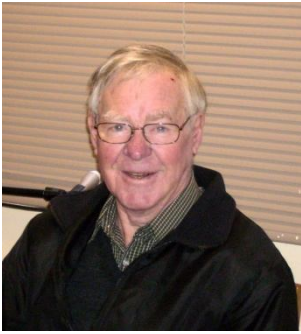


**Bachelard, Eric, Professor** (from ANU Emeritus Faculty website)



Eric Peter Bachelard was born in Melbourne in 1931, the younger of two sons. He attended state primary schools, then Trinity Grammar in Melbourne on a scholarship.

Eric completed an associate diploma at Creswick School of Forestry in 1952, which led to employment with the Victorian Forestry Commission. From here he returned to training to complete a degree in forestry at Melbourne University in 1958, followed by a masters degree and PhD at Yale University, USA. He returned to the Victorian Forestry Commission in 1962, then a year later was back on the US east coast as Instructor in Biology at Harvard University for 12 months.

In 1965, after a further year in the Forestry Commission, Eric applied successfully for a lectureship in the ANU's newly formed Department of Forestry in the faculty of Science, under the headship of Professor Derek Ovington, where he helped with the development of the new teaching and research programs, including his own specialty of tree physiology.

In 1969 Eric was promoted to Senior Lecturer, and later to Professor of Forestry in 1978. From 1980 to 1983 he was Dean of Science, then from 1986 to 1989 Chairman of the Board of the Faculties [the undergraduate arm of the ANU]. He served as Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor on occasion. From 1992 to 1996 he was Head of the School of Forestry, from which position he retired from the university. He is a Fellow of the Institute of Foresters of Australia.

Eric Bachelard has served on many professional and advisory committees and boards both inside and outside the ANU, and was editor of Australian Forestry for five years in the 1970s.

He has assisted professional forestry organisations in Papua New Guinea.

From 1992 to 2002, Eric was a member of the Board of the Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School. In 2008 he was inducted by his old school Trinity Grammar in Melbourne into their Gallery of Achievement.

***Interview abstract:*** *Eric's father died when he was 13 years old, as a consequence of which his mother had a considerable financial struggle to complete the schooling of her sons. After four years on scholarship at Trinity Grammar in Melbourne, Eric enrolled at Creswick School of Forestry, near Ballarat, in 1952. Emerging a year later with an associate diploma in forestry, he joined the Victorian Forestry Commission, then after two years as a silviculturalist he enrolled as a bonded undergraduate in Forestry at Melbourne University, graduating in 1958. Still attached to the Forestry Commission, he began graduate studies at Yale University in the US, completing a PhD there in 1962. After a short period back in Australia, Eric returned to the US for a year, this time as a faculty member teaching biology at Harvard University.*

*Returning to the Victorian Forestry Commission in 1964, he was appointed chief research officer in silviculture, then in 1965, lecturer in the newly formed Department of Forestry at ANU. This newly created centre replaced the Australian School of Forestry at Yarralumla, the training school of the Federal Government's Forestry and Timber Bureau. The new ANU department contained a mixture of staff previously employed by the Bureau, and newly recruited staff of similar background to Eric - a mixture of*

*experience and new talent, who soon melded into a productive and energetic group under the guidance of Professor Derek Ovington.*

*Eric and Sally (Lodge) became engaged in 1965, and married at the beginning of 1966. They lived initially in an ANU house in Lyons, and moved to their present home in Cook, in 1968, where their daughter and two sons were raised.*

*Eric played a key role as a research physiologist and academic leader in establishing the new programs of teaching and research in forestry at ANU; this was rewarded by promotion to senior lecturer in 1969. The new courses were pioneering in their philosophy and structure, imaginatively integrating biology at all levels with economics, environmental science, and business. The courses were enthusiastically accepted by the private and government sectors, and the school's graduates were keenly sought both in Australia and abroad. Eric believes that in recent times other forestry schools have caught up with and overtaken ANU, establishing new approaches to the multidisciplinary complex which is modern forestry. He believes this is an issue which has to be addressed continuously, and acted on, to ensure the quality of graduates and postgraduates coming out of any forestry school. New political attitudes often interact through forestry on larger environmental issues of soil quality, water policy, climate change, resource management and carbon sequestration.*

