Vice-Chancellor’s Column

The new academic year has provided an opportunity to welcome many new students to the University as well as continuing students returning to complete or progress their studies. In addition, I warmly welcome new staff members, many of whom are from outside the Central Coast and the Hunter, to their ‘new’ university.

The commencement ceremonies at Callaghan and Ourimbah this year were very successful, including the Faculty based functions. By now, I hope that new students have been inducted into the operations of the University, and have a good working knowledge of life at a large research intensive university, set in distinctive regional locations here in Newcastle and on the Central Coast. Increasingly of course, our students may be located in countries around the world, as they undertake academic programs online or at one of our partner locations in South East Asia or here in Australia.

A major feature this year of our new domestic undergraduate enrolments has been that the University continues to be a ‘first choice university’ for students. The University has attracted 11 percent of all first preferences to the University Admissions Centre (UAC), for 111 individually named degree programs. In addition, UAI’s for every program except 11 at the University have increased from those of 2002, and the following programs required a UAI of 90 or more: physiotherapy, psychology, occupational therapy, medicine, biomedical science, combined law degrees, speech pathology and all combined degrees.

Increased preference demand has been experienced for many programs, in particular, teaching, nursing, other health professions, business and the arts.

There are of course some down sides to this increased popularity, which are reflected in the increasing number of students who miss out on places at the University. Of 8987 first preferences received for entry to the university, 6157 offers were made in the main round, leaving 2830 students without an offer. Given that 77 percent of our domestic undergraduate students come from the Hunter and Central Coast, there is a major shortfall of more than 2000 places for prospective local students in the 2003 round.

I am pleased to announce here the establishment and our membership of a new group of Australian universities named Innovative Research Universities Australia. Flinders, Griffith, La Trobe, Macquarie, and Murdoch universities share with us a common history of being established in the 1960s and 1970s as strong research based, innovative and comprehensive universities. We have developed ways of making ourselves distinctive by adopting alternative organisational structures and innovative approaches to teaching and learning, research and community engagement, and by actively recruiting students from more diverse backgrounds than are typically found in longer-established universities.

IRU Australia will use the resources of the six universities to increase and extend the activities of member universities in research, teaching and learning, international programs, commercial enterprises, regional initiatives and engagement with business, the professions and communities. Our universities will continue to stress the importance of a strongly student-focused learning environment, with schemes to promote access, equity and diversity, and place emphasis on multiple modes of delivery, integrating the new educational technologies into high-quality face-to-face teaching and online learning. The relationship between the universities will evolve rather quickly this year, with initial meetings focusing on identifying obvious areas for cooperation, collaboration and benchmarking. This relationship will not be an exclusive one to the detriment of current or future plans for partnership in specific areas with other universities. I hope that you join with me and the University Council in welcoming this new cooperative development.

I have personally worked at two other IRU Australia universities (Griffith and La Trobe), and have been closely familiar with the plans and objectives of these and others in our group. May I invite you to participate in this exercise when the opportunity becomes available. I hope you, like me, recognise that it is an important step forward for us to participate strongly in this new enterprise and cooperative activity.

On a more difficult matter, at the time of writing this column, Australia had just entered a war in association with the US and Britain. Irrespective of your personal or political views, I am sure that each of us recognises the gravity and potential international impacts of this decision. I take the view that this is a major tragedy and an action that cannot be justified under current United Nations rules and procedures, nor on moral or ethical grounds. As Vice-Chancellor of a major Australian university, I have serious concerns about the impacts of this action on our standing internationally, both as an individual university and as a sector, committed to the internationalisation of education and research, and to peace and goodwill to all people.

Let us all work towards peace, tolerance, respect for all people of the world, and international engagement and cooperation, rather than war and suffering in the Middle East.

Roger S Holmes
Vice-Chancellor and President

March/April edition

Editorial enquiries
phone/fax 4956 1869
or mob 0412 128 727,
email prklb@altinga.
newcastle.edu.au.
Display advertising
enquiries to Dianne
Taylor on 4921 8641
and classified ads to
Kate Grady on
4921 6856.

Publisher
Christina Murdoch

Editor
Kim Britton

Writers
Kate Grady
Leigh Wallis
Cae Pattison

Photography
Chris Patterson
Keith Davey

Cover
Staff were rewarded for
their exceptional service
to the University at a
ceremony to present
the Vice-Chancellor’s
Awards for General
Staff Excellence last
month. Story and
caption of our cover
shot, p10/11

UNINESS
Students enrol online for the first time

The University's online enrolment facility allows students to search and select courses they want to study, add them to their program and enrol from home or a computer with internet access anywhere in the world.

Within two weeks of the new facility going live, over 18,600 students had accessed the online system, including students from as far afield as Ireland, Munich and Hong Kong. All undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students enrolled online for the first time this year, with a few exceptions in some courses at Grad.School.com and some off shore programs.

David Donnelly from Student Administration Services says the new online enrolment process for 2003 follows the successful online processing of UAC acceptance of offers last year.

"We believe we were one of the first universities in New South Wales to introduce an online system for the acceptance of UAC offers," he said. "In April last year we introduced online course variations and changes to address for undergraduate students. Online enrolment has been the final stage in a conversion to web based student services. Notification of exam results, class timetables and electronic handbooks have been available for some time through web access."

The major benefits of the online system is that students are in control of the process and can choose to access and complete their enrolment in their time and from anywhere in the world. When a student enrolls online the information is simultaneously recorded on the University's student system NUSTAR, which means the faculties and schools have instant access to information on enrolment numbers and course demand. The student receives a receipt number and email confirmation so they know their enrolment has been completed.

"The system even allows students to advise the University that they want a break in studies, change their area of study, or that they have graduated from their program," David said. "It saves an enormous amount of paper and time for both students and administration staff. Nothing is lost in the mail and there are no delays in sending or receiving material. The feedback we have received so far from the students has been overwhelmingly positive."

Staff join students in peace rally

University staff held an anti-war rally at the Callaghan campus in March in protest at the threat of Australian involvement in a US-led war against Iraq.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Social Work Brian English told a crowd of around 200 staff members at the rally that he could not support a war where Australia was the aggressor.

"There has been no other occasion in Australian history where we have taken part in a war that has not been either in our own defence or in response to a request from an ally for assistance," he said. "Even in Vietnam, although we now know we were deceived by government, we believed we were asked to be there by the Vietnamese people."

He called on staff to speak as loudly and as often as they could against the war to impress upon Prime Minister John Howard that the Australian people do not support his declaration of war.

Associate Professor in history Wayne Reynolds told the rally that the war has very little to do with Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction.

"Iraq is not the problem," he said. "The problem can be found in American policy and behaviour since the dawn of the atomic bomb."

The USA is the only weapon-State in the world that has declared itself prepared to use nuclear weapons in a first strike, he said.

"Not only do they have a policy to use nuclear weapons, they have historically threatened many times to do so. The world is watching not Iraq but the exercise of American power."

Staff and student unions joined together to form the University Peace Forum to coordinate action at the University against the war. The group was working in a cooperative manner with the Hunter Peace Forum – an umbrella group that brings together a range of organisations and individuals opposed to war – to promote the No War case.

A public meeting on 'Why this war is wrong' was held in the Griffith Duncan Theatre on March 15 with speakers including writer Richard Neville, James Singleton of the United Nations Association and government scientist Robin Batterham.

"Iraq is not the problem. The problem can be found in American policy and behaviour since the dawn of the atomic bomb."
Training tomorrow’s health professionals

Professor Mike Capra, who last month took up the key position as Head of the School of Health Sciences, wants to develop research and research training in the School.

