

# Making a new ceremonial mace for the Australian Catholic University



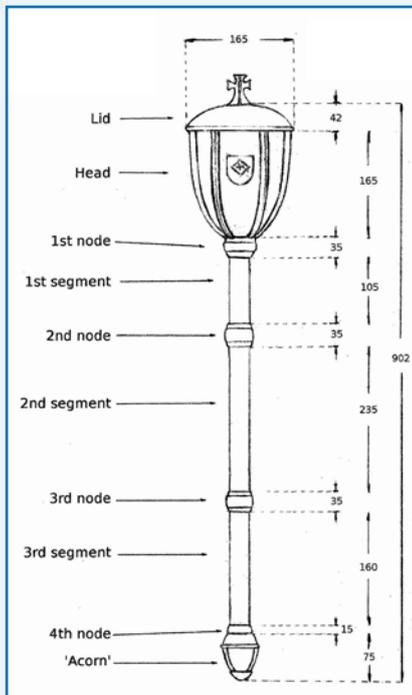
How things are designed and made should interest all those with a passion for the creative arts. One of our members, Christine Erratt, was involved in the process of designing a new mace for the Australian Catholic University because of the important articles she wrote for *Australiana*, and another member, W.J. Sanders Pty Ltd, was commissioned to make it. Like many pieces of historic Australian art, the design of the mace combines a number of motifs, several representing Australian natural history subjects, to symbolise the University's origins and campuses.

1. Designer Candela Riveros meets with Christine Erratt to discuss the design and symbolism of the mace

2. Mace design by Candela Riveros

3. The mace

4. The head of the mace

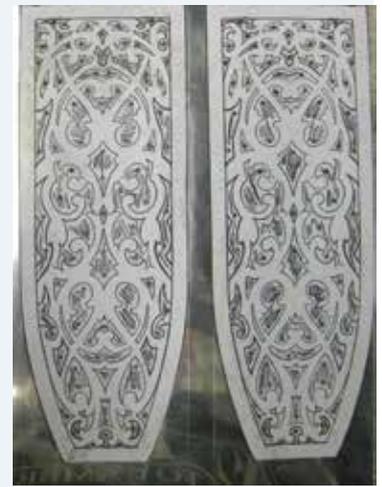
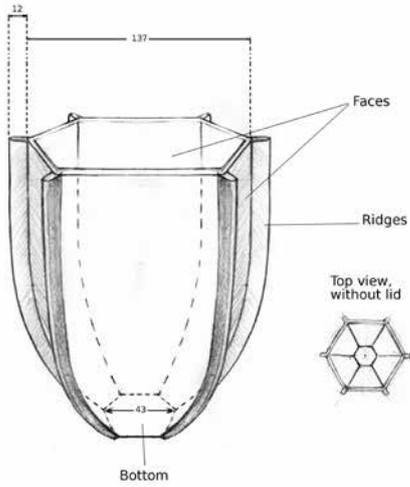


## CHRISTINE ERRATT

The Australian Catholic University (ACU) celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2015. In anticipation of this, the Vice-Chancellor decided that the original ceremonial mace made in 1992 of wood and granite should be replaced with a new mace made of precious metal. Symbols representing the Catholic Church, the University, and the three states and one territory in which ACU had foundation campuses were to be incorporated into the new mace. Sydney manufacturing silversmiths W.J. Sanders Pty Ltd was commissioned to design and make the mace.

A ceremonial mace is an integral part of any university, as it symbolically represents the authority vested in the Chancellor, and as such is always carried or displayed in the presence of the Chancellor. It is also a symbol of the academic quest for knowledge, truth and wisdom.

Newcastle freelance designer, silversmith and natural history illustrator Candela Riveros was chosen to design the mace. Design options were discussed at length and in November 2014 I was asked to advise, having



previously undertaken and published my research on all the ceremonial maces of Australian universities (plate 1).<sup>1</sup> The material chosen was sterling silver, a precious metal with 925 parts of silver per 1,000 parts of the metal alloy.

The length and weight of a mace are of paramount importance, as ease of carrying and transport are significant considerations. Ease of cleaning must be considered. To this end, Candela Riveros' design incorporated easy disassembling, the shaft of the mace unscrewing into three separate components, while the domed lidded top and the foot knob also come apart (**plate 2**).

