricula, it approaches these with sensitivity and understanding, and with a readiness to continue dialogue towards consensus. Surely, it suggests, genuine unity can coexist with some diversity.

To this absorbing task, the Project Manager, has brought and effectively contributed the wisdom and great experience of his rich and varied lifetime. Acknowledgements too must be made to his dedicated and hard-working Project Team. To this talented, visionary and ecumenical gathering go our thanks and warm wishes.

Here then, is a significant contribution to higher education in Australia which fully merits wide public and academic dissemination and discussion. From here, too, must come a stream of meaningful dialogue within and across interest groups.

To the endless adventure and ever-expanding horizons of education comes a newly authorised journey of discovery. Its goal is clearly defined; its course already well charted.

May it find fair winds, eager and willing crews, a speedy and exhilarating journey and rewarding home ports.

John Carrick
Commonwealth Minister for Education 1975–1979
Preface

Uncovering Theology began as a research project—a Discipline-Based Initiative supported by the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching, now the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC). The project has enjoyed the welcome institutional sponsorship of the Australian Catholic University as the lead institution. Our thanks must first go to Professor Gabrielle McMullen, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at ACU for her enthusiastic support and keen professional interest.

Uncovering Theology was managed by a team drawn from the Council of Deans of Theology. It consisted of co-chairs Neil Ormerod (Professor of Theology, Australian Catholic University) and Mark Harding (Dean, Australian College of Theology) with Robert McIver (Dean, Faculty of Theology, Avondale College) and Gerard Moore (Director of Research, Sydney College of Divinity). Each team member wishes to thank their respective institutions who released them for this work.

The success of the project is due of course to its manager, Charles Sherlock. From the commencement of his brief in January 2008, Charles has been indefatigable in the pursuit of the project’s goals. His knowledge of Australian theological education is unique; some would say legendary. Despite serious health issues that surfaced in mid 2008, Uncovering Theology can be confidently commended as a landmark in the enterprise of Australian theological education.

In September 2008 Charles convened a highly successful workshop for providers at the Uniting Church’s Centre for Theology and Ministry in Melbourne. Information gained formed the backbone of a substantial amount of Charles’ research that built on earlier submissions from each institution in response to his request for handbooks, enrolment data and other material. The team wishes to thank all those who took part in the provider workshop and their institutions for responding so generously.

Uncovering Theology marks the emergence of theological education as part of the mainstream Australian higher education landscape. We are delighted that it is issued by ATF Press, the major Australasian academic imprint in theology and religion, which has been publishing books with colleges in Australasia and the Asia-Pacific region for 15 years.

Uncovering Theology will shape the future of the discipline. We commend it to all theological education providers and their stakeholders and also to higher education regulators and educationalists generally.

Mark Harding and Neil Ormerod
Co-chairs, Uncovering Theology project
Executive Summary

Theological education in Australia has a history of more than 150 years, operating largely in parallel to the six public universities until 1945. In addition, the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions had little contact before the 1960s. Four major turning-points influence its present shape:

- the 1964 Martin Report, which led to state governments authorising the conferral of degrees by private higher education providers, including theological institutions;
- the emergence of ecumenical consortia, facilitating theological teaching in Australia’s public universities;
- the development of Christian tertiary institutions offering disciplines alongside theology; and
- the Commonwealth *Higher Education Support Act* (HESA, 2003), and the consequent introduction of FEE–HELP from 2005.

All Christian traditions in Australia now participate in theological higher education, through 69 colleges grouped into 26 Higher Education Providers, including five consortia (one listed in HESA Table B) and six universities (five Table A and one Table B). Some 14,000 students are engaged in learning at these institutions, representing around 6,200 EFTSL. The formation in 1968 of the *Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools* (ANZATS) fostered growing co-operation between colleges: formal accreditation procedures were required for membership.

The full range of *Australian Quality Framework* higher education courses has been available in Australian theological education since 2000: diplomas, degrees, graduate certificates and diplomas, coursework masters, professional doctorates and Higher Degrees by Research.

