RICHARD WALLER HUNSTEAD OBITUARY

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Professor Richard Waller Hunstead, universally known as Dick. He passed away on Thursday 30 January, following a sudden illness, aged 76 years. Dick was with the University of Sydney continuously since 1960, which is an extraordinary statistic, likely unmatched by any other person. This year marked the 60th anniversary of his enrolment as an undergraduate student (BSc Hons.), which was followed by a PhD in astrophysics, and subsequent appointment as a member of staff, in the School of Physics in 1974.  He was promoted in time to Professor, and his service to the School and University in teaching, research and leadership has been extraordinary. Indeed, his enormous contributions to the School of Physics were recognised in 2011 with the award of the Harry Messel Award for Excellence.

In research, Dick gained an international reputation based on work over many decades and published in nearly 200 refereed papers.  He was awarded the Robert Ellery Lectureship by the Astronomical Society of Australia in 1995, in recognition of outstanding contributions in astronomy.  His achievements included the discovery of variability of radio sources at low frequencies (Hunstead 1972, ApJ Lett, 12, 193); pioneering work on the calibration of the Molonglo Telescope, including identifying optical counterparts of radio sources; seminal work on quasars and radio galaxies, especially giant radio galaxies; ground-breaking studies of quasar absorption lines at high spectral resolution; and studies of radio transients, including his most recent work on the detections of Fast Radio Bursts with the UTMOST telescope. The significance of his research was recognised with an ISI Web of Science Citation Laureate award for the impact of his publications in the period 1981 to 1998. As well as being an excellent collaborator and researcher, he was a wonderful supervisor. He has been the supervisor and mentor of an extraordinary number of staff and Honours, PhD and undergraduate students.

Dick taught in lectures and laboratories at every level.  His particular passion for experimental physics saw him make invaluable contributions to the design and constructions of numerous experiments, with
outcomes that have greatly enhanced the student experience. From 1998 to 2012, Dick was Coordinator for the Talented Student Program, an initiative that introduces top academic students to scientific research from their first year.

His leadership roles included serving as Head of the Astrophysics Research Group (now known as the Sydney Institute for Astronomy) in the School of Physics, as Chair of the Physics Academic Programs Committee and as Director of the Molonglo Radio Observatory for more than a decade. Dick showed his passion and dedication to the field of Astronomy and the School of Physics with a very generous gift, with his wife Penny, known as the Hunstead Gift for Astronomy. Dick will be remembered as an excellent researcher and teacher, but more importantly as a generous, caring scientist who has left an enduring legacy for generations of staff and students. He will be so sadly missed but long remembered.