Mike has extensive academic experience gained at seven universities in four countries – Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and the United Kingdom. He has held significant research and teaching positions at national and international level at established universities in Sydney, Otago, Birmingham and Melbourne as well as emerging universities, including the University of South Pacific and Queensland University of Technology (QUT).

Over the past 17 years, Mike has made significant contributions to the QUT in health and science as a teacher, researcher and as Director of the Centre for Biological Population Management. He developed policies for the management and allocation of research funding to the Centre and for the management of research training.

“I’ve been involved with a professional doctorate program at QUT and I hope to participate in one at Newcastle,” he said. “We already have a strong professional base in Newcastle. Professional doctorate is a win-win situation, with the student being able to complete research that is work-based and the employer benefiting from that research.”

Mike says there is already a group in the Faculty of Health working to establish a professional doctorate program and that he is keen to contribute to its development and implementation.

“It is an area that I can see developing in Health Sciences and for the professional groups that comprise it,” he said. “I’d also like to encourage the development of PhD programs in the School.”

While acknowledging that it is hard to get people in professional areas to commit to research, he hopes to build research into undergraduate degrees by keeping people interested during their studies and by facilitating their access to and information about scholarships. He will also look at consolidating research programs of the School and building them up, which will be helped by the appointment of two new Chairs.

“We have appointed Chairs in Occupational and Environmental Health, and Nutrition and Dietetics,” he said, “which will help to strengthen the School’s research profile, and will look forward to other similar appointments to the School.”

Mike has participated in the development of research policy at a national level as a member of the Research Strategy Sub-Committee of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission and Chairman of the Sea World Research and Rescue Foundation Incorporated. He has published extensively during his career and has obtained research funding in excess of $1 million from government and non-government agencies.

At international level, Mike has participated in research development activities with the Ministry of Agriculture in Fiji, as well as providing research and training advice to the Minister of Health and the Vice-Minister of Environment in Mozambique.

“There are a lot of opportunities at both undergraduate and postgraduate level overseas,” he said. “I have carried out Occupational and Environmental Health work in Fiji, Malaysia, Vietnam and Mozambique and I think that my connections will help the School to establish networks. I know that Occupational Health and Safety have a very successful Singapore program and I’m looking at the potential to establish programs in other Asian countries.”

At Faculty level, Mike believes it’s quite a plus to have so many different disciplines grouped together. It provides opportunities to interact with other health professionals on cross-disciplinary projects.

“Newcastle is in a unique position with its mixture of health related disciplines,” he said. “Being together in one Faculty leads to a lot of potential interaction and cooperation in research, and hopefully in teaching as well.”

Mike says the School of Health Sciences will become a leading force in providing health professionals in the disciplines of nutrition and dietetics, environmental and occupational health, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and medical radiation science, to the Hunter, Central Coast and ultimately, nationally and internationally.
The state of space science in Europe

The Director of Science of the European Space Agency (ESA), Professor David Southwood, delivered a seminar at the University last month on the focus of space science in Europe.

Europe has emerged in the past decade as the second space power and Professor Southwood told staff and students how the ESA has moved beyond near-Earth space to become active in all major fields of space science.

“We have lots of plans to explore the solar system, which has so far only been done by Russia and America,” he said.

Professor Southwood was in Australia for the commissioning of an ESA deep-space antenna at New Norcia, 130 kms north of Perth. The 35 metre diameter antenna is the first site in a proposed network of sites, with another currently being built in Cebreros in Spain. A third antenna will be built somewhere in the Americas, either in Chile or the desert region adjacent to the Rocky Mountains in North America.

“We are putting the antennas at points around the Earth that will allow us to have the whole sky covered,” Professor Southwood said. “As we now use very narrow radio beams, we need to be able to pinpoint where a spacecraft is very accurately.”

Professor Southwood has had a long and active research career in space science, mostly at Imperial College, London. He has worked on NASA's Galileo mission to Jupiter, the joint ESA/NASA Ulysses mission to the Sun and Jupiter, and more recently was principal investigator for the magnetometer experiment on ESA's Cassini mission to Saturn. As Director of Science at ESA since 2001, he is responsible for implementing the scientific programs associated with all ESA missions. These missions include SOHO (the Sun), Cluster II (Earth's magnetosphere), Mars Express, Venus Express, Rosetta (comets), Hipparcos (star positions), XMM-Newton (X-ray astronomy), and ISO (infrared astronomy).

He came to Newcastle to visit Professor Brian Fraser from the University's Space Physics Group. Brian met David in 1969 in Ottawa, when the two young scientists both won scholarships to attend a conference. They have stayed in touch over the years.

“David's seminar was on the progress of space science in Europe and was open to students and others from across the Faculty of Science and IT and the University,” Brian said. “It is important for Australian space science to interact with world space agencies at this time. We have just launched our first satellite in 35 years, FedSat, and need to continue to maintain our international contacts.”

Noel Pearson delivers law lecture

This year's Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture was delivered by Noel Pearson, Chairman of the Cape York Land Council and Team Leader of Cape York Partnerships. Mr Pearson's lecture looked at High Court decisions on native title in the cases of Ben Ward and the Yorta Yorta people.

Professor Ted Wright, Dean of the University's School of Law, said they were delighted to attract a speaker of Mr Pearson's calibre.

“He is, without doubt, one of the pre-eminent Indigenous leaders in this country with an unwavering commitment to the empowerment of his people. In whatever forum he finds himself, Noel Pearson always speaks with passion, insight and integrity,” he said.

Ben Ward's and the Yorta Yorta cases are both central to the ongoing Aboriginal land claims process. Mr Pearson argued that the High Court had abandoned its 'time-honoured' methodology of the Common Law when dealing with the cases.

The Sir Ninian Stephen Lecture was established in 1993 to mark the arrival of the first group of Bachelor of Laws students at the University. It is an annual event delivered by an eminent lawyer at the commencement of each academic year.
A team of four engineering scholars on industry site and written software that will allow it to collect data and send it back to CSA for analysis. "The company recognises that motivated and resourceful people add significantly to a business, and that such people can often be found at university," Dr Webster said. "As well as our five existing engineering and accounting scholarship students, Transform employs seven additional part-time students from the engineering, computer science and MBA programs. We are also moving to establish four new final year engineering scholarships. The University has been integral to the company's development.

The company focuses on the design and manufacture of components for passenger rail vehicles – everything from linings and seats to lighting, public address systems and even nose cones and drivers' cabs. They employ around 150 people including around 20 engineering staff.

While originally planning to offer only one summer scholarship to evaluate the skills an industrial design student could bring to their business, Transform were so impressed with Doug and Alison they decided to give them both a chance.

"Engineers often use 3D modelling to develop and refine ideas, but this approach can be quite constraining and inefficient in the preliminary concept stage," Dr Webster said. "The industrial design students, by the nature of their training, were able to rapidly capture ideas on paper, and produce multiple variations on a theme. The relative merits of the different concepts could then be evaluated before committing to a particular solution. Their skills complemented our existing engineering expertise and significantly enhanced the design process."

The summer placement was such a success that both Doug and Alison have been offered part-time work with the company during their final year of study. Alison, who came to the University from the Central Coast to study industrial design, says the placement was 'brilliant'.

"I really enjoyed it. It gave me an opportunity to put into practice the things I've learned at university. The people are great and it was a beneficial experience all around," she said.

