

Professor Bruce Chapman AM

Distinguished Fellow of the Economic Society of Australia

Professor Bruce Chapman has been made the 2015 Distinguished Fellow of the Economic Society of Australia in recognition of his contributions to the profession, the Society and the nation over more than three decades.

Bruce has dedicated most of his career to understanding issues in labour economics. As a portent of the future his very first published paper was on the rate of return to university education in the Australian public service – he has not drifted far from that topic over more than thirty years of subsequent academic work. His PhD from Yale focussed on labour market decisions of young males, and on returning to Australia much of the 1980s was spent exploring labour market issues. He and John Beggs had a very fruitful collaboration during this period producing a string of high quality publications concerned with strikes, wage adjustment and labour turnover.

This was also the period of the Accord, a period when the government tried to actively engineer wage trade-offs to improve employment outcomes. As a labour economist with a strong interest in public policy, Bruce entered the fray. From 1987 to 1989 he became a full-time economic consultant to the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, on leave from ANU, and then from 1994 to 1996 he was Senior Economic Advisor to Prime Minister Keating.

During these periods inside government he became deeply involved in the issue of funding higher education. This led to Bruce's substantial intellectual contribution around the issue of income-contingent loans. It also led to his practical legacy of income-contingent funding of higher education in Australia based on the HECS model. He is publically recognised as the architect of HECS, and his contribution has been acknowledged by other parties: he became a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia in 1993 and became a member of the Order of Australia in 2001.

Since the mid-1990s Bruce's publications and public lectures have focussed almost exclusively on the role income-contingent funding can play both in education and in other areas. Most of his recent papers look at these issues and his book, published in 2006, was appropriately titled *Government Managing Risk: Income contingent loans for social and economic progress*.

Bruce has not neglected his role as a professional leader. He was Director of the Centre for Economic Policy Research for much of the 1990s, and Head of the Economics Program at ANU's RSSS for a number of years. He has also been deeply engaged in leadership of the profession first as President of the Society of Labour Economists and then as President of the Economic Society of Australia from 2007 until 2013. He is still engaged as an Advisor to the national Council. Since 2011 he has also been a member of the Executive of the International Economics Association.