The symbolism incorporated was a Christian cross for the Catholic Church; the logo and motto of the University; and the floral symbols of the three states and one territory for the locations of the campuses – the waratah (NSW); Cooktown orchid (Queensland); royal bluebell (ACT); and common heath (Victoria). The logo was to appear in the University colours of blue and red, made possible by the use of enamel.

To achieve the right balance for both

**5.**  
Design drawing – details of the head

**6.**  
L to R: maquette of the six panels, single panel template, template drawn on 925 sheet silver

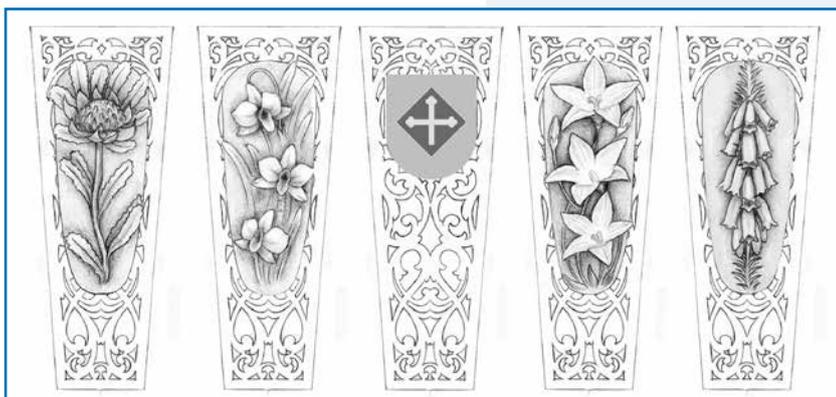
**7.**  
Scroll pattern drawn onto panel templates

**8.**  
Fine saw-piercing of the scrolling pattern on a silver panel

**9.**  
Completed saw-pierced panel

**10.**  
Design drawings for the panels of the head by Candela Riveros. L to R: waratah, Cooktown orchid, ACU logo, royal bluebell, common heath

**11.**  
Chasing with hammer and punch to create the royal bluebells





**12.**

Waratah – floral emblem of New South Wales

**13.**

Cooktown orchid – floral emblem of Queensland

**14.**

Royal bluebell – floral emblem of the Australian Capital Territory

**15.**

Common heath – floral emblem of Victoria

**16.**

University logo

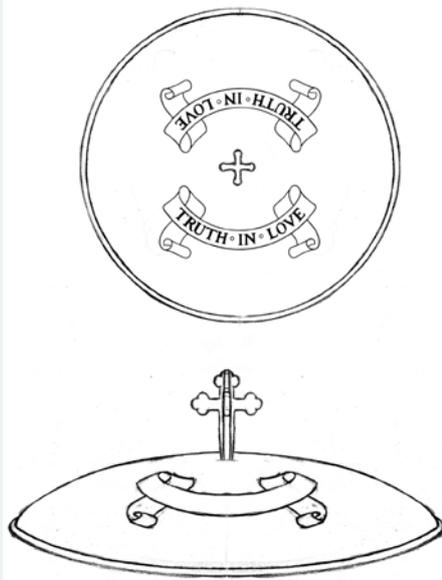
visual and carrying purposes, correct proportions for each component of the mace – the head, the shaft, and the foot knop – were considered. A stand for the mace to rest upon was also designed.

With the approval of the University Senate gained, W.J. Sanders’ staff commenced work on the mace in January 2015.

The design of the mace (**plate 3**) is described thus:<sup>2</sup>

The silver head of the mace is surmounted by two silver crosses intersecting each other at right angles. The cross is symbolic of Christianity. The crosses sit upon a

slightly domed lid that is adorned with silver scrolls engraved with the University’s motto “TRUTH IN LOVE”. Beneath the lid, the bell-shaped head consists of six sections of scrolling pierced work, each centred with a design in silver. The logo of the University, crafted from enamelled silver, appears on two sections. These are placed in opposing positions to allow the logo to be visible from the front and the rear during processional use of the mace. Centred on the other four sections, representing the three states and one territory of Australia in which the University’s foundation



**17.**

Design drawings of the lid

**18.**

Intersecting crosses and scrolls



campuses were established, are the relevant four floral emblems: waratah (NSW); Cooktown orchid (Queensland); royal bluebell (ACT); common heath (Victoria). These four emblems are handcrafted in silver using repoussé and chasing techniques. Silver knops separate the three silver sections of the shaft.