The UNISS group has also created a web interface so the client will be able to check the health of their computer network. The new system, which kept the four busy for their entire summer vacation placement, is up to the testing phase.

Stuart has been sponsored by CSA for the past three years and was involved in the development of the remote monitoring service. The former Merewether High School student is a great proponent of the UNISS scheme.

"UNISS definitely prepares you well for what you will do on the job," he said. "Splitting my time between study and work placement has progressed my professional skills way beyond what would have been possible with just university studies."

CSA's Manager of Corporate Services and Human Resources Libby Schneider said the company became involved in the UNISS program four years ago.

"We saw its potential to develop well rounded and industry experienced graduates," she said. "It works for both the scholar and the sponsor. By providing opportunities the sponsor can aid in promoting personal development skills as well as industry experience for the scholar, which ultimately can lead to a career with the sponsor on completion of studies."

Two industrial design students are the latest to benefit from a series of scholarships and sponsorships by Newcastle company Transform Rail Interiors.

Doug Helman and Alison Howard, who are beginning their final year in industrial design at the University, each won a $3,000 scholarship and a 10-week placement at the company that provided them with valuable industrial experience.

Engineering Manager for Transform Rail Interiors and former electrical engineering lecturer at the University Dr Ian Webster, said that the company had significant ties with the University, including being a foundation sponsor of the University of Newcastle Industry Scholarship Scheme (UNISS), a participating sponsor in the commerce program with the School of Business and Law, and employing 12 graduates of the University.

"The company recognises that motivated and resourceful people add significantly to a business, and that such people can often be found at university," Dr Webster said. "As well as our five existing engineering and accounting scholarship students, Transform employs seven additional part-time students from the engineering, computer science and MBA programs. We are also moving to establish four new final year engineering scholarships. The University has been integral to the company's development."

The company focuses on the design and manufacture of components for passenger rail vehicles – everything from linings and seats to lighting, public address systems and even nose cones and drivers' cabs. They employ around 150 people including around 20 engineering staff.

While originally planning to offer only one summer scholarship to evaluate the skills an industrial design student could bring to their business, Transform were so impressed with Doug and Alison they decided to give them both a chance.

"Engineers often use 3D modelling to develop and refine ideas, but this approach can be quite constraining and inefficient in the preliminary concept stage," Dr Webster said. "The industrial design students, by the nature of their training, were able to rapidly capture ideas on paper, and produce multiple variations on a theme. The relative merits of the different concepts could then be evaluated before committing to a particular solution. Their skills complemented our existing engineering expertise and significantly enhanced the design process."

The summer placement was such a success that both Doug and Alison have been offered part-time work with the company during their final year of study. Alison, who came to the University from the Central Coast to study industrial design, says the placement was 'brilliant'.

"I really enjoyed it. It gave me an opportunity to put into practice the things I've learned at university. The people are great and it was a beneficial experience all around," she said.

The UNISS group has also created a web interface so the client will be able to check the health of their computer network. The new system, which kept the four busy for their entire summer vacation placement, is up to the testing phase.

Stuart has been sponsored by CSA for the past three years and was involved in the development of the remote monitoring service. The former Merewether High School student is a great proponent of the UNISS scheme.

"UNISS definitely prepares you well for what you will do on the job," he said. "Splitting my time between study and work placement has progressed my professional skills way beyond what would have been possible with just university studies."

CSA's Manager of Corporate Services and Human Resources Libby Schneider said the company became involved in the UNISS program four years ago.

"We saw its potential to develop well rounded and industry experienced graduates," she said. "It works for both the scholar and the sponsor. By providing opportunities the sponsor can aid in promoting personal development skills as well as industry experience for the scholar, which ultimately can lead to a career with the sponsor on completion of studies."
Research targets boys literacy

Three University researchers have won a grant from the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) to research ways to develop boys' literacy through community literacy.

The cross-disciplinary research project, funded with a $45,000 grant under DEST's innovative project initiative, will target 10 priority primary schools in the Lake Macquarie district to address the problem of boys under-performing.

Dr Julie McLeod from the School of Education contacted the other researchers, Penny Crofts from the School of Social Sciences and Deb Hartman from the Family Action Centre, to help her with the project.

"One of the issues identified as a problem with boys' literacy is that the texts they are presented with to read at school don't interest them and another is the lack of role models for literacy at home," Julie explains. "There are lots of literary activities involved in the home. Dads are reading newspapers, brochures, instructions to assemble things - these are real texts."

In the first stage of the research project, a coordinator will carry out an inventory for literacy in a community context that will create a record of what men read and write in their everyday lives. The inventory will help fathers to see themselves as literary people, which is important to their acting as role models for their sons.

The second stage of the research involves final year education students taking the community assets inventory and using it to develop a specific literacy skills program for boys in primary school.

"This is a critical age for boys, who not only need literacy skills, but self-confidence in themselves as literary beings," Julie said. "Schools need to acknowledge that literature happens in a whole range of contexts. A comic, for instance, can have words that are just as complex as the words of a more traditional text. We should be building on home practice in schools."

Julie, coordinator of the Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Primary) program, is accustomed to collaborative projects having instigated a School, Family and Community Studies course, which is taught by Social Work lecturers. Rising out of Julie's doctoral studies, the course acknowledges that primary teachers not only work with children, but with families and communities as well. The students undertake a range of service learning projects in school communities across the Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Taree and Maitland districts.

"The perception of a need for teachers to work more closely with communities arose from my doctoral research, when I followed teaching interns into their first two years of teaching," she said. "From that I talked to people in Social Work about the possibilities of a course and we really worked well together. We discovered the similarities between the philosophies of social workers and primary teachers and learned a lot from each other."

The DEST project will be carried out this year with the proposed classroom resources for teachers to utilise in improving boys' literacy to be available by March next year.

Ground-breaking Australian trial

Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Health Professor John Marley has played a major role in the Second Australian National Blood Pressure Study (ANBP2), one of the largest medical research studies undertaken in Australian general practice.

The ANBP2, involving 2,000 GPs and 6,000 patients, is a groundbreaking research study providing clear recommendations for the management of high blood pressure. The study was a joint initiative of the High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia (HBPRCA), the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aging, Merck Sharp and Dohme (Australia), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), academia, general practitioners and hypertension specialists. Professor Marley was a principle researcher in the leading research group.

The ANBP2 followed 6,000 patients over four years and found a 17 percent greater reduction in cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks, in men aged between 65 and 84 taking ACE (Angiotensin-Converting-Enzyme) inhibitors, a new treatment for high blood pressure, compared with those on diuretics.

An estimated 70 percent of men and 67 percent of women aged between 65 and 74 have high blood pressure, and the risk increases with age. The results of the study demonstrated that outcomes are improved when hypertension in the male elderly is treated with an ACE inhibitor rather than a diuretic. Patients without risk factors such as diabetes should start treatment with diuretics.

"The ANBP2 study united general practitioners and specialist areas of research, showcasing Australian research internationally and forging strong links with prestigious medical research institutions throughout the world," Professor Marley said.

Together with previous related studies, ANBP2 is set to influence revisions to the World Health Organisation Disease Management guidelines, which define the best practice for treating high blood pressure for doctors globally.
Try and conjure an image of the person who was named Rural Woman of the Year and you might imagine a woman who is enterprising, courageous, resourceful and determined, but worried about the effects of drought, the welfare of stock and dwindling financial returns.

This year's winner has all of these qualities and more, but is far from the stereotypical woman on the land. In fact she spends a great deal of time around water and grows small and slimy creatures! She is Milada Safarik, a 23 year old Master of Marine Science student at the University's Ourimbah campus and a worm farmer.