Quality assurance has been given increased attention in the past 25 years, notably in the three private consortia—the *Australian College of Theology* (ACTh, founded in 1891), *Melbourne College of Divinity* (MCD, set up by a 1910 Act of the Victorian Parliament) and *Sydney College of Divinity* (SCD, commencing in 1983). Since 2005, each has been audited by the *Australian University Quality Agency* (AUQA), as have Moore Theological College (established in 1856) and Avondale College (commencing in NSW in 1897). These engagements with AUQA were positive experiences, and raised awareness of the importance of ongoing quality assurance.
The large number of theological colleges, and the diversity of their church, academic and government accountabilities, indicate the need for further collaboration in Australian theological education. This cannot be imposed from outside the sector: further working together needs to be initiated from within, since some of the diversity reflects substantial, long-term theological difference. The patterns of relationships between colleges and churches are correspondingly diverse, including funding: some colleges continue to rely on tuition fees and donations, and few have endowments. Even so, the churches are likely to continue as the ‘industry partners’ of Australian theological education (including university contexts), whether or not a college is church-sponsored.

Learning and teaching in Australian theological education is marked by a strongly formative ethos, both communal and personal, with small classes and a broad range of ages and life-experience in the student body. The preparation of professional ministers continues to be a significant for some 20% of theological students, but most study to be equipped for life as Christians, the primary meaning of ‘vocational learning’ in theological education. In the best of worlds, a flexible national learning and teaching management plan would be developed to bring greater coherence to Australian theological education, and assist students, faculty, teaching institutions and churches to learn together as partners in a common enterprise.

The Australian ‘theology sector’ faces several pedagogical challenges, including experienced faculty coming to terms with the learning styles of younger students; the rapid growth in the use of new technologies and flexible delivery; and the ‘service’ teaching of theology to students from other disciplines. Existing differences in graduate course nomenclature, length and articulation need to be resolved. Theological institutions need to clarify and put in place patterns of graduate attributes for different courses, unit learning outcomes and evaluation, and further develop national benchmarking standards.

Re-assessment is needed of the expectations placed on faculty by the formative ethos of theological education, and by their wider church responsibilities, in order to equip and re-orient them for the changing environments of society, higher education and church within which they teach. Sustaining the teaching / research nexus, succession planning and providing adequate academic administrative support present particular challenges. Identifying the research strengths in Australian theology is another need: here libraries have led the way, working through the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association (ANZTLA).
Research doctorates in theology have been awarded by the ACTh and MCD since the nineteenth century, and research masters’ since the 1950s. The establishment of theology departments at Flinders University (1980), Murdoch University (1986) and Charles Sturt University (1997), and the formation of Australian Catholic University (1991), has boosted Australian theological research resources. The allocation from 2002 of Commonwealth funding to the largest theology research body, the MCD, enabled the development of a research culture across its colleges, and engagement with the research processes of the public universities. Similar advances have also taken place in the ACTh and SCD, including research training, supervisor accreditation and the fostering of faculty research. Yet the lack of research funding is holding back the bedding down of such basic elements in research practice across the theology sector as a whole.

Neither college faculty, church leaders, university staff nor public servants have a full picture of Australian theological education: this book offers such a portrait for the first time, albeit restricted by the time and resources available. One hoped-for outcome is that as particular churches, colleges, university and government departments see themselves in the light of an overall viewpoint, greater understanding, co-operation and collaborative action may eventuate: the many matters noted ‘for consideration’ in the Uncovering Theology book seek to offer ways forward.

Overall, the picture which emerges of Australian theological education is one of a long-established, academically robust and distinctive dimension of higher education, with strengthening international links. Australian theological institutions welcome the warmer relationships developed over the past three decades with government and the universities, and believe that theology makes a distinctive contribution to higher education. Yet they continue to set their priorities by seeking to discern and follow the purposes of God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, not only for the sake of the churches, but for humankind in all its diversities, and the whole created cosmos.
The Uncovering Theology Project

*Uncovering Theology* aims to ‘scope’ tertiary theological education in Australia—its ‘depth, reach and utility’—and so lift the cover sheet from what has been a largely unmapped dimension of tertiary education.

Over the last half-century, church and society in Australia, never tightly inter-woven, have drifted further apart. How Australian theological education will develop and change over the next decade or more is thus a more open question than in earlier generations. From a government and university perspective, benchmarking and quality assurance are key factors for all areas of tertiary study in Australia, including theological education. Changes are continuing to take place in the way governments support and regulate higher education, public and private.