The silver foot knop at the base of the shaft is acorn-shaped and decorated with a repeat of the scrolling saw-pierced pattern that is used in the sections of the head of the mace. The mace is 93 cm in length and weighs 2.5 kg.



## The head

The bell-shaped head consists of six panels with ridges within the frames dividing each section, incorporated for support and protection of the vulnerable parts of the enamelled and repoussé sections (**plate 4**). Scrolling saw-piercing of the six panels for the head was skilfully crafted by hand, using a lightweight saw with a fine blade 0.2 mm wide. Not only is this a highly decorative component of the design but it is also a lighter weight option for the large head than a solid silver one would be (**plates 5–9**).

The four floral emblems were handcrafted using repoussé and chasing techniques (**plate 10**). Repoussé is relief decoration hammered from the underneath or from the inner side of the metal. It is often combined with chasing, a technique of detailing the front surface of metal with various hammer-struck punches or tracers (**plate 11**). Unlike engraving, which uses a sharply pointed burin, graver or scorper, chasing does not involve the removal of any metal.

The floral emblems were then soldered onto the centre of four panels (**plates 12–15**). Two silver University logos enamelled in the University colours were centred on a silver shield, also covered with enamel (**plate 16**). These two panels are located so that they can be seen from the front and rear of the mace – an important consideration during its procession ahead of the Chancellor.

The panelled section of the head is surmounted by a slightly domed removable lid upon which are set decorative scrolls. The University motto, “TRUTH IN LOVE”, is engraved on each scroll. Two silver crosses intersecting each other at right angles surmount the centre of the domed lid (**plates 17–18**), completing the head (**plate 19**).

## The shaft

Three hollow tubular forms were fabricated from silver for the shaft. The sections were constructed so each can be screwed into its adjoining section. A silver ring was formed to conceal each joint, forming a knop, and to add aesthetically to the otherwise plain shaft (**plates 20–21**).

## The foot knop

An acorn-shaped foot knop was spun and screwed into the end of the shaft. The saw-pierced design used in the panels of the head of the mace is repeated on two faces of the foot knop (**plate 22**).

## The stand

A matt black painted timber box-like structure was constructed as the base of the stand. A silver saw-pierced plate is screwed to each end of the base. The saw-pierced design on each plate reflects the saw-pierced scrolling design on the head of the mace (**plates 23–24**).

The mace was completed in July 2015 and it was blessed at the University



**19.**  
Completed head of the mace

**20 & 21.**  
Silver tubes and rings forming knops for the shaft

**22.**  
Saw-pierced acorn-shaped foot knop



**23.**

Saw-pierced silver endplate and black base of stand

**24.**

The stand supports the mace for display

**25.**

Blessing of the ceremonial mace at the ACU Senate Mass on 23 July 2015



**Christine Erratt** has a long-time interest in Australiana and Australian silverware. Her research led to her writing two books: *Marks on Australian Silver 1950-2005* and *Hendrik Forster Silversmith Designer Maker*, both available from Parker Press [www.parkerpressbooks.com.au](http://www.parkerpressbooks.com.au).

While preparing her *Marks* book, Christine became aware of the diverse ceremonial maces of Australian universities made by Australian silversmiths. She pursued this research with a series of articles in *Australiana*, which won her the Peter Walker Fine Arts Writing Award in 2013.

Senate Mass on 23 July 2015 (plate 25). Its inaugural use was at the Sydney graduation ceremonies in July 2015.

The Senate of the Australian Catholic University is to be congratulated for pursuing this significant project and for commissioning a local Sydney firm, W.J. Sanders, to design and make the sterling silver ceremonial mace. It is an important addition to the University's ceremonial regalia and one which will be in frequent use for many, many years. Its significance should not be underestimated.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Photographs 1 to 24 were taken by Jed Hessel, while 25 is from the ACU website.

**NOTES**

- 1 Christine Erratt, "Ceremonial maces of Australian Universities", *Australiana* February 2012, May 2012 & August 2013.
2. This mace is number 40 in accordance with the numbering system used in my previous articles in *Australiana* documenting ceremonial maces of Australian universities.