Named winner of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) Rural Women's Award for 2003 by NSW Premier Bob Carr and NSW Agriculture Minister Richard Amery, Milada was presented with a $15,000 cheque at a ceremony held in January. The presentation was the culmination of a gruelling selection process that came down to two finalists from 150 applicants from across NSW. Milada was then required to make a presentation to the judges.

How does a young woman become a worm farmer and develop it so enthusiastically that she wins an award for it? Milada puts her success down to the fact that she shared a vision for the worm farm (situated at Dora Creek on Lake Macquarie) with her father.

"We could both see the potential in farming marine bait worms for the recreational fishing market," Milada says. "The fact that we were both involved in the project made it happen."

Milada noticed that people were removing worms from the environment, particularly beach worms, and thought that if they could grow the worms under controlled conditions, it could provide a sustainable bait.

"We have just been through our first summer when there is the greatest demand for worms and are pleased with the response to our product with sales nationally as well as in Asia, Japan and the USA where there is a huge interest in recreational fishing," she said. "Even though the farm is only small at the moment – eight ponds producing two tons of worms each year – we hope to grow and expand into the export market."

Milada will put her prize money back into the business to begin building 16 more ponds in the next year or two.

Currently the marine worms being cultivated are a close relative to the beach worm, known as the tube worm (genus Onuphididae). In about a year the worms, which are extremely attractive to saltwater fish, grow to a length of 25 centimetres in ponds about 60 centimetres deep that mimic the sea floor.

"They don't breed easily," says Milada, "and you have to have the conditions just right. We have to take the water quality into consideration and feed them a high protein diet of pelletised phytoplankton feed, almost like a fish farm."

She and her father have broken ground with their harvesting methods by putting the worms to sleep, which prevents them becoming stressed and creates a better product.

"We are able to use 99 percent of the available worms that are sold either live or preserved," she said. "This allows us to farm in a sustainable manner and also remain environmentally responsible. They also make great food for aquaculture fish farms as they contain specific fatty acids that fish need."

Milada's focus is firmly fixed on the worms from an academic point of view. They are the subject of her Master's thesis.

"Where I always looked at everything from a scientific aspect, now it has turned towards aquaculture," she said. "The challenge will be to bring the two together. I hope through my research to be able to contribute to the farm and also the biological knowledge of this species."

---

Salary Packaging

Build and protect your wealth through the university's Staff Salary Packaging arrangement.

Contact Eric Burns, Authorised Representative of Associated Planners, on (02) 4942 1455.
Teachers rewarded for total commitment

Two of the University's most committed teachers have won this year's Awards for Excellence in Teaching. Awarded by a Sub-Committee of the Curriculum, Teaching and Learning Portfolio Committee, the teaching awards recognise excellence in teaching activities.

Julie McLeod from the School of Education and Ken Sutton from the School of Behavioural Sciences teach different disciplines and have different backgrounds but they have one thing in common – a belief in a holistic approach to teaching.

Julie, coordinator of the Bachelor of Teaching/Bachelor of Arts (Primary) program, says that good teachers need to understand their students.

"You need to get to know what their needs are and then support those needs with your teaching," she said. "It is important to really care about the whole student. Learning about the students as their program coordinator, helps me plan for the two core courses within the degree that I also coordinate."

Julie began her teaching career in a one-teacher school in the lower Hunter, where she says she had to learn fast what it is to accommodate individual differences and plan for them. This was a 'disadvantaged' school that made it even more of a challenge for her to make learning fun, exciting and successful for the students.

"I was then asked to teach at a demonstration school, where you had to be highly organised and understand why you are doing something in the classroom in order to justify your teaching practice," she said. "I'm enthusiastic about teaching and modelling best practice in teaching."

Julie came to the University to teach full-time in 1992, looking for a challenge. She has co-authored two books – 'Planning for Learning' and 'Enriching Learning' – to support the University's education students, which are now being used in around eight other Australian universities.

After completing a Master's degree externally through Deakin University and her PhD through the University, all while juggling work and parenting three children, Julie is well attuned to the needs of mature aged students – who make up almost half of the students in her program. She is currently working on a major research project with the Department of Education, Science and Training to try and identify what's making the difference in numeracy outcomes in the State's primary schools. Work she has done on improving numeracy in schools was reflected in the new mathematics syllabus to begin in NSW primary schools next year.

"I really feel we are starting to make a difference in education in NSW," Julie said. "Newcastle primary teaching graduates are highly sought after because they are well prepared for a range of different primary contexts and that is now being acknowledged across the State. As well as having a 92 percent employment rate for graduates, we have the highest proportion of students selected for the Targeted Graduate program."

Ken Sutton began his career in an engineering trade (patternmaking) before he trained at Newcastle College of Advanced Education. After teaching technology education in high schools for 17 years, Ken completed postgraduate studies in education at the University and worked part-time in tertiary education for a number of years. He took up his position as lecturer with the University 13 years ago.

"I began my University teaching career with industrial arts and design and technology trainee teachers. An opportunity arose to teach computer applications including Computer Assisted Design (CAD). I moved on to specialise in CAD and taught it at an advanced level for a number of years. In addition to trainee teachers, I taught CAD to chemical and mechanical engineering students, building construction management students and to a mixture of industry personnel in short courses with a colleague."

Ken's interest in teaching computing developed into teaching common computer applications to students across the former Faculty of Science and Mathematics and later across the Faculty of Science and Information Technology. He is the Callaghan coordinator of a large Faculty computing course, which also attracts students from other faculties.

"I have always been interested in many areas of technology but I became particularly enthusiastic about computer technology around 1985 when I began to recognise its application to technical drawing, data analysis and desktop publishing. I appreciated computers as creative and precise tools and I soon realised that I would enjoy teaching others to use them," Ken explains.

Ken has a strong link with psychology and the largest cohort of students he teaches come from this discipline. He is doing a PhD under the supervision of Associate Professor Andrew Heathcote and his thesis is titled: 'The Acquisition of Complex Mental Rotation Skills. The focus is the practice effect on speed accuracy.'

Ken has been involved in many aspects of teaching including presentations at teaching-related conferences, teaching grants, committee work and course development. He is a strong supporter of teaching and course evaluations by students, colleagues and employers as a means of improvement.
Awards recognise outstanding service

Vice-Chancellor's awards for general staff excellence were presented to three individuals and two teams, with a third group highly commended, in a ceremony held in the Great Hall last month.

The Vice-Chancellor Roger Holmes said the awards were established in 1998 to recognise and reward outstanding and exceptional service or work performance from the University's general staff.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chair of the award selection committee Brian English said there had been a record 19 nominations this year.

"We were extremely impressed with the quality of all nominations, which showed the commitment and dedication of staff across the University," he said.

Susan O'Connor, Human Research Ethics Officer in the Research and International Division, received an individual award for her professional, thoughtful and conscientious service to researchers, students and the wider community. Presenting the award to Susan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Ron MacDonald said she is regarded as an outstanding research ethics officer amongst her peers and is often consulted by those in similar positions with other universities.

"Susan upholds and exhibits the very same ethical principles that underpin human research ethics," he said.

Professor Tim Roberts from the Faculty of Science and IT presented an award to Andrew Bish. Andrew joined the Space Physics Group at the University in October 1999 as an electronic engineer and was given the task of building the magnetometer instrument, NewMag. The instrument, constructed jointly by the Space Physics Group and the Institute of Geophysics at UCLA, was launched on Australia's microsatellite FedSat in December last year.