*In 1978, Eric was promoted to Professor, then in 1980 his skills as an academic manager were recognised through his appointment as Dean of Science in ANU, and in 1986 his appointment as Chairman of the Board of the Faculties [then the undergraduate teaching arm of ANU]. Eric sees the 1980s as the culmination of his career as scientist and manager, a period in which he felt that his personal and professional skills came together to considerable effect - for the school of forestry and Science Faculty, for the university, and for himself. Apart from his academic responsibilities, Eric was also sought after for other campus roles. Amongst these was Vice President of the ANU Staff Association, Chair of the ANU Careers and Appointments Advisory Committee, Chair of the ANU Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee, and Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor at times.*

*Eric enjoyed interacting with students in his role as teacher, supervisor, and mentor, among whom he was a popular figure. He was a tutor and member of the Governing Body of Burton Hall from 1968 to 1976.*

*Beyond the university, Eric was active in forestry science editorial work, on boards concerned with forestry training and research, including membership then Chair of CSIRO Forest Research, and in foresters' professional organisation. He was a member of the Board of the Canberra Church of England Girls' Grammar School for ten years in the 1990s.*

*Eric was Chairman of the Board of the Faculties in the late 1980s when universities nationally were thrown into turmoil. The transformation of the Colleges of Advanced Education into universities, effectively doubling the university sector in Australia, resulted in a move by the federal government for amalgamation of the Canberra College of Advanced Education with ANU. This was seen by most ANU staff as pedagogically unsound, representing a serious challenge to the autonomy of ANU. Eric found these events, at all levels of university operation and management, personally challenging and demanding, from which he obtained a good deal of satisfaction in their final resolution, with little in the way of negative outcome for the university, though the events did illustrate for him some want of senior leadership within the university.*

*Among the senior university officers in the time Eric served ANU, he ranks John Crawford, Tony Low, and Peter Karmel as exemplars, and sometimes wonders how they might have handled the crisis surrounding the proposed amalgamation with the Canberra CAE had they been vice chancellors at the time. Others who impressed him, and became important models or mentors for Eric, were Lindsay Pryor [Professor of Botany], and Ian Ross and Noel Dunbar [both Deans of Science and Deputy Vice Chancellors].*

*Peter Karmel was a key figure in the establishment of the ANU Graduate School, involving Eric centrally in this development. Eric was also part of a new movement by ANU into staff development as an institutional*

*responsibility in the early 1980s.*

*Since his retirement in 1996, Eric has watched with disappointment the subsuming of much of the discipline of forestry into environmental and resource sciences, to the point that ANU has lost some of its professional eminence in the discipline of forestry.*

*The current problems besetting international students studying and living in Australia worry Eric. Their media prominence as targets for hooligans and racists is but part of a wider issue related to international students, in Eric's view. The large numbers of international students now studying in Australia, often as full fee-paying 'clients', imposes a responsibility on their host universities not only to assist with their security, both on and off campus, but also to provide wider pastoral care; they are a vulnerable group of students. Moreover, Australian educational institutions should ensure that they do not exploit, or be seen to take advantage of this group. Apart from the matter of protecting the simple human rights of these valued visitors to Australia, many will become leaders of their communities, back in their home countries or in Australia. As alumni, they have the capacity to become influential friends and supporters of the Australian universities and other training institutions which they once attended.*

*Eric was not in the best of health at the time of this interview, but with the support of his wife Sally, and his family, he looks forward to remaining connected with ANU, through Emeritus Faculty, and through the many friendships he has forged over more than thirty years as one of its valued scientists and senior managers. Eric's interest in trees continues - he has an attractive mini- forest of bonsai plants, and has worked hard to grow and shape eucalypts and wattles into miniature specimens.*

*Eric played golf enthusiastically for many years, though in the last two years his main sporting interest has been boule - a gentle game of guile and skill, played amongst the wonderful trees near Weston Park, with a group of like minded, wily gentlemen.*

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**Eric Bachelard died on 14th September 2009, a few months after this interview was completed. He is greatly missed by his family, his many friends, and his colleagues in Emeritus Faculty at ANU.**