



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**

**Dr Michael Spence AC**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal

23 October 2019

**Associate Professor Noah Riseman,**  
President, International Association for Australian Studies

**Associate Professor Anna Johnston**  
Vice-President, International Association for Australian Studies

Via email: [M.Carey@murdoch.edu.au](mailto:M.Carey@murdoch.edu.au)

Dear Associate Professor Riseman and Associate Professor Johnston,

Thank you very much for your letter about the University of Sydney's decision to not replace our Chair of Australian Literature, after Professor Robert Dixon retired last June. As Chair, Professor Dixon provided the University with valuable guidance on Australian literature, and his track record of long-standing service is well documented.

I appreciate your concerns, but I want to assure you both, and the International Australian Studies Association, that the University remains deeply committed to research and teaching in the field of Australian Literature and, more broadly, the humanities and social sciences. We have a number of internationally renowned scholars already working in this field and are working to secure funding for an endowed chair of Australian Literature. As you know, philanthropy is a critical additional funding avenue for the University, to support education and research work that will benefit future generations. The University has more than 50,000 donors from across the world, with most based in Australia. We have strict procedures in place to limit donor influence and preserve academic freedom and no donor receives material benefit from making a philanthropic donation to the University.

I would like to also point out that Australian literature remains embedded in the University of Sydney curriculum. Our minor in [Australian Literature](#) includes units of study featuring predominantly Australian content, as well as units that include significant Australian content as part of the course work. While the units and numbers of enrolments vary from year to year, and not all those studying a particular unit are enrolled in the minor, hundreds of our students study content rich in Australian writing each year.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Spence