"In addition to assembling hardware electronics, Andrew also designed a computer software system to test NewMag at UCLA from his University office here in Newcastle, through internet connection," Professor Roberts said. "This saved the project both time and money."

Andrew worked on the integration and assembly of FedSat at Auspace Ltd in Canberra and was one of three engineers responsible for successfully completing FedSat on time for its launch on a Japanese rocket by the Japanese Space Agency NASDA.

"It is a tribute to the dedicated work of this team, and particularly Andrew, that FedSat is now orbiting the Earth every 100 minutes at an altitude of 800 kms," he said.

The third individual award was presented to Jenny Smith, Personal Assistant to the Director of Faculty Services for Education and Arts. The Faculty's Deputy Executive Dean Sandra Sirasch said Jenny's helpful manner and knowledge of the University made her an invaluable member of the team, particularly since the restructure which saw four faculties amalgamate into a new and very large one.
"She has continually demonstrated her commitment to colleagues, other staff and students within the Faculty of Education and Arts, and has 'lifted the bar' in the area of service delivery," she said. "She has shown the same level of commitment to the Faculty Research and Research Training Committee, where she often processes late arriving material as well as providing relevant information to members of the committee and students alike."

The seven members of the Wollotuka Administration Support Team were recognised with awards for their efforts in having Wollotuka perform well above the national benchmarks as a provider of support to Indigenous students. During an exceptionally busy year last year, the team had ensured outstanding service. Each of the staff members has maintained an active involvement in the Aboriginal community, which helps Indigenous people to feel part of the University and overcomes the alienation possible when dealing with a large organisation.

Fifteen members of the Security Services Team were recognised for their service and initiatives, which keep staff and students safe and secure on campus. Vice-President (University Services) Linda O'Brien said the team provides a wide range of services not only to the University, but also to external clients including the Forum, Pacific Power, KU Child Care Centres and the University Union.

"The Security Services Team not only patrol the University to make sure everything and everyone are safe and secure, they also provide a shuttle service in the afternoons during term time, escort staff to cars in the evening, and provide cash escort services on a regular basis," she said. "They patrol on foot, in cars and are soon to implement a security bike patrol service to access all areas of the University."

The two-man team of Ken Oliver and Domanic Lieb, who advise students on machinery and techniques in the Industrial Design Workshop, was highly commended for their efforts to make their workshop safe and welcoming.

Above:
The Vice-Chancellor presents individual awards to Andrew Bish, Susan O'Connor and Jenny Smith

Cover Image:
Back row: (left to right) Dominic Lieb, Peter Boyd, Roger Holmes, Brian English, Rod Hill, Gavin Smith, Willy Wilson and Paul Clark
3rd row: (left to right) Ken Oliver, Susan O'Connor, Jenny Smith, Andrew Bish, James Doolan, Leanne Ayers, Gordon Aitken and Kyle Nicholas
2nd row: (left to right) Adelle Grogan, David Newham, Darlene Deitsche, Cheryl Newton, Suzie Cole and Graeme Wallace
Front row: (left to right) Mandy Kelly, Brooke Kenny, Mervyn Allan, Robert Metz, William Clough, Michael Bromelow and Tony Ford
Australia's first Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics

Professor Sandra Capra joined the Faculty of Health's School of Health Sciences last month as the first Professor of Nutrition and Dietetics in Australia.

Pro Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Health John Marley said Professor Capra brings to the position 30 years of experience in all aspects of dietetics at a national and international level.

Professor Sandra Capra has extensive academic and professional experience teaching at five universities, holding a PhD in nutrition and as an accredited practicing dietician, throughout Australia and overseas. Over the last decade, she has published extensively in international journals, reviewing research proposals for the National Health and Medical Research Council, Queensland Health Cancer Council, Diabetes Australia, Prince Charles Research Foundation and the Princess Alexandra Hospital Research Foundation.

Professor Capra comes to Newcastle from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), where she was an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health, as well as Deputy Head of School, Director of Academic Programs and Chair of the Teaching and Learning Committee. She implemented and evaluated a variety of major curriculum reviews and reforms at QUT, including the introduction of the Doctor of Health Science program and a group of new graduate certificates.

"The School of Health Sciences will create national and international leadership in teaching and research in Nutrition and Dietetics," said Professor Marley.

In addition to her countless leadership roles in professional and government bodies including the national presidency of the Dieticians Association of Australia, Professor Capra was recently awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM). She was honoured for her service to community health through the advancement and promotion of dietetics, as an educator and researcher.

"The appointment of the first ever Professor in Australia, emphasises our commitment to providing premium education research and career opportunities in the field of Nutrition and Dietetics," Professor Marley said.

Outstanding contributions honoured

The University honoured its exceptional graduates at the Godfrey Tanner Memorial Convocation Awards dinner held last month. The dinner was named in recognition of Godfrey Tanner's outstanding contribution to Convocation.

Professor Warren Pengilley, Professor of Law at the University, is the winner of the Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence. Mrs Janice Vadnjal, Hunter Area Health Organ and Tissue Donor Coordinator, received the Newton-John Award for outstanding contribution to the region.

Professor Pengilley's academic qualifications include a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws from the University of Sydney, Doctor of Jurisprudence from Vanderbilt University, Master of Commerce and Doctor of Science from the University of Newcastle. His extensive career encompasses academia, private legal practice and involvement in Government through the Foundation Commissions of the Australian Trade Practices Commission.

Throughout his career, Professor Pengilley has authored and co-authored some 20 books and over 300 refereed articles, primarily in the field of trade practices. He has delivered lectures and conference papers both nationally and internationally.

The Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence is awarded annually to a graduate of the University who has made a most substantial and significant contribution to the national and/or international community.

Mrs Janice Vadnjal is the Hunter Area Health Organ and Tissue Donor Coordinator, graduating from the University with a Diploma of Applied Science (Nursing) and a Bachelor of Nursing.

Through her extensive experience in the nursing profession, Ms Vadnjal obtained an Intensive Care Certificate with excellence in clinical practice. During her close work with Intensive Care Unit theatre staff and the families of donors and recipients, Mrs Vadnjal recognised the need for a systematic yet compassionate way of dealing with traumatic events such as brain death, and organ donation. As a result, she was instrumental in the establishment of an area network of hospital based donor coordinators.

The Newton-John Award recognises Mrs Vadnjal's new and innovative approach to clinical practice.

Also presented at the dinner were the Newton-John Memorial German Prize to Nadja Krueger, the Newton-John Memorial Music Prize to Peter Guy and the University of Newcastle Convocation Prizes to students from each of the five faculties in recognition of their outstanding contributions.
Centre combats the effects of cancer on large scale

Cancer is a national health priority area in Australia, with around 345,000 new cases diagnosed annually and 34,000 deaths, accounting for 27 percent of all deaths in Australia. Improvements in treatment for cancer, however, have meant a significant growth in the number of cancer survivors and a group of Newcastle researchers is working to improve their long-term wellbeing.

The Centre for Health Research and Psychooncology (CHeRP) has been working to reduce the burden imposed by cancer through its research on cancer prevention, supportive care and doctor-patient communication, since it was established in 1988. Director Associate Professor Afaf Girgis says 15 years of operation is quite an achievement for the Centre, which operates in a competitive field.

"We are the acknowledged leaders in the field of behavioural and psychosocial research into the effects of cancer," she said. "We have guaranteed funding from the Cancer Council (NSW) to continue our research to June 2006, as well as grant funding for several of our studies."

