Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Sir Zelman Cohen, Mrs Jean Willett, distinguished guests.

It is indeed a great honour to be asked to play a small part in this 25 years' celebration. As many of you will know Griffith University was my life for nine years from 1973 through 1981. It was a time in my life of great excitement - a time when I learned much.

Chancellor, I apologise for I am going to stray from my brief right at the start of my speech, by thanking you on behalf of all of your guests for allowing us to be a part of such a splendid and historic occasion. This is a great occasion for meeting with old friends. Will all the guests of the University please join me in thanking the Chancellor, and the Council of the University for the invitation to be a part of these celebrations.

It has been a splendid dinner - and not yet finished - for I am conscious that I am keeping you from your dessert. A friend of mine was at a dinner party recently - not a large gathering like this, but a dinner party in his host's home. This friend of mine is one of those people who normally does not get on well with animals, and so he was delighted and fascinated by the attention the host's pet dog was giving him. After a while he could not resist saying to his host "Dogs and I normally just don't get on - this is wonderful". "I wouldn't get too excited" replied his host "we were a bit short on crockery with so many people here, and you've got his plate".

I congratulate the University on having commissioned a history timed to be launched during these celebrations, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you tonight "Preparing for the Future - A History of Griffith University 1971-1996", written by Noel Quirke. In his preface Noel says that

"it is not intended to be a definitive history, nor indeed even a comprehensive history. Rather it is a sketch of the creation and evolution of a major tertiary institution..."

As one who was a staff member in the early years of the University, and who has watched it develop in recent years, I congratulate you Noel on producing a very readable account of the way this University has developed. It is an account that will have great interest for anyone who has been a part of the Griffith evolution. But it is also a work that will add to the record of the development of higher education in Australia through one of its more turbulent phases (though what Amanda Vanstone has in store for the universities may make the past seem tranquil).

Many in this room could write their own personal histories of this University, and in introducing the book to you I hope you will allow me to add some of my own recollections.

First let me say how delighted I am to be speaking on the same platform as Sir Zelman. As Vice-Chancellor at the University of Queensland in the early Griffith days he was a good friend to us, but I owe him a particular thank you. When John Willett offered me the post of Founding Chair of the School of Science, I said to him "unless I can keep my research flowing, and that meant having good laboratory facilities, I would have to decline." John talked with Sir Zelman, and as a consequence I had a lab in the Chemistry building on the St Lucia campus for 21 months, until the Nathan buildings were ready. The University of Queensland similarly helped Robert Segall, the Foundation Professor of Physics. That was one of the ways that helped Griffith hit the floor running with its research programs.

In the opening chapter Noel Quirke details what might almost be called the pre-history of the University. The period when the founding Chancellor Sir Theodore Bray (or Ted in the familiar Griffith style) did so much to establish the University, not only physically, but culturally as well. This University will always owe a great debt to Ted Bray. It is sad he is not able to be with us tonight.
He persuaded the Queensland Government to give him and his Interim Council a very open brief - simply "to plan a second university institution in Brisbane". He and the Interim Council decided that the University should "offer an alternative university experience to that already available in Queensland". Ted Bray was far-sighted enough to see the future importance of our relations with our Asian neighbours and he said (remember this was the early 1970s) "if we do nothing else in this University, we will teach Asian studies and we will cultivate good relations between Asia and its neighbours around the Pacific rim."

But perhaps one of the wisest things that Ted Bray and his Council did was to appoint John Willett as the Founding Vice-Chancellor. I am pleased that Noel has captured in the book, the very valuable contribution that Jean Willett made to the establishment of Griffith - Jean I am pleased to see you here tonight, and to be able to reminisce with you.

John Willett and Ted Bray and others of course set out to provide that "alternative university experience" with great success and Noel documents those developments with skill.

As Noel has captured in his book, those early days were something special. Has there ever been another University that had as its first building on campus the squash courts! That was done to provide a base for the University building works team. John Willett was always finding ways of getting the early staff together, and I expect there a few here who will remember the red wine bottling parties that were held in the squash courts - most of the time more wine went into the bottlers than into the bottles. And much later after we had moved on to the Nathan campus, the University-wide "Feast of the Eponym" on Sir Samuel Walker Griffith's birthday.