Changes have similarly taken place within the churches—the Second Vatican Council, major reforms in the public worship of older churches, the rise of Pentecostal movements, and the growing presence of non-Christian faiths in Australia, for example. Even so, the Christian churches continue to look to theological education institutions for the education of clergy and other professional ministers, and will continue to be the main sources of their colleges’ human, physical and financial resources. Yet the shape of ‘church’ and ‘ministry’ for the decades ahead is by no means clear, raising questions about the curricula of theological courses and colleges. With some 75% of students studying without ordination primarily in mind, tuition fees, donations / endowment and government funding are becoming increasingly significant for each college’s ongoing ministry. In view of these contexts, *Uncovering Theology* has proved to be timely.

The *Council of Deans of Theology* (formerly the *Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia or University Departments*, and now including all theological HEPs who wish to participate) initiated the project, which was funded by *The Australian Learning and Teaching Council* (ALTC).

The project was managed by Dr Charles Sherlock, the author of this book, whose personal networks facilitated its progress, and fostered the significant co-operation received from across the range of Australian theological education.

The project was administered by the School of Theology of Australian Catholic University (Strathfield), and directed by a Project Team which met regularly during its planning (August–December 2007) and execution (January 2008–April 2009):
Co-chairs
Dr Mark Harding (Australian College of Theology)
Professor Neil Ormerod (Australian Catholic University)

Members
Dr Robert McIver (Avondale College)
Associate Professor Gerard Moore
(Sydney College of Divinity)

Project Manager
The Revd Dr Charles Sherlock
(Anglican Diocese of Bendigo,
former MCD Registrar, ACTh Council member)

Project Reference Group: the Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia and
University Departments, in 2008 representing
Adelaide College of Divinity /
Flinders University, School of Theology
Australian Catholic University, School of Theology
Australian College of Theology
Avondale College, Faculty of Theology
Brisbane College of Theology
Charles Sturt University, School of Theology
Melbourne College of Divinity
Perth College of Divinity /
Murdoch University, Theology Program
Sydney College of Divinity
University of Auckland, School of Theology
University of Otago, Department of Theology
and Religious Studies

The Uncovering Theology project used a variety of methods (Appendix B gives fuller details). Its first phase employed existing materials produced by theological colleges and HEPs. Quantitative data was gathered across the whole period of the project’s duration (see Appendix G).

The Consultation Day held on September 25, 2009 at the Centre for Theology and Ministry in Melbourne was particularly significant for the second phase, gathering qualitative data (see Appendix E). Some 70 people from all mainland states participated, representing the five consortia and most stand-alone theological institutions, from across the full variety of Australian tertiary theological education. The day proved to be stimulating for participants, many of whom had not previously met one another, fostered responses to the work done to that point, and gathered a wide range of qualitative insights on the major areas identified as important for theological education in Australia.
Project aims and outcomes

The intended broad outcome of the project was a detailed, evidence-based portrait of Australian theological education, especially to improve learning and teaching within it.

The Project Team believes that this has been achieved, and warmly affirms these three ‘meta-outcomes’ as very significant for the future:

1. The present two ‘peak’ bodies in Australian theological education are both important to its ongoing health and vitality, having complementary roles:
   - The Council of Deans of Theology relates theology HEPs to one another as institutions, and is the primary vehicle by which the theology sector addresses government and higher education.
   - ANZATS enables faculty and teaching institutions to engage in networking and scholarship as regards both pedagogy and research, especially through annual conferences (the latter in co-operation with ANZSTS, the publisher of Colloquium).

2. The development of common benchmarks across Australian theological education is essential for its long-term health. Such benchmarks should be used in particular for the five-yearly re-accreditation processes required of Non-Self Accrediting Institutions (and probably Table A and B HEPs, following the Bradley Report).

3. The general spirit of co-operation and collaboration in Australian theological education must be fostered, and practical developments encouraged in areas of mutual interest.

The Project Team believes that convergence on what is needed for a first degree in theology (at both undergraduate and graduate levels) would offer an excellent opportunity to pursue aspects of each of these outcomes.

The precise Aims of the project are set out in Appendix A, general outcomes in Appendix C, matters for consideration in Appendix D, and a Bibliography in Appendix F.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to bring together in this project three decades of close engagement with Australian theological education. Dr Keith Cole, the inaugural Secretary of ANZATS, was my first theological teacher, at Ridley College, Melbourne. His sustained passion for co-operative theological engagement has remained with me in the years since. This book is dedicated to him.