Smoking, a major contributor to cancer rates in Australia, has been an important focus of CHeRP's research, with studies aimed at targeting key groups such as pregnant smokers and youth.

“We are trialing innovative ways of encouraging people to stop smoking and to remain quitters, particularly through using nicotine replacement products and tele-marketing of quit strategies.”

CHeRP's work includes several studies looking at the psychosocial impact of cancer.

"We examine the broad spectrum of patients' needs, including information, psychological support, communication, daily living, spiritual and financial issues. Once we know what the areas of need are, we develop and test strategies to improve them, with a focus on strategies that can be implemented into existing systems where possible."

The Centre is embarking on the first Australian population based longitudinal study to examine survivorship issues, the NSW Cancer Survival Study, which began this year with $441,000 funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council. The study will look at cancer survivors from six months after their diagnosis with the disease to five years later to identify how physical, emotional and social effects of cancer change over time.

"We will examine how these issues change for patients over that time," Afaf said, "and try to identify whether there are particular sub-groups e.g., rural patients or patients with a particular disease, who are more in need of different services at various times in their cancer journey."

Afaf says the Centre, which is based in the School of Medical Practice and Population Health in the Faculty of Health, was founded by its inaugural Director, Professor Rob Sanson-Fisher, who is considered to be among the leading behavioural scientists in Australia and internationally.

"Rob had a vision and took the group with him, steering the Centre to be internationally recognised as a leader in behavioural research," she said.

As well as being an important research group, the Centre also trains postgraduate students. An external review of their program noted that CHeRP was an Australian leader in training behavioural scientists.

"To develop a workforce in behavioural science, it's important that we take a lead in training them. We offer scholarships to attract high-level PhD students to CHeRP and at any one time, we have about 4 PhD students and between 18 and 25 staff working on research projects."

Afaf has been working in the Centre since it was established and has been Director since 2001. Born in Egypt, she came to Newcastle when she was 12 and studied psychology at the University. Her PhD research was in the area of psycho neuro-immunology, examining the effects of personality characteristics and relaxation therapy on the immune system. Her move to CHeRP involved a big shift in thinking as she moved away from concentrating on the individual and into population-based research.

CHeRP's work aims to have an impact at the population level, eg. encouraging people to protect their skin from the sun in order to reduce skin cancer rates, developing guidelines to promote more timely access to palliative care for those who need it, and training clinicians to better communicate with their patients.

"Once I was swept into that way of thinking," Afaf said, "I realised that it was much more likely to make a difference at a bigger level."
Achieving a career goal

There are rare days when Faculty Services Director of Business and Law Julie Kien contemplates sneaking out of her office the back way.

It often takes Julie half an hour to negotiate the corridor and walk to her car. But that is the price she pays to uphold what she sees as one of the most important aspects of leadership - approachability.

"The more you are available as a leader, the more people ask of you," she says. "You need to respond to the concerns of staff. A good leader should also be authentic and energetic and I hope that I am. What you see is what you get."

There is more to Julie than meets the eye, however. She is a genuine University success story with a long list of achievements.

Julie began work as a Junior Stenographer in the University's then Department of Civil Engineering when she was 16 years old. She had done a year at secretarial college after leaving St Aloysius Girls High School in Hamilton.

"I came from a big family and we were expected to go out and get a job as soon as we could," Julie says.

In 1974, Julie moved from Civil Engineering to the Planner's Division, under Don Morris, as a stenographer. It was in these early years that she formed an ambition to climb to the top of the University's administrative tree - to become a '10'. While she was considered a junior employee until she turned 21, Julie became a departmental secretary at the age of 19. She did the Open Foundation Course when she was 20 and took four years to complete her Bachelor of Arts part-time, majoring in English and history. Julie was the first member of her family to complete a degree.

In 1984, with her BA studies behind her, Julie returned to work in Engineering as an administrative officer before becoming Faculty Secretary for Architecture. In 1988, she was head-hunted to be the inaugural HECS Officer and oversaw the implementation of HECS. In 1989, she filled another inaugural position as Prospective Student Liaison Officer during the difficult year that saw the amalgamation of the University with the Hunter Institute of Higher Education. In 1994, she accepted yet another inaugural position as Executive Officer to the newly-established Faculty of Law.

"In Law, because it was a small, newer Faculty, we drew together the support staff of the Faculty Office and the Department of Law," Julie said. "This maximised the efficiency of the administration and really formed a model for what became the role of the Faculty Services Director."

Julie, who completed a Diploma of Tertiary Education in 1990 and a Master of Tertiary Administration from the University of New England in 2001, believes it's important to continue learning.

The University's latest restructure, with the formation of the amalgamated Faculty of Business and Law, saw Julie face one of the biggest challenges in her working career. She took up the position of Faculty Services Director in early December 2001.

"For this position to work, it has to be at a senior level because the person needs to contribute to the strategic decision making of the Faculty and be able to hold discussions with senior academic staff particularly Heads of Schools. The Director Faculty Services also has to convey to the general staff that they are here to support the academic endeavor and ensure a high standard of administrative support is provided."

She says the Faculty has very supportive people at the top, with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Executive Dean forming part of a cooperative team that ensures ongoing support is provided to staff and students.

Julie, who is a big believer in the one-University concept, has tried to break down barriers to create a cohesive team for Faculty-wide service delivery that is inclusive of staff at the Central Coast and at University House. Business and Law is involved in a pilot of the Managing for Performance scheme. She works cooperatively with her 50 or so staff and has held two half-day forums to involve them in planning.

"Nothing can succeed unless your team is with you and understands what the goals of the Faculty and the University are," Julie said. "We need to have a shared belief in what we are trying to achieve."

Julie not only makes herself available to her staff in the corridor, she also communicates via a weekly Faculty-wide email bulletin, BLink, and delivers comprehensive reports on all her areas of responsibility at meetings. In her first 12 months in the position, she has overseen the development of a new website, an undergraduate marketing plan, a corporate look for the Faculty's brochures, banners, etc, a staff development policy, and placed her staff.

Relocation of the Faculty Student Services Office and the Newcastle Business School Office should be completed by the beginning of May.

"I've achieved a career goal," Julie says. "Now I want to consolidate what I'm doing here."
25 years of 2NUR FM

Radio station 2NUR FM opened in March 1978 and this year celebrates 25 years on air with its future looking brighter than ever.

As a locally owned radio station, 2NUR FM created history as the first community and FM station to serve Newcastle and the Hunter, relying on the invaluable support of dedicated volunteers.

Beginning its broadcasting in temporary accommodation at the University, the station raised $180,000 in 1989 from business and corporate sponsors towards a new purpose built site on campus. The earthquake halted proceedings until 1994 when 2NUR FM finally moved to its current location in the Language Centre on the Callaghan campus.

Facing near closure in 1999, the enormous community support for the station saw the University Council extend their deadline under stringent conditions that a firm base for financial sustainability would be achieved. In December that year, Mr John McGahen was appointed as Station Manager. With 35 years experience in the radio industry behind him, John's brief was to turn the financial situation of the station around.

John brought considerable change to the programming and staffing arrangements, securing major new advertisers, increasing station revenue, and attracting new listeners and supporters.

"By redesigning and rebuilding the format, 2NUR FM has successfully re-positioned itself as a real alternative to the commercial and ABC radio stations and has formed a solid partnership between the University and the community," John said. "Continual format refinement ensures that we maintain our high standard of broadcasting, which is important to consolidate a loyal listener base and attract new listeners.

