



Professor Emeritus John Willett DUniv (1922-1993) Griffith's First Vice Chancellor

John Willett was appointed the first Vice Chancellor of Griffith University in November 1971, and began in that role in March 1972.

In laying the foundations for the new university, Professor Willett adopted the reform agenda of the era – theme-based Schools, programs grounded in interdisciplinarity, a common foundation course for each program, a problem solving approach to teaching and research, and a more egalitarian structure for decision-making. Particularly ground-breaking were the development of Asian Studies and Environmental Studies.

In the face of the challenges presented by doing everything de novo, an innovative and distinctive university was

fashioned. The aim was not to compete with other institutions in Brisbane, but rather to develop as an alternative and complementary institution – principles which were visionary in their time.

By the time of his retirement as Vice Chancellor in 1984, the University had grown to 3461 students and had established a strong reputation for research in its foundation disciplines. John Willett's most significant and permanent memorial will be this University, and the sustained commitment of its staff and students to the original vision of an innovative, responsive and creative community of scholars.