Charles Sherlock
Abbreviations

AASR  Australian Academy for the Study of Religion
ACBA  Australian Catholic Biblical Association
ACTA  Australian Catholic Theological Association
ACD   Adelaide College of Divinity
ACTh  Australian College of Theology
ACU   Australian Catholic University
ALC   Australian Lutheran College
ANZATFE Australian and New Zealand Association for Theological Field Education
ANZATS Australian and New Zealand Association of Theological Schools
ANZSTS Australian and New Zealand Society for Theological Studies
ANZTLA Australian and New Zealand Theological Libraries Association
ATF   Australasian Theological Forum
AUQA  Australian Universities Quality Agency
BBI   Broken Bay Institute
BCQ   Bible College of Queensland
BCSA  Bible College of South Australia
BCT   Brisbane College of Theology
BCV   Bible College of Victoria
BD    Bachelor of Divinity
BTh, BTheol Bachelor of Theology
CCTC  Churches of Christ Theological College
CDTC  Committee of Deans of Theological Consortia
CIS   Catholic Institute of Sydney
CPE   Clinical Pastoral Education
CSP   Commonwealth Supported Place
CSU   Charles Sturt University
CTC   Catholic Theological College
DEEWR Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST  Department of Education, Science and Training
DMin  Doctor of Ministry
DMinStuds Doctor of Ministry Studies
DTheol Doctor of Theology
EFTSL Equivalent Full Time Student Load
FACIT Fellowship of Australian Catholic Theological Institutes
FEE-HELP Federal Education Entitlement—Higher Education Loan Program
<table>
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<tr>
<td>GA</td>
<td>Graduate Attributes</td>
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<td>HDR</td>
<td>Higher Degree by Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>HEP</td>
<td>Higher Education Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>HREC</td>
<td>Human Research Ethics Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSPF</td>
<td>Institute for Christian Spirituality and Pastoral Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>JTC</td>
<td>Jesuit Theological College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTh</td>
<td>Diploma in Divinity (Licentiate in Theology: MCD)</td>
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<td>MA</td>
<td>Master of Arts</td>
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<td>MCD</td>
<td>Melbourne College of Divinity</td>
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<td>Master of Divinity</td>
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<td>MMin</td>
<td>Master of Ministry</td>
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<td>MTh,mTheol</td>
<td>Master of Theology</td>
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<td>Master of Theological Studies</td>
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<td>Nazarene Theological College</td>
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<td>PBC</td>
<td>Perth Bible College</td>
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<td>PCBC</td>
<td>Pentecostal and Charismatic Bible Colleges network</td>
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<td>PCD</td>
<td>Perth College of Divinity</td>
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<td>PTC</td>
<td>Presbyterian Theological Centre / College</td>
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<td>Queensland Theological College</td>
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<td>RTC</td>
<td>Reformed Theological College</td>
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<td>RTI</td>
<td>Recognized Teaching Institution</td>
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<td>St Andrew’s Greek Orthodox College</td>
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<td>SMBC</td>
<td>Sydney Missionary and Bible College</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCS</td>
<td>School of Christian Studies</td>
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<td>SPABC</td>
<td>South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>STFE</td>
<td>Supervised Theological Field Education</td>
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Notes on Terminology

Throughout this book,

1. By ‘church’ is meant any Christian body—a congregation, diocese, synod, conference etc.—which owns, sponsors, has an institutional relationship with, or acts as a patron, to an Australian theological institution, irrespective of financial support being involved.

2. ‘Congregation’ is used to refer to a particular Christian faith community, and ‘local congregation’ to refer to one which is geographically based.

3. The term ‘ordinand’ is used to refer to a candidate for the authorised ministry of a church (usually professional), including a person preparing to enter a religious order or missionary society, without prejudice to any particular understanding of the precise meaning of ‘orders’ and ‘ordination’.

4. The term ‘clergy’ is generally avoided, because it is theologically problematic for many, is not used by every Christian tradition, and does not include members of religious orders or other Christians engaged in authorised ministries. The phrase ‘authorised / ordained ministers’ indicate persons who in their tradition are recognised as having long-term responsibility in, and being public representatives of, the Christian Church.

5. Where the term ‘professional’ is used, it does not refer to whether or not a person is paid, but indicates the classical meaning of a profession: an occupation backed by a heritage of practical wisdom and an accumulated and growing body of knowledge, operating with an implicit ethos of ethical behaviour, usually involving a life-long interest and relationship.

All lists (for example of colleges, consortia, churches, disciplines) are given in alphabetical order unless otherwise stated.