"There is ample evidence via research and radio surveys, to indicate that 'Easy Listening' 2NUR FM is finally guaranteeing its promise of providing Newcastle and the Hunter region with a fresh, new and unique approach to radio listening for the next 25 years and beyond."

Student named Apprentice of the Year

Second year Mechanical Engineering student Aaron Carle was named Australian Business Apprentice of the Year at the national training awards at the end of last year.

Aaron, an Indigenous student who came to the University after completing a Certificate III in boat and shipbuilding at the Hunter Institute of TAFE, wants to become a naval architect. His award was the only one received by NSW at the national awards.

The award topped off a year of high achievement for Aaron, who also won State and regional apprenticeship awards, a $6,000 award from the Harvey Knox Opportunity Fund, and statewide recognition for his work on Nemesis, a boat that won the Australian Maritime Services Ski Boat of the Year award last year.

Aaron helped to design and build Nemesis while working as an apprentice shipwright with one-man operation Jacana Marine. The excitement of the design process, as well as the hands-on experience of building Nemesis, awakened his interest to a career in naval architecture. His mechanical engineering studies are in preparation for entry to the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania.

"I grew up on the water near Taree and my family were fishermen, so I was always around boats and into all sorts of water sports," Aaron said. "The Nemesis is the best Australian made boat for wakeboarding."

While Aaron found the switch from TAFE studies to University a bit daunting, he said he received good support from the Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment and from Wollotuka, the University’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Centre. He won an Engineering Aid scholarship, which is jointly sponsored by Wollotuka and the Faculty.

"I took part in the Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme offered by Wollotuka, which was really helpful in my first semester."

Aaron completed his first year of University study with a swag of distinctions and credits. This continued the pattern he set during his TAFE studies, which he completed with distinctions. He was the first Indigenous student to complete the Certificate III in boat and shipbuilding at Hunter Institute and says he plans to be an ambassador for the Indigenous community in educational, employment and social arenas.
Teaching & Learning

Students win national law competition

Two Newcastle law students are set to take on the world in the International Client Interviewing Competition to be held in Durban, South Africa this month after winning this year's Australian Competition, which was held recently at the University of Tasmania.

Emma Renshaw and Mathew Jennings defeated teams from 12 other law schools to take out the competition. Professor Ted Wright, Dean of the School of Law said that the School was extremely proud of Emma and Mathew.

"It's a tough competition with students training for months beforehand and as this is the first time that Newcastle has entered, it represents a real milestone for us."

Both Emma and Mathew are enrolled in the Law School's Professional Program, which provides its students with the opportunity to work at the University's Legal Centre, interviewing clients and researching cases under the direction of academic staff who are also the Legal Centre's solicitors.

"Working at the Centre gives students a real insight into the law and enables them to gain invaluable 'hands-on' experience," Professor Wright explained.

"In Emma and Mathew's case it has clearly paid dividends."

One of the competition judges, Mr Frank Astill from Sydney University, said Emma and Mathew really made a big splash.

"They knew how to ask questions and probe in a diplomatic way," he said.

Emma and Mathew said they were overwhelmed at the reception for their style of client interviewing.

"Having discussed strategies with our opposing teams after the competition and listening to the national judges' feedback on our performance, we realised that our style of client interviewing promoted a more 'client friendly' approach to the interviewing process," Emma explains. "Clearly, our real experiences with clients in the legal centre contributed greatly to our ability to immediately assess the client and respond to their individual needs. Though I've since become more aware of the academic nature and traditional importance of the international competition, I refuse to give in to pressure and conform to a more traditional notion of interviewing."

Emma says that when it comes to the international competition, she and Mathew will continue to keep an open mind, maintain a flexible strategy and adapt their language and explanations according to the kind of client they are presented with. "Putting the client at ease, rather than knowing all the answers, is what it's all about."

Aboriginal elder expounds education

Aboriginal elder and former manager in the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Les Ridgeway, stressed the importance of a good education when he spoke to Aboriginal Studies students at the University last month.

Mr Ridgeway, now retired, was the first Aboriginal person employed as a public servant in New South Wales. He visited the University to deliver a lecture on the changes in Aboriginal public policy during the Whitlam years and the development of the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). A Worimi nation elder, Mr Ridgeway said he had been forced to attend mission schools as a child, where he learned to sing well but was not given the necessary skills to prepare him for public life.

Despite his limited schooling, Mr Ridgeway worked as an Aboriginal welfare officer and met Aboriginal activist Charlie Perkins, at Moree, during the 'freedom rides' of the early 1970s. Perkins recruited him to join the newly-formed DAA and he went to Canberra. When Gough Whitlam's Labor Government won power in 1972, he boosted spending on Aboriginal affairs from $44 million in 1973 to $200 million in 1975.

"I think it was the undoing of Whitlam," Mr Ridgeway said. "He was the only Minister in Australia prepared to stick his neck out and do something for Aboriginal people and for that he was ostracized."

Mr Ridgeway became the only Aboriginal regional manager of a DAA office when he took up a position at Griffith. He said that the local Aboriginal communities in Griffith had no sewerage or town water supplies and drew their drinking water straight from the Lachlan River.

"I set about building beautiful brick veneer houses with solar systems for electricity, brought town water, sewerage, curb and guttering, and tarred roads into the communities using the Whitlam government's money," he said.

Mr Ridgeway was critical of the civil servants and bureaucrats who managed the DAA, saying they set Aboriginal people up for failure by setting them tasks for which they were not adequately trained or resourced. He said that today the billions of dollars spent on Aboriginal affairs mostly goes to maintaining offices, with very little funding finding its way to Aboriginal people, who are still living in squalid conditions across NSW.

"Under the Whitlam Government, we were able to improve conditions for Aboriginal people with better facilities for health, housing and education," Mr Ridgeway said.

Gough Whitlam had also abolished unjust laws and signed agreements to return land to Aboriginal people.

"But there is still a lot to do and that's why I keep telling school children that it is vital they get the best out of the education system available to them," Mr Ridgeway said. "Without education, there will be no way to break out of the bureaucratic rubble we have got around us."
Awaba site helps recover Aboriginal history

When Nola Hawken stood on the shores of Lake Macquarie with her sisters, their families and friends in March 2000 for a naming ceremony for what has been informally known in the Swansea area as Margaret's Bay, they celebrated the discovery of their family history that had previously been lost to them.

The sisters had known they were of Aboriginal descent when they were growing up but it wasn't until they had to arrange the funeral of their uncle that they began to find out about their ancestors. They were able to trace their lineage back to the early 1800s to an Aboriginal couple known in the Swansea area as Old Ned and Queen Margaret. The latter was the subject of many books and newspaper articles.

The story of Margaret and Ned and of the quest by their descendents to reclaim their family history, is one of the many fascinating resources on the University's Awaba website, which was launched in October last year.

The site's Indigenous editor, Vicki Grieves, lecturer in the School of Aboriginal Studies, is a historian who specialises in Aboriginal family history. She is a first class honours graduate, currently completing a PhD thesis that explores issues in her own family history in the time of British takeover of Aboriginal lands from the Hunter to the Manning Rivers. Vicki says that it is not uncommon for Aboriginal people not to know the details of their own family history.

"There has been a lot of work done recently on this secret history – when Indigenous peoples' family histories have been appropriated by non-Aboriginal people as local folklore, it has the impact of further dispossessing Aboriginal people," Vicki said. "It is part of the decolonising process to have Aboriginal people take control of their history again."