Noel also reminds us in the book of the great contributions of one of the often unsung pioneers at Griffith - Roger Johnson. Roger laid out the master plan for the Nathan site that has served the university so well. He resisted the temptation to clear masses of trees and shrubs and lay acres of lawns. The bush environment at Nathan is to me still one of the most beautiful university campuses in the world. The work that Roger Johnson did particularly the wonderfully simple concept of the Spine Path, together with that of Alan Cole the first Site and Buildings Manager, has been a great legacy to the university. I recall the way in which trees and shrubs were moved from a potential building site to around a newly completed building.

The first home for the university was 27 Sherwood Road in Toowong. My friends whom I had left behind in Sussex wrote and asked me if all universities in Australia had house numbers. From Sherwood Road we moved to Evans Road - a light industrial site. That is where much of the initial curriculum planning was done that produced degrees with that particular Griffith flavour. Noel tells in his book of the "Evans Road Mob", but discretion suggests I do not add to his account.

Noel then describes the move to the campus and the arrival of the first 451 students. That was quite a shock to many of us who had not seen a student for nearly 2 years. One story that Noel tells I remember with great fondness for John Willett. This was the debate in the University Council on should there be a university motto, and if so, what. John was strongly opposed to the idea, contrary to the view of many on the Council. In the end John offered a possible motto to Council, but when they found it was a quotation from Chairman Mao's "Little Red Book", the whole notion was dropped.

The University broke new ground in many ways - not only with Asian Studies, and Australian Environmental Studies, but it was the first to encourage mature age students, the first to have more than 50% of its students as women. In 1976 in the brochure for prospective students John Willett described Griffith as

"a place that has high ambition, first class people, limited resources, and its fair share of human weaknesses".

Research flourished as documented by Noel and the University made its mark on the national and international university scene. A major impact on the University was the 1988
Commonwealth games, and Noel takes us through the negotiations that led to student accommodation coming to Nathan.

The end of the first phase of Griffith's development came with the resignation of John Willett in 1983. There was a period of interregnum with Professor Robert Segall as A/g Vice-Chancellor and then the current Vice-Chancellor Roy Webb took up office in 1985.

As Noel documents well, the whole environment of higher education in Australia was changing, and Roy has with great dexterity led the university through Dawkins amalgamations, to greater international interactions, to the multi campus it now is with its five major components. It now looks to developing a new campus at Logan City.

I feel privileged to have been a part of this university in its early years. It is a period of my life I shall never forget, it was a period when I learned much, particularly from those around me. In March when I left UTS, I told in one farewell speech of the three people who had most influenced me in my professional life. One of those I identified was John Willett, who taught me much about management and leadership. He passed on many tips, but one I shall always recall was when I went to see him and tell him I had been appointed President of NSWIT. "Remember one thing, Gus" he said "you are not paid to be popular".

This University has had two Vice-Chancellors, who have each played a different role, but a role suited to the needs of the time. John Willett gave the University a great start, and established it, as was his brief as a different university. Roy Webb has taken that base and developed it to meet the environment of mass education, and to become an international university.

This University has also been fortunate in its Chancellors. I have talked of Ted Bray and his unique contribution. He was followed by Alan Sewell, and now by Chief Justice John Macrossan. They in their turn have steered the university along its successful pathway.

The title of the book being launched tonight "Preparing for the Future" is a most apt one. At all stages through its past 25 years Griffith University has been preparing for the future, and under Roy Webb's leadership it is well placed for any future that may confront it.

In his forward to the book, the Chancellor says "While we remain confident [about the future] we cannot predict. Who would dare to offer a precise picture of the way Griffith will look in another 25 years?" I must admit that when I arrived in Toowong in April 1973 I could never have predicted Griffith Uni as we see it today.

Noel, I again congratulate you on producing an accurate, readable account of the first 25 years of this university. I urge all of you here as friends of the university to buy a copy and get it autographed as a souvenir of the evening. Noel, please stand up and take a bow.

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor thank you for allowing me to be a part of this celebration. I have great pleasure in officially launching "Preparing for the Future - a history of Griffith University 1971-1996" by Noel Quirke.

Professor Gus Guthrie
14 September 1996