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**Abstract**

The focus of this article is on the processes by which five tertiary institutions in South Australia were integrated into the Unified National System in 1991. In contrast with what occurred in some other States, the South Australian institutions were allowed unusual scope for self-determination within the broad national policy framework. In practice, this apparent freedom of choice proved a mixed blessing. Institutional ambitions no less than individual aspirations and self-interest tended to modify and delay decision-making processes. However, the long drawn-out wrangling and debate eventually led the key participants from conflict to cooperation and an acceptable compromise. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Mildred, Geoffrey, E-mail: mildredfamily@ozemail.com.au