Margaret's great-great-grand-daughters Nola and Kerry, who are both enrolled in the Bachelor of Aboriginal Studies at the University, said they are proud to have their story included on the Awaba site.

"We're very excited that the site has been put together properly by historical scholars from the University," Nola said. "We are continuing our journey of learning now and I'm sure that the Awaba site will become very well known over the years. It's really good for the Newcastle area."

The site is a database of historical materials relating to the Aboriginal people of the Newcastle/Lake Macquarie region and is a collaborative project between the Schools of Aboriginal Studies and Liberal Arts. Project coordinator David Andrew Roberts said the Awaba site was developed in conjunction with representatives from the Newcastle Awabakal Aboriginal community.

"All the people who have worked on the site are locally based writers and scholars – some from the University and some from the community," he said. "It is a work in progress and includes the first ever publication of the Gospel of St Mark in Awabakal, from the 1837 manuscript of the Reverend Threlkeld, a famous character in local history."

The University is emerging as a leader in the study of Threlkeld's work and has just purchased a book he wrote in 1850 to complete his collected works, held in the Archives and Rare Books section of the Auchmuty Library. David, who completed an award-winning Honours thesis on the Bells Falls' Aboriginal massacre and a PhD at the University on the history of the Wellington Valley, said Giovanni di Gravio from the Archives had been generous in his contributions to the Awaba site, as had the web team from the Faculty of Education and Arts, Rebecca Buchanan and Geoff Burrowes.

The Awaba site was conceived by Associate Professor Hilary Carey from the School of Liberal Arts and funded partly by a Research Infrastructure Block grant and partly by the Faculty of Education and Arts. It complements the Aboriginal Missions and Reserves Historical Database site developed by Hilary.

Visit the site at http://www.newcastle.edu.au/group/amrhd/awaba/
Seeking to reduce the admin burden

A committee has been established to investigate ways of streamlining the University’s administrative processes in an effort to minimise the burden on staff.

Co-Chair of the Committee, Professor Brian English, said that the project will investigate the extent to which administrative tasks are impacting on the University community.

“We plan to engage in a bottom-up process by consulting with those most knowledgeable about the University’s administrative processes.”

The Committee will firstly identify the major University-wide processes to be included in the review and then seek feedback on each of the identified processes to ascertain which might be in most need of attention.

Consultation with the University community will be undertaken using focus groups with staff in faculties and divisions, and a staff survey of service quality. The information obtained will then be compared with results gained from students through the annual Composite Student Questionnaire. The feedback from both staff and students will determine the priority processes that need to be investigated further.

“We want to reduce double-handling and inefficiencies where they still exist,” Brian said. “There will always be an administrative component to everyone’s work but we hope to identify ways we can do it better. Reducing the administrative burden on academic staff was one of the issues to come out of the University’s restructuring process.”

The Committee acknowledges that there are a lot of process improvement projects already underway across the University as a result of the restructure. However, the scope of the Committee’s investigations will be limited to major University-wide processes where significant gains can be made, including such things as student enrolment, examinations, and course approval and review.

Vice-President (University Services) Linda O’Brien, who co-chairs the Committee, said it is likely that some solutions to improvements identified by the committee will be based on using IT more strategically.

“However, IT is not the only answer,” Linda said. “It’s possible we will look at other universities to identify examples of best practice in specific processes. Given the competitive environment we find ourselves in today and with reduced government funding, we need to embrace smart business practices in order to provide better services to our students and staff.”

Project Manager and Director of the University’s Planning and Business Improvement Unit Ivan Skaines, says the Committee will report their findings to the Senior Executive Group by October in time for improvement proposals to be submitted for funding under the Strategic Initiative scheme.

“We want to free up academic staff to concentrate on their core business, which is teaching and learning, research and community services and generally to minimise the administrative burden on all staff,” Ivan said.

Other committee members are Heads of School John O’Connor and Kathleen Fahy, and Faculty Service Director Julie Kiem.

Play welcomes students

First year students were given a humorous insight into uni life during Orientation Week thanks to a new student drama production. The play, Welcome to UNI, was written and designed by second year students Julius Alterator and John McMaster.

“This play is designed to work with other O Week activities to make students feel at home and welcome at the University,” Julius said. “It focuses on a group of students and explores some of the issues that arise when they first come to uni.”

Julius wrote the play at the end of his first year, basing it on his own and his friends’ experiences as drama students. The play encouraged audience participation and featured a student cast with sets and costumes designed by students.
Who pays for the environment?

Will proposed Commonwealth government energy reforms cost the consumer? Will the environment benefit or suffer from the reforms? These questions were the focus of the Australian Energy Forum (AEF), ‘Parer-The Consumer and the Environment’, held last month at the University.

Former Federal Resources and Energy Minister Warwick Parer chaired an energy review, which suggested scrapping the mandatory renewable Energy Target (MRET) scheme that binds fossil fuel energy retailers to buying a proportion of their energy from renewable sources by 2010, and replacing it by carbon emission trading.

The Parer review said the MRET scheme was not the most efficient way of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However, Greenpeace claim the scrapping of the scheme threatens to kill the renewable energy industry.

AEF Director, Professor Scott Holmes, says the energy forum sought to provide a platform for open debate on energy issues with an aim of influencing a sustainable national energy policy designed to serve the future needs of all Australians.

“The Parer Review could have significant impacts on the affordability and reliability of energy supplies and the environment and this forum was an ideal opportunity to get first hand knowledge and contribute to the debate about Australia’s energy future,” he said. “It is expected that the forums will initiate research projects and indeed, the first one resulted in an approach by a major industry group to the University for research.”

Presentations were made by Paul Breslin (Parer committee member), Trish Benson (Public Interest Advocacy Centre), Rupert Posner (Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy) and Federal Shadow Resources spokesman and Member for Hunter, Joel Fitzgibbon, who initially proposed the AEF.

The Newcastle forum was the first of three public forums, with the second (Ownership and Concentration in the Oil and Gas Industry) held in Darwin on March 13 and the third (Ensuring Coal Sustainability) scheduled to take place at the University on April 11.

Student exchange program

The annual Student Exchange Fair, which showcases the wide range of exchange opportunities available to Newcastle students who would like to study abroad, was held at the University last month.

Past exchange student and one of this year’s organisers, Daniel MacDonald, says the purpose of the Fair is to attract more Australian students to study overseas in the University’s exchange programs.

“We send up to 100 students overseas each year, and the hope is to double this number over the next couple of years,” Daniel said. “Studying in another country is an amazing and invaluable experience, and students get to make friends and contacts from all over the world.”

The exchange program allows students to swap places with students from overseas universities to continue their study for one or two semesters, while experiencing different cultures, learning new languages and making international friends. Many of the overseas institutions offer courses that are taught in English and designed for international students.

Representatives from universities in USA, Scandinavia, Europe and Asia as well as current international students and past Australian exchange students were at the Fair to discuss how to apply for overseas study and what students should expect.

The University is associated with over 80 institutions worldwide, and offers a large number of scholarships to students who want to take advantage of the exchange program.
They probably wouldn’t even think of it, unless you mentioned that resi’s multi-award-winning Complete Home Loan has no hidden fees, a very low standard variable rate, and a 3-year written honeymoon guarantee (which means you’ll pay less over 3 years with resi than with any other standard variable rate loan - honeymoons included - or we’ll refund the difference). After that, they’ll definitely want to look into their loans – and ours. So get them to contact us. We certainly won’t hide anything from them.

Call 4946 2500
www.